

Introduction:

This week we learn that there is no substitute for true worship. Good appearances and busy lives are nothing apart from a worshipful connection to God. You can find Pastor Mark's sermon notes [here](#)¹ or listen to the sermon by clicking [here](#).²



Scripture:

Please read [Mark 11:12-25 in your bible, or click here](#).

“Don't settle for appearance without substance, or for activity without worship.”

So What?

“In Mark 11:12-25, Jesus passes judgment on the nation of Israel for settling for cheap substitutes. They settled for appearance without substance and activity without worship. This is illustrated through two enacted parables as Jesus pronounces judgment on the fig tree (12-14, 20-21) and the temple (15-17).”³ Their hypocritical behavior was in insult to God. He wanted Israel and the gentiles to engage with him in worship. Instead, the pharisees hindered the gentiles from worshiping. They were busy going about “worship” in the temple but failed to connect with God and his mission. “We can be guilty of the same violations today. We can fill our lives with seemingly good activities, and yet never have any time to worship or listen for God's voice. We can easily substitute activity for worship. Don't settle for appearance without substance or activity without worship. Instead, center your life on Jesus Christ. A life centered on Christ can have a deep and lasting impact.”³

What Now? Jesus condemned the actions of those in the temple courts. Verse 17 says, “And he was teaching them and saying to them, *“Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.”* There are several application points we should take note of because of this:

1. Jesus was “teaching them.” Jesus was angry, and rightfully so, but rather than throwing an uncontrolled fit, his actions and words were purposeful and meant to correct. We should not be afraid to stand up for the truth of scripture, but we must approach each situation 1) Biblically rather than with our own opinion (Christ taught here by quoting scripture) and 2) Our actions should be driven by a desire to show the right way, out of a love for God, rather than being driven by a hatred for those in the wrong. Self righteous hatred has no place in Christian lives.
2. The context for “*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations*” is [Isaiah 56:6-8](#), in which Isaiah explains that God wants to include gentiles in worship, not just Israel. We too must remember that salvation through Christ and the call to worship has been extended to all people. We must never look down on others, excluding or hindering them from coming to God. Instead we must clear the way, pointing them to God. Racial, ethnic, or other types of prejudice must have no place in the lives of God's people.
3. “But you have made it a den of robbers.” Read [Jeremiah 7:8-15](#) and then reread [Mark 11:12-25](#). Meditate on the passages. We should be intentional about living a Godly lifestyle. We don't want to be legalistic, yet it is God's will that we be more and more like his Son. Church involvement is not sanctification, but is a part of the life we should lead. Let us choose a lifestyle of worship.
4. The temple area was crowded and busy. Sometimes we think that busy equals spiritual. Yet we can see from the lessons Jesus taught, using the fig tree and the temple as examples, that good appearances and busyness are nothing if they are not connected to worship and fruitfulness. Let us consider our schedules, comparing them to our spiritual life. Are we displaying the [fruits of the Spirit](#)? Are we so busy doing things for God that we forget to spend time with God? Maybe we need to drop some fruitless activities. Perhaps our activities are good, but maybe we need to refocus and make worshiping God the purpose behind those activities.

¹ <https://wheelsms.wordpress.com/2015/09/06/dont-settle-for-cheep-substitoots/>

² <http://www.firstcentralbaptist.com/sermons/gospelofmark.html>

³ The full text of this excerpt can be found in the Pastor's sermon notes.