Jesus and the Moneychangers



Scripture Reference: Mark 11:15-19

Suggested Theme: Love God deeply and show him respect.

Memory Verse: “Wisdom begins with respect for the Lord. And understanding begins with knowing God, the Holy One.” Proverbs 9:10

Story Overview:

The Jerusalem Temple represented God’s presence and holiness to his people. Jesus came to the Temple during the yearly Passover celebration only to find that the area had been turned into a busy marketplace where people were concentrating on money instead of God. His deep love and respect for God led Jesus to take dramatic public action. He turned over tables and threw out those who were cheating the people.

Background Study:

This event is recorded by all four gospel writers and takes place during the last days before the crucifixion. John is the only writer who opens his gospel with Jesus clearing the Temple at the beginning of his ministry. As is sometimes the case, the four writers place events in different chronological orders to emphasise different aspects of the life of Jesus.

- Matthew 21:12-13
- Mark 11:15-19
- Luke 19:45-48
- John 2:12-17

The Temple in Jerusalem was the centre of everything it meant to be the people of God. It represented the presence of God. The Temple of Jesus’ day represented God and his people’s history. The concept of the Temple began over a thousand years earlier, not long after the exodus from Egypt. This can be traced through the Tabernacle, Solomon’s Temple and the Second Temple.

The Tabernacle:
As Moses led the people out of Egypt and into the promised land, a cloud guided them during the day and a fire at night. During the years in the wilderness, God provided detailed instructions for an ornate tent or Tabernacle to be built. God provided his people with a tangible representation of His presence through the tabernacle.

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> “Then the cloud covered the Meeting Tent. The greatness of the Lord filled the Holy Tent. Moses could not enter the Meeting Tent. This was because the cloud had settled on it. And this was because the greatness of the Lord filled the Holy Tent.” Exodus 40:34-35, ICB

The tabernacle was packed up when the cloud moved, and the people moved along with it. When it stopped, the tabernacle was re-assembled, and the people made camp around it.

Solomon’s Temple:

Many years later, when God’s people conquered the land, King Solomon built a Temple in Jerusalem to serve the same purpose. This Temple was elaborate and beautiful and was a beacon for the nations. Although neither the Tabernacle nor the Temple could actually “contain” God, He blessed the people with His presence in them. When Solomon finished the Temple, the presence of God filled it. 2 Chronicles 7:1-5

As we read through the Old Testament, we learn that God’s people strayed far from Him and were eventually taken into captivity by other nations. Solomon’s Temple, in all its magnificent beauty, was destroyed.

The Second Temple:

After many years in captivity, Ezra and a remnant of the Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple at the exact location as the first. As beautiful as the Second Temple was, it could not compare to the first one. Unlike the Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple, the Bible does not refer to God’s presence or glory descending on the location. Both joy and tears accompanied the dedication of the Second Temple. Those who remembered Solomon’s Temple knew this was inferior.

This second Temple was the Temple of Jesus’ time. It is sometimes referred to as “Herod’s Temple” because it was under a long-term refurbishment project begun and overseen by Herod the Great. Herod’s Temple was destroyed in 70 AD by the Roman army during the Jewish rebellion. Today, only a few stones of the entire Temple complex remain. This is referred to as the Western Wall or “the Wailing Wall.”

This second Temple is the one visited by Jesus in today’s lesson. It was the time of the Passover in Jerusalem. People from far away were coming to Jerusalem and needed animals for the required sacrifices. Having travelled far, it was common for people to purchase animals and other items for sacrifice once they had arrived.

Various currencies had to be exchanged for the currency of the Temple, and providing this service was a good thing. But, instead of helping people, Temple leaders had turned the process into one in which people were cheated out of their money and, ultimately, held back in their worship of God.

The Temple area was reserved for the worship of God. Jesus expected to see reverence for God and not a bunch of animals and money like a downtown market. He was outraged. This event makes it clear that Jesus was not afraid to show emotion and take action. This was not a case of Him losing His temper but, instead, taking appropriate action. The fact that the Temple leaders did not stop Him reveals that they knew they were guilty.

Jesus’ anger was righteous because it was based on His love and respect for the Father. Jesus knew that the Temple represented reverence and worship. The Temple was like a home of God that thieves and robbers had invaded.

This event draws heavily upon the Old Testament scripture. The prophet Jeremiah had been told by God to stand at the gate and preach to the people about how they were misusing the Temple (Jeremiah 7:1-15). Compare Jeremiah 7:11 and Mark 11:17. Jesus quotes directly from this passage.

