

Week of October 18, 2021: JESUS AND THE PHARISEES AND TEMPLE SYSTEM

Discussion Questions Set #1

“When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” (John 4:13-17)

“I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God”. (Exodus 6:7)

“I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people”. (Leviticus 26:12)

“If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here”. (Exodus 33:15).

1. Scripture is pretty clear that we are to model our practice of faith after the invitational and relational God whom we serve. In what specific ways might our faith be invitational in nature? In what specific ways might our faith be relational in nature?
2. Why do you think the religious leaders of Israel and, by extension, the temple system they managed became increasingly exclusive and ritualistic in Christ’s day? Do you think that we have a tendency as people to drift from invitational/relational forms of faith practice to more exclusive/ritualistic practice? Why might this be the case?
3. Why do you think that Jesus reacted so strongly to seeing the exclusive and ritualistic functioning of the temple in John 4?
4. What do you think it might mean for us to become an invitational and relational people here at Hillside? What kinds of postures, activities and behaviours might need to be present in us for us to become more invitational and relational? What barriers might exist to becoming this sort of people?

Discussion Questions Set #2

“Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?” “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied. “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.” Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, “Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?” They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.” (John 7:45-52)

“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.” (Matthew 23:1-4)

In sermon, we discussed how Christ regularly used the words hypocrisy or hypocrites in reference to the religious leaders of Israel. Hypocrisy is the act of pretending to be something on one hand while truthfully being something else. We discussed three common points of hypocrisy for the Pharisees:

- a) they claimed to be “truth seekers” but looked only to confirm the opinions they already held.
 - b) they suggested that their actions were altruistic, but done out of a love of money and a love of self.
 - c) they feigned an openness to others, but their practice was more about exclusion and isolation.
1. Why do you think these three areas of hypocrisy are so destructive to faith? To the church?
 2. Where might you see a similar hypocrisy at work in the church today?
 3. How might we avoid such areas of hypocrisy, both personally and corporately? What practical steps can we take to protect against such things?