

**A Journey to Hope: Money**  
**Luke 19:28-48**  
**March 28, 2010**

Char did a very good job with our scripture reading. 20 verses is a lot to cover. I would like us to watch a depiction of what we just heard. This scene is from the movie Jesus.

Jesus riding into Jerusalem while the crowd waves palm branches and shouts hosanna, this is the event that we remember on Palm Sunday. As you heard from the reading and saw on the screen, this is not the only thing that happened on that Sunday.

After Jesus made his way to the Temple he was disgusted with what he saw. There in the house of God were merchants selling all manner of things. In a rare moment of anger Jesus turns over the tables and drives the merchants out of the temple. What we saw today was a pretty mild portrayal of Jesus. I have watched other movies where Jesus is much more aggressive in driving out the merchants.

If you were one of those merchants, would you have been angry at Jesus? I'm sure you would have! In our Lenten Study, *The 24 hours that Changed the World*, Adam Hamilton suggests some of those merchants were probably in the crowd on Friday calling for the crucifixion of Jesus.

This morning I am going to focus on what happened in the Temple and not the ride there. I believe there is a lesson that can be learned that can help us in our journey called life. So what happened that Sunday? Why was Jesus so angry?

I have read numerous theories. One theory suggests that people traveled great distances to get to the Temple. Remember there were no churches or temples in the various towns and villages. The only place a Jew worshipped God was at the Temple in Jerusalem. Faithful Jews would travel to Jerusalem several times a year, usually during special holy days.

As part of the worship one was required to offer a sacrifice. If you read the Old Testament book of Leviticus, you can find detailed instructions of what one needed to sacrifice. Rather than traveling all the way to Jerusalem with your lambs or pigeons or what ever else you needed, you would bring coins.

At the Temple there would be money changers that would exchange the coins for the items to be sacrificed.

The theory is that the money changers had rigged scales. The people were being cheated. Jesus was angry that men were getting rich from the religious practices of faithful Jews. If this was the case, we could understand why Jesus was so miffed.

Other theories suggest the Temple became more a place to do business than a place to worship. How could Jesus not be disturbed when he saw what had happened to the house of God?

There have been churches that I have served where out in the narthex the boy scouts would be selling one thing, the youth were taking orders for another thing and the missions committee was selling something else. Would Jesus have been angry with that church? Maybe disappointed, there might have been other times and other places to make those sales, but not angry.

I believe money, or more specifically the influence of money, was the cause of Jesus' anger. Jesus taught one could not love both money and God. But there on the Temple's ground, the very seat of God, people were showing their love of money.

Jesus knew the seductive power of wealth. Jesus taught more on money than he did almost everything else. Ultimately the question becomes who is your master? Is it God or is it money? How we answer that question will seriously impact our life.

All during Lent I have been looking at various issues we face in our life. I have tried to present a Christian perspective on how to deal with suffering, temptation and self esteem. Hopefully I have given some suggestions that can help us have a journey to hope.

Today we look at money. Given what has happened in this country over the past couple years, money or wealth, has been a major focus. Millions have lost their jobs, their savings and their homes. I heard an ad on the radio where a woman says the same food pantry she used to support is now a place she looks to for help.

From what I have read and heard, it was basically greed that has caused most of our financial crises. From Government, to banking to business to every day folks looking for a quick buck, folks let their desire for more money cloud their thinking.

Friday night I watched a documentary called Capitalism. Directed and produced by the controversial movie maker Michael Moore, it is an interesting take on the evils of capitalism. If you want to understand how we got into this mess, rent the movie.

In the movie he interviews several priests. Basically they both say capitalism as is has been lived out in the United States is evil. By evil they mean it runs counter to what Jesus taught. Jesus taught about caring for the poor, about treating folks fairly, about forgetting debts. Capitalism is about dog eat dog, fight to the top.

It's not like Jesus was against the idea of making a profit. The issue was how you made your profit and what you did with that wealth. Three months ago I looked at a parable that was about talents. In that story the one with 10 and 5 talents were able to double their money. If you remember, both servants were praised by their master. The one that just hid his talent however was punished for his lack of courage.

One that Sunday I talked about the things God has given us. We have time, we have skills and we have some wealth. Will we use these things just for our own needs, or will we use them to help expand God's Kingdom? To help illustrate my message I asked for 15 volunteers to participate in a Kingdom Assignment. After coming forward, I then told my volunteers what I wanted them to do. I gave each person \$100 and told them to use it to expand God's Kingdom.

Some took the money and did something to make more money. Other took the money and gave it directly to an organization that is doing Kingdom work. I have a booklet that gives the story of all 15 volunteers. You will each get a copy after the service.

I'm sure you are curious to find out what happened as the result of our Kingdom Assignment. In just a few moments you will hear from several of my volunteers. After the service we are having a lunch in honor and

celebration of our Kingdom Assignment. After the lunch we will hear from several other Kingdom workers. I hope you will stay for lunch.

So how did God move?  
Irene & Dustin Dimitry  
Alma Winkworth

We can get caught up in the capitalistic spirit and do what we can to make all we can so we can have everything we want. Another option is see money as a tool. It can allow us to have what we need to take care of our needs, but it can also allow us to expand God's kingdom.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism once said "gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can". It is that spirit we would do well to aspire to. Money in and of itself is not evil. With money we can do wonderful things. We have also seen recently what can happen when money becomes a god.

Lent is a time of introspection. During this week we call holy, a good question to ask ourselves would be "who do I worship: God or money". If it's God, then we are all given a Kingdom Assignment.

We are managers of God's gifts. How can we best utilize those gifts to expand God's kingdom?