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SERMON TITLE: **The Public Me and the Private Me**
The Life & Times of Jeremiah
SCRIPTURE: Mark 11:15-19 and Jeremiah 7:3-4
DATE: October 27, 2019
Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

Often, the worship service begins with a liturgy, a Psalm, to call you to worship. Sometimes those readings become rote. If the liturgy does not change much, you might think that the words are worship. You simply come here, say the words, and it's done. Nothing else is required.

But Jeremiah didn't believe so. He said it like this (7:4):
*Don't for a minute believe the lies being spoken here—
"This is God's Temple, God's Temple, God's Temple!"*

Evidently, those words meant everything would always be stable simply because it was God's temple and God would be there. *This is God's sanctuary, God's sanctuary, God's sanctuary.* But is that all there is to it? Do words alone signify God's constant presence?

Those of you who are astute Bible students, what is actually the Lord's temple?

Paul writes: "Don't you realize that *your body is the temple* of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

"This is God's Temple, God's Temple, God's Temple."

Once Jesus really annoyed the religious leaders when he claimed that he was going to tear down the Temple and in three days raise it up. He was actually talking about his body. (see John 2:19-22)

Jeremiah complicates their assumption about God's Temple by adding this (7:3):

*"Clean up your act—the way you live, the things you do—
so I can make my home with you in this place."*

Oh, it's all about the public me vs. the private me; what you say vs. how you live.

A man's mother raised him with these words: "Do as I say, not as I do."

He didn't think that was fair. His mother was a hypocrite.

Here's another one: Two brothers led self-centered, greedy lives. They were mean, intolerant crooks. When one of them died, the other one went to a minister to plan the funeral, "I'll pay you very well to say my brother was a saint." What's a pastor to do? Here's what the pastor said in his message: "I have to tell you the truth: this man who died was a liar, a bully, a cheat, and a thief. But compared to his brother, he was a saint."¹

Wonder if the pastor received his check?

Here's another observation. "A businessman well known for his ruthlessness once announced to Mark Twain, "Before I die I mean to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I will climb Mount Sinai and read the 10 Commandments aloud at the top." "I have a better idea," replied Twain. "You could stay in Boston and keep them."²

It's all about the public me vs. the private me; what you say vs. how you live.

When it was built, the temple signified a permanent home for God. King David said,
"My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great; *for the temple will not be for mortals but for the LORD God*" (1 Chronicles 29:1).

So David gave his son support to help him accomplish it. When it was finished,

[Solomon] knelt on his knees in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven. . . . 'Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O Lord my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you. *May your eyes be open day and night toward this house, the place where you promised to set your name, and may you heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. . . . And hear the plea of . . . your people Israel.*' (2 Chronicles 6:13, 19-21).

Let's hear what was going on in the temple when Jesus entered: Read Mk 11:15-19

¹ John Ortberg, *Who is this Man?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 116.

² Moody Bible Institute's *Today in the Word*, September, 1991, p. 32, found at <https://bible.org/illustration/ten-commandments>, accessed October 23, 2019.

Now does it come into focus? As in Jeremiah's time when he told the people, 'it's not about words, it is about inward change,' it meant the same to Jesus 600 years later. The people were outwardly compliant. They were going to Temple, but inwardly they were missing the point entirely.

It was like saying "I love you" but doing nothing to be faithful to that love.

They needed reform; they needed a revival.

True reform happens in the heart, and only God can see the heart.

Now I can end this sermon here. We all know this. Yet, the struggle is real. We are often selfish; we are mean sometimes, frequent hypocrites like these guys:

At an annual meeting of the American Heart Association, 300,000 physicians met to discuss how to keep hearts healthy by eating a low-fat diet. But all week they were seen at neighborhood fast food restaurants consuming bacon cheeseburgers, fries, steaks, shakes, just like the rest of us. When one cardiologist was confronted about being a bad example he replied, "Not me. I took my name tag off."³

There we are, in all our glory. John Ortberg writes: "The good person is the person whose heart—whose inner being—is bathed and pervaded by divine love. Therefore, the good person is not simply one who does good things; it is someone who genuinely wants to do good things."⁴

Last week we were in New York for a conference with a theater group. One of the entertainers was J. Mark McVey. Mark has played Jean Valjean in *Les Miserable* 3,200 times. He told us his testimony. When he started out, his singing meant everything. He is successful and has sung all across the United States, on Broadway, and abroad. He was raised a Christian, but something changed "Christianity as usual" for him.

He began his performance for us by saying "Jesus is number One" and sharing what changed him. It was his role as Jean Valjean. He could not understand Jean Valjean's devout commitment to raise Cosette after the death of her mother; to love her no matter what it cost him. Jean Valjean loved Marius, Cosette's boyfriend and future husband, as a son. This song is his prayer for Marius as he went off to fight the French Revolution. See VIDEO.⁵

As Mark McVey sang this song about his love for young Marius, the words and story of God's love came alive, and flooded over him as if Jesus was singing those words to him:

*God on high, hear my prayer.
In my need, You have always been there.
He is young, He's afraid. Let him rest, Heaven blessed.
Bring him home.
He's like the son I might have known
If God had granted me a son. . . .
And I am old and will be gone.
Bring him peace. Bring him joy.
He is young, he is only a boy.
You can take, You can give. Let him be, let him live.
If I die, let me die; let him live. Bring him home.*

In his work and in his life Mark McVey embodies the love that he sings about and gives all the glory to God.

Solomon saw God's hand in the work he did on the temple. When it was done, he prayed this way:

If your people Israel pray about their troubles or sorrow, raising their hands toward this Temple, then hear from heaven where you live, and forgive. Give your people what their actions deserve, for you alone know each human heart. Then they will fear you and walk in your ways. . . . In the future, foreigners . . . will come from distant lands when they hear of your great name and your strong hand and your powerful arm. And when they pray toward this Temple, then hear from heaven . . . and grant what they ask of you. In this way, all the people of the earth will come to know and fear you, just as your own people Israel do. They, too, will know that this Temple I have built honors your name. (2 Chronicles 6:29-33)

When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the . . . sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. The priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD's house. When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever" (2 Chron 7:1-3).

It is important to give; to serve; to be good; to worship. This all comes from the heart when you put Jesus first and pray, when you grasp what this sanctuary is all about.

Let your relationship with the Lord be first and your prayers in this place will be heard and answered to God's glory.

AMEN

³ Ortberg, 117.

⁴ Ibid., 119.

⁵ "Bring Him Home" with J. Mark McVey, <https://jmarkmvey.com/media.html>, accessed October 24, 2019.