

Jan 23, 2019

# Luke 19:45-48

## The Certain Gospel: Consumer Christianity

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**S:** When Jesus enters the temple courtyard what does he do?

**C:** He drives out the temple merchants as he quotes Isaiah's promise that the temple will be a house of prayer and contrasts it with the den for thieves they have made it into.

**EI:** When Jesus enters the temple courtyard he drives out the temple merchants as he quotes Isaiah's promise that the temple will be a house of prayer and contrasts it with the den of thieves they have made it into.

**Big Idea:** The antidote to consumer Christianity is prayer. (7 words)

Guest Preaching:

- 1/27/19 at Dunstable Evangelical Congregational Church for Pastor Bobby Ross
- 2/10/19 at Forestdale Community Church for Pastor Paul McPheeters

**(S1)** When I showed my church this opening slide one couple went out and **got burgers after church**... I want to start out by **playing a little game**. I want to see if you can guess each answer **silently** in your **mind**. I'm going to ask you a "how many" question and you're going to see if you know the right answer.

- How many cars and trucks did Americans buy in **2017**? Answer: **17.3 million**
- How much did we spend on movie tickets domestically in 2017? Answer: **\$11 billion**
- How much did Americans spend on donuts in **2014**? Answer: **\$581 million**
- How many Cokes are consumed each day **globally**? Answer: **1.9 billion**

Do you like to buy stuff? I do. You don't even have to go to the store now. You can use your **smartphone** to shop anytime, day or night. In our world we're constantly consuming, so it's no wonder we begin to consume God too. God, I'm here to put money in the **offering bag** so that in return you will give me... **dot-dot-dot**. God, I'm praying, now would you do what I want? The **University of North Carolina** asked **teenagers** about their view of **God** and **religion** and they found this.

**(S2)** "They concluded that most American teens view God as a "combination divine butler and cosmic therapist," and teens were "primarily concerned with one's own happiness in contrast to focusing on glorifying God, learning obedience, or serving others." This was the religion of most teens, the researchers concluded, because it is also the form of religion practiced by their parents. Americans want a god who will serve our needs, fix our problems, and help us achieve our goals."<sup>1</sup>

We can even bring this mindset to church. We expect **excellent music**, a **funny yet thought provoking sermon**, and maybe **coffee** or **donuts** during fellowship time. If God is something we **use** to get what we really want, **safety**, **security**, **happiness**, **wealth**, then we are **consuming** God and our religion is not Christianity, but "**consumer Christianity**." Today, I want to ask this question...

### **(S3) What's wrong with consumer Christianity?**

What's wrong with God giving me what I want? Today in our text Jesus addresses what's wrong and it's **not pretty**. He has finally come to **Jerusalem** for his **crucifixion**. He's just ridden in on a donkey and the **next big thing** he does is go to the **temple**. He **walks up the steps** into the courtyard and he **makes a scene**.<sup>2</sup>

**Luke 19:45-46** When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. 46 "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be a house of prayer'; but you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" (NIV®)

In both Matthew and Mark Jesus "overturned the tables of the **money changers** and the benches of those selling **doves**" (Matt 21:12; Mark 11:15). The money changers **exchanged currencies** from around the middle-east for the one type of currency the temple used, **Tyrian Shekels**. It wasn't a **Roman** coin because they hated their **Romans oppressors**, but it did have "the **image** of the god **Melkart**."<sup>3</sup> We think Jesus calls them "robbers" because they were charging an **unfair fee** on the **exchange**. They were swindling **pilgrims** who came to Jerusalem for **passover week**. What's wrong with consumer Christianity?

### **(S4) 1) It takes advantage of others.**

It asks now "how can I love my church family?" But "how can I make money from my church family?" In Westford one of the churches just got **swindled** of a **couple hundred dollars** from a man claiming to need help paying **rent** but was actually making it up. But this isn't just limited to **financial opportunities**. When

someone **new comes** to our church do we ask, “how has God **gifted** and **called** them?” Or “when can we get them **signed up** for childcare or the worship team?”

In **Matthew** and **Mark** Jesus targets the **dove sellers**. The people that bought doves for sacrifices were the **poor**. The **rich** could afford **calves** and **sheep**. **Jesus’ parents** offer “a pair of doves or two young pigeons” when they come to consecrate him as a baby at the temple (Luke 2:24). By **cleansing** the temple of these **merchants** Jesus is cleansing the temple of **oppressors** and **idolaters**. They took advantage of the **poor** and used money with the **image** of a **false God** (Melkart) to run the temple.