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Then Jesus taught the people. He said, “It is written in the Scriptures, ‘My Temple will be a house where people from all nations will pray.’ But you are changing God’s house into a hideout for robbers.’” Mark 11:17, ICB

Other Bible Verses About Respect for God:

- Deuteronomy 6:5
- Exodus 20:7
- Proverbs 9:10
- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- 1 Peter 3:15

Way to Introduce the Story:

Before your group gathers, place several different types of coins (foreign and more familiar) on the table. As the children arrive, show them how to make coin rubbings. Place a coin under a clean piece of paper and rub a crayon over the paper. The impression of a coin will appear. The children will probably make a lot of these impressions on their papers. “I have a question to ask you. Which is more important, worshipping God or having lots of coins? Of course worshipping God is more important than having lots of money. In today’s story we are going to learn about some people that were supposed to be worshipping God. Instead of doing that they just started buying and selling things to make money. They forgot all about worshipping God.”

The Story:

Jesus and His disciples travelled from place to place, teaching people about God. At the time of the special Jewish feast of Passover, they travelled to Jerusalem to worship God and take part in special ceremonies at the Temple. Mary and some of Jesus’ brothers went along, too. They all looked forward to a special time in Jerusalem. They thought about the beautiful Temple. They thought about how people would be worshipping God at the Temple.

Ever since He was a young boy, Jesus had been taught by His parents that the Temple of God in Jerusalem was a very important place. This was a place where people came to worship God and offer sacrifices. At the Temple, everyone was supposed to think and talk about God.

But when they arrived at the Temple, it did not seem as if people were there to worship God at all. The people were not treating the Temple like a special place of God. Instead, the Temple looked like a big market! Animals were making loud noises. Jesus heard cattle, sheep and doves. Some people exchange money and try to cheat others. The people were not thinking about God at all.

Jesus was very sad and angry at how people treated God and God’s special place. Jesus is the son of God, so the Temple was His Father’s house. He loved His Father, and He loved His Father’s house! Jesus knew He needed to do something very drastic so that everyone would understand how serious this was.

So Jesus did something that shocked everyone. He tied cords of rope together to make a whip to swing around. Then He began swinging the rope and turning over the tables that people had put in the wrong places in the Temple. He shooed the birds and animals away and caused the money that people were cheating with to fall all over the ground. Jesus said, “Get those things out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!”

Before this, everyone was thinking about money and the market. Now, people finally had time to stop and think about what Jesus had been teaching. It was time to love and respect God at His Temple, just like Jesus

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did.

By the time Jesus left, many people were talking about Him. Some had learned to love God more because of what Jesus said. Some got angry and began to say bad things about Jesus.
What would you have done if you had been there that day?

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- Why did the Jews go to the Temple at Passover? (To worship God)
- Jesus was angry because the people had turned God's house into what? (A market)
- Who couldn't worship God because the market was where they would usually worship? (The Gentiles)
- What did Jesus do when He saw that people had turned the Temple courts into a marketplace? (He made a whip out of cords and drove out all the animals, scattered the coins of the moneychangers, and turned over their tables)
- Who wanted to kill Jesus after they saw what Jesus did and heard Him teach in the Temple? (The chief priests and the teachers of the law)
- Who was amazed by Jesus' teaching in the Temple? (The crowd of people)
- Is it sinful to be angry? (No, but we can end up doing sinful things because we're angry if we don't have self-control)
- What did you learn about God from this story?
- What did you learn about Jesus from this story?

Reflection:

- What do you think Jesus looked or sounded like as He turned over the tables, scattered the coins, and drove out the animals?

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- What do you think the Temple sounded like as Jesus turned over the tables, scattered the coins, and drove out the animals?
- What do you think about Jesus making a whip?
- How do you think Jesus felt after He had done these things?
- What do you think Jesus was teaching the people in the Temple about?
- Have you ever been angry? What were you angry about?
- Jesus was angry, but for a 'righteous' reason- He was angry because people weren't honouring God or loving people. Have you had this kind of anger? Tell us about it.
- What else might Jesus or the Father be angry about for righteous reasons? (Injustice, people being mistreated, people not respecting God, etc.)
- What question do you have for God about this story?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- Goodbye World Song
- J-E-S-U-S Song
- Building Up The Temple
- He's Got the Whole World in His Hands
- My God is So Big!
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- For younger children, bring some toy animals and money and let them put on a play to show the story.
- The moneychangers were distracting all the people from the worship of God. Discuss ways that we might distract worshipers today during Sunday assemblies. How can we help people worship God?
- Discuss ways to show respect for God.
- Acrostic: Write the letters R-E-S-P-E-C-T vertically down the left side of a paper. Beside each letter, write a way to show respect for God.

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- Older children can look up the Temple online or in a bible encyclopaedia and find out which areas of the Temple were areas restricted to worship.
- Discuss the things that make us angry and compare them to the things that made Jesus angry.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

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Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page and worksheets about Jesus cleansing the Temple (Calvary Curriculum)
- Video to show children: “Jerusalem Temple at the Time of Jesus” by “Messages of Christ.” The YouTube video is just under 2 minutes.
- Video to show children: Virtual Reconstruction Of Second Temple and Temple Mount (7 minutes 46 seconds) from YouTube

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