

Should we allow fund-raising at church?

Bible Study Leader's Guide

References: Matthew 21:12-13, Mark 11:15-17, Luke 19:45-46, John 2:12-16
1 Corinthians 10:23-24
LCMS Biblical Stewardship Principles

Why did Jesus clear the temple?

1. Similarities

- Altar still exists although not used for sacrifices
- Area around altar generally reserved for pastors
- The Court of Israelites and women are equivalent to our sanctuary. The Court of Gentiles is like our church narthex.

Differences

- Non-Christians are welcome in the church's sanctuary.
- Don't have separate courts for men, women, and non-believers. We all sit together to hear the Word of God.
- A heavy curtain does not separate us from God.

2. At Mount Sinai, God gave Moses instructions to establish the Sacrificial System that was in place in Jesus' day. The Sacrificial System was the offering of animals, grain, and wine (sin, praise, and thank offerings) as a part of Old Testament worship (see Concordia NIV Study Bible p.150). These offerings, however, could only be made at the temple in Jerusalem. The temple priests were responsible for presenting the offerings of the community and of individuals at the altar. As part of Moses' Law (Deut. 14:22-26), those travelling great distances to Jerusalem could buy their offerings rather than carry them from home. Thus, the sellers were needed to support worship at the temple. The money changers were also needed. Each person over the age of 20 was required to pay a temple tax, which was used to fund the daily sacrifices for the atonement of sins. Since people would come from many different countries, they needed to exchange their currency for the Tyrian shekel, the temple currency.
3. King Josiah burned and killed all things and people associated with Baal worship. King Josiah was focused on cleansing and restoring God's temple. Jesus, on the other hand, caused a minor disturbance. Roman guards who patrolled the temple would have intervened if Jesus' intentions were like Josiah's. Jesus, more than likely, wanted to get the attention of all those around him.
4. The phrase "It is written" tell us two things. Jesus was quoting from the Old Testament, and he was speaking to the Jews. Jesus quotes from Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 7. Only the Jews would understand the message conveyed in these two references. The word "but" points out the most important part of Jesus' message. Jesus was concerned that the temple had been turned into a "den of robbers".

5. The sellers in the market place provided a service to traveling pilgrims, but these sellers took advantage of these people by charging high market prices and exchange rates. Not only were the sellers corrupt but the temple priests condoned and even participated in the abuse. The priests may also have taken a percentage of the commercial activity, and at times declared sacrificial animals brought to the temple not adequate and required people to purchase “perfect” animals from the sellers.

Jesus’ words, however, were more likely a pronouncement of God’s judgment on the Jewish leadership, the Sanhedrin. This Jeremiah reference accuses the leadership of trying to hide its spiritual corruption behind its ritual piety and the perceived safety of the temple.

Other details also support the idea the pronouncement of judgement. In John’s Gospel, he notes that Jesus uses a whip of cords to clear the temple. A whip of cords was a symbol of judgement, and the Romans used such a whip with metal or bones attached to its cords as punishment. The incident of the withered fig tree is also a warning of judgement. In Matthew’s Gospel, this incident directly follows Jesus’ cleansing of the temple. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus’ cleansing of the temple is sandwiched between the description of the withered fig tree incident.

6. The Court of the Gentiles was the only place where non-Jews could gather to worship. It was also where the market was held. Some sellers were even using the Court as a short cut between the city and the Mount of Olives. Since Jesus’ actions occurred during Passover Week, the number of pilgrims and sellers were probably even higher than usual. The noise, smell, and distractions of the market made it impossible for the Gentiles to have a reverent and orderly worship or to come in peaceful prayer.

Jesus’ actions may not have been so much as to ensure that the Gentiles had a place to worship but to condemn the barring of the Gentiles from God’s presence in the inner courts. Isaiah 56:6-7 tells that the God’s blessings would be for all people. While the Jewish leaders should have been reaching out the Gentiles, they were threatening them with death if they came to God’s house. By using this Isaiah reference, Jesus may have been looking to the future when all peoples will call on the name of the Lord.

7. A sample restatement: “God has said that my house will be open to all who believe but instead you have turned it into a place to hide your sins.” Encourage others to read their statements.
8. Matthew and Mark note that Jesus threw out both buyers and sellers. If the buyers stop purchasing animals for sacrifice, and stop paying the temple tax then there would be no need for temple priests and the Sacrificial System would end. This led the priests to ask Jesus for a miraculous sign to prove his authority to change worship practices. The miraculous sign would be his death and resurrection. Jesus’ death paid the ultimate price for our sins, and his resurrection was the sign that God accepted his payment. There was no need for any more sacrifices.

Fund-raising and Stewardship?

9. We are all God's children; therefore, we should respect one another. As fellow believers, we are working together in God's kingdom. While we are not of this world, God has called us to work in it by sharing and living the Gospel message.
10. We are only the stewards of all that we have. We have been blessed with much, and much is expected of us. We must continue to grow in our faith, so that we will always have the right motivation for what we do and how we do it.
11. We are to encourage one another to serve our community and world with all of our blessings (time, talent and treasure). As we do so, we need to be careful to do it such a way that does not hinder our efforts.

LCMS Stewardship Principles

- 1. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE GOD'S STEWARDS.**
God's stewards are stewards by virtue of creation and their re-creation in Holy Baptism; therefore, they belong to the Lord.
- 2. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE MANAGERS, NOT OWNERS.**
God's stewards have been entrusted by God with life and life's resources and given the privilege of responsibly and joyfully managing them for Him.
- 3. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SAINTS AND SINNERS.**
God's stewards rejoice in and live out what God has declared them to be through the cross. At the same time His stewards recognize they are sinners who fight sin and its consequences each day.
- 4. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE UNIQUELY SINGULAR, YET PROFOUNDLY PLURAL.**
God's stewards recognize that their lives are not solo performances but are personal responses to God, lived out within the community of faith to benefit the whole world.
- 5. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE *IN* THE WORLD, BUT NOT *OF* THE WORLD.**
God's stewards recognize that the Lord sets them apart from the world and by the transforming power of the Gospel sends them into the world to live out the Gospel.
- 6. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE LOVED AND LOVING.**
God's stewards recognize that their stewardship flows out of God's act of love for them in Christ which empowers them, in turn, to love others in acts of Christ-like love.
- 7. GOD'S STEWARDS ARE SERVED AND SERVING.**
God's stewards recognize that their stewardship involves a Gospel-powered style of life which is demonstrated in servanthood within all the arenas of life.
- 8. GOD'S STEWARDS LIVE WITH AN AWARENESS OF THE PRESENT AND FUTURE, OF TIME AND ETERNITY.**
God's stewards live intentionally in the light of God's eternal purpose while being firmly committed to His rule in the here and now.