How do we unintentionally **oppress** others and commit **idolatry**? Idolatry is anytime we **worship** or **love** anything more than God. Do you ever come to church looking for what you can get out of it instead of what you can give to God? Great **music**, great **programs**, and **great donuts** are all good things, but if we care more about them than God than we’ve become consumers and **idolaters**.

I’m going to share a quote with you from Thom S. Rainer. He contrasts the difference between an **entitled church member** and a **Biblical church member**. It’s **pretty stiff**, but I want it to **match Jesus’ tone** that he must have had when he **cast** out those **moneychangers**.

The entitled church member treats the church more like a country club than a church. They view their financial offerings as dues to get perks and privileges. They make pastors and other church leaders cringe when they say, “You do know we pay your salary.”

The entitled church member is the antithesis of the biblical church member described in 1 Corinthians 12. The apostle Paul describes that type of church member as giving, functioning, and sacrificing. He or she is a member of the body of Christ for the greater good of the church. Others come first.

An entitled church member expects his worship style. She expects her color of the rooms and temperature in the worship center. They expect their pastor to jump when they call. After all, they think, it’s our church. We should be able to get what we want.

The entitled church member resists change constantly. These church members do not want anything that upsets their way of doing church to be introduced to the congregation. Church is about their perks, their desires, and their comfort.

Biblical church members will gladly accept change to reach people with the gospel, and to bring glory to God. Entitled church members are in churches to get their needs met.<sup>4</sup>

I share what he wrote **not** as an **accusation** but as a **challenge**. May this church **never be filled with** entitled church members but rather **Biblical** church members. And **if we are** a little entitled, let’s **confess** that **sin** and start anew. I don’t want to be a consumer Christian. *Consumer Christianity takes advantage of others.*

## **(S5) 2) It prevents others from worshiping.**

There’s some debate among scholars whether or not **(S6)** Jesus drove out the merchants in the **court of the gentiles**, which was the **outer plaza** around the temple used by the **non-Jews** to worship and pray, or in the **Royal Stoa**, which was a hall lined with **pillars** and was the more common **commercial center**. Because of Jesus’ **focus on prayer** I think it was the court of the gentiles. The temple system **required** some buying and selling of animals but Jesus is angry with them taking over the court of the gentiles because it **prevents gentiles** (non-Jews) from coming to worship and pray to the **one true God**.

When Jesus cries out, “My house will be a house of prayer” he’s quoting from the **prophet Isaiah**. But he’s actually quoting **Isaiah 56**, which is a prophecy for when there is **no temple** in Jerusalem because it has been **destroyed** and the Israelites have been taken into **exile**. In Isaiah 56 God is telling the people how they are to treat **foreigners** when they **rebuild** the temple. I want to read you two verses

### **Isaiah 56:6-7**

**(S7)** 6 And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord  
to minister to him,  
to love the name of the Lord,  
and to be his servants,  
all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it  
and who hold fast to my covenant—

**(S8)** 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain  
and give them joy in my house of prayer.  
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices  
will be accepted on my altar;  
for my house will be called  
a house of prayer for all nations.” (NIV®)

God promises that it’s not just the Israelites who will have the **privilege** of worshipping on the **holy mountain**, that’s the **temple mount** in **Jerusalem**. He also intends to bring in **foreigners**, or Gentiles, to worship at his house. Luke **cuts** the phrase “for all the nations” but Mark’s account includes it (Mark 11:17). Somewhere along the line the Jewish people lost sight of God’s purpose to bring in all the nations (Gen 12:2-3). They became **self-focused** and lost site of God’s **missional plans**. **Worship** became about what was **convenient for them** and **met their needs**, not about God’s plans to reach the world.

My **pastor friend** told me a story recently. He told me he was trying to **modernize** the music at his church but the lady who **lead** the music wasn’t having it. She told him that this is what the music had been for **hundreds of years** so he asked her, “Are you telling me you wouldn’t change the music if you knew your **grandkids** would come to church?” And all she said was “change it!”

No I’m not here today to tell you that you need to change your music. Maybe you do, but maybe there’s something else you’re holding onto that’s not helping you **reach the lost** but you just really like it. Does anything **come to mind**? Might the Lord be asking you to **give it up** and try something new for the sake of **his kingdom**? Consumer Christianity prevents others from worshipping.

But this isn’t easy. Change is hard, especially changing myself.

### **(S9) What is the antidote to consumer Christianity? Prayer.**

Within Jesus’ condemnation of their lack of prayer is a **positive call** to pray. He says “my house *will be* a house of prayer.” That’s a **future indicative**. It’s going to happen! It will happen. My house **WILL BE** a house of prayer. What does this prayer do?

### **(S10) 1) Prayer teaches us to love God and others.**

Notice what happens the rest of this week as Jesus teaches in the temple.

**Luke 19:47-48** Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. 48 Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words. (NIV®)

The religious people try to kill Jesus but all the people **love Jesus**. It doesn't say for sure but I like how the text says "**all the people**." I bet that means **gentiles** who had come to the court of the gentiles to pray were hanging on Jesus' words too. The word "hung" means to "**depend**." The people were depending and hanging on every word of Jesus because he taught truth. They had encountered the **self-serving consumeristic religion** of the temple, but when they **encountered Jesus** they **encountered life**. The world takes. Jesus gives. It's through prayer that we come to **love Jesus** and it's Jesus who **satisfies us**

If you're like me when you pray you probably start by telling God all of **your needs and wants**. That may be true **for years** and years but **over time** if we keep at it prayer will become less and **less about my needs and wants** and more about **just being with God** and **lifting up others**. Pray for God to give each of us and the whole church a **greater love for him** and for **each other**. *Prayer teaches us to love God and others.*

How else does prayer **counteract** consumer Christianity? If **consumer Christianity prevents** others from **worshipping** and prayer is the **antidote**, then...

### **(S11) 2) Prayer is worship.**

When we pray to the one true God we are **worshipping him**. We are admitting that **he is God and we are not** and that nothing we can **consume** will ever **satisfy us**. We are admitting that **only he** can satisfy us. One of the effects of Jesus driving out the buyers and sellers is that at least for that day people **couldn't buy animals** and **sacrifice** them. **Don't miss this!** By driving out the merchants Jesus is doing away with the **sacrificial system**. In a similar occasion in **John 2** when Jesus drives out the moneychangers the Jews seem to understand the **deeper authority** Jesus is claiming. **After** Jesus drove out the moneychangers...

**(S12) John 2:18-22** The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

**(S13) 20** They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" **21** But the temple he had spoken of was his body. **22** After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. (NIV®)

When Jesus drove out all the **lambs** and the **sheep** and the **doves** there was still on **perfect lamb** standing there... Him. **Jesus** is the **perfect sacrifice** we all need. **You** can try everything in this world (money, power, relationships) but only Jesus can satisfy you. Only Jesus can **pay** for your sins. Only Jesus can save you from your **endless need** to **consume**. Just **admit** you're broken and sinful and need him. "**Jesus, I confess** I'm sinful and try to satisfy myself with **anything but you** when all I really **need is you alone**. Jesus forgive me. Please give me your **eternal life**. Please give me your **contentment**. Amen."

### **(S14) The antidote to consumer Christianity is the lamb.**

The antidote to consumer Christianity is the lamb. How do we come to the lamb? By prayer. Come and talk to him. Come and worship him. When you feel your selfish desires rising up in your church family or as you go about your week, go to prayer. Go to the lamb. He's chased out all the money lenders and all the other sacrifices. He's the only one you really need. *The antidote to consumer Christianity is the lamb.*

**Philippians 4:19-20** And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. **20** To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (NIV®)

*Pastor Jonathan Romig wrote and preached this message.*

Jul 14, 2018

<sup>1</sup> Jethani, Skye. *What's Wrong with Religion?: 9 Things No One Told You about Faith* (Kindle Locations 319-323). Niddy Griddy Design, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Various accounts of Jesus driving out merchants: Luke 19:45-48; Matt 21:12-16; Mark 11:15-18; John 2:13-22

<sup>3</sup> Wilkins, Michael J.. Matthew, Mark, *Luke: Volume One* (Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary Book 1) (Kindle Locations 8543-8548). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

<sup>4</sup> Rainer, Thom S.. *Who Moved My Pulpit?: Leading Change in the Church* (Kindle Locations 276-287). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.