



Abundant Life
COMMUNITY CHURCH



Each day this week, I (Gabe) will share a brief devotional- walking through some of the events of Holy Week, the days leading up to and including Jesus' death & resurrection, using some pictures from my trip to Israel last month.

A House of Prayer

Today is Holy Monday, the day we remember as the one on which Jesus overturned

tables and drove people out of the temple. I took the above picture at [the Teaching Steps](#), also called the Southern Steps, one of the places we know with certainty that Jesus stood. These steps stood at the main entrance of the 1st-Century temple, and it is where many rabbis (including Jesus) gathered to teach their students. Jesus would have walked up these steps on the Monday of Holy Week, as he entered the temple to make a bold statement about the religious climate of Jerusalem.

Take a few minutes to [read Mark 11:12-26](#).

Jesus' actions in the temple communicate his message clearly - he was fed up with the spiritual abuse taking place in the name of God, specifically in this great place. The temple was meant to be a house of prayer, a place for people to worship the true & living God, but it had become, as Jesus says, a den of robbers.

I want to draw your attention to the fig tree in the verses that bracket Jesus' time in the temple. In this bizarre story, Jesus curses a fig tree that is not bearing figs, even though it was not the season for figs. The next morning, the disciples notice that the fig tree is withered. This is a strange (if not troubling) story, until you understand [the symbolic significance of the fig tree](#) in Scripture. Jesus used the fig tree as a parable for the spiritual state of Israel, who was no longer bearing spiritual fruit. His message is simple - if God would judge a fig tree for failing to produce fruit out of season, then how much more will he judge those religious leaders who bear harmful fruit? In other words, his message is consistent with his actions in the temple.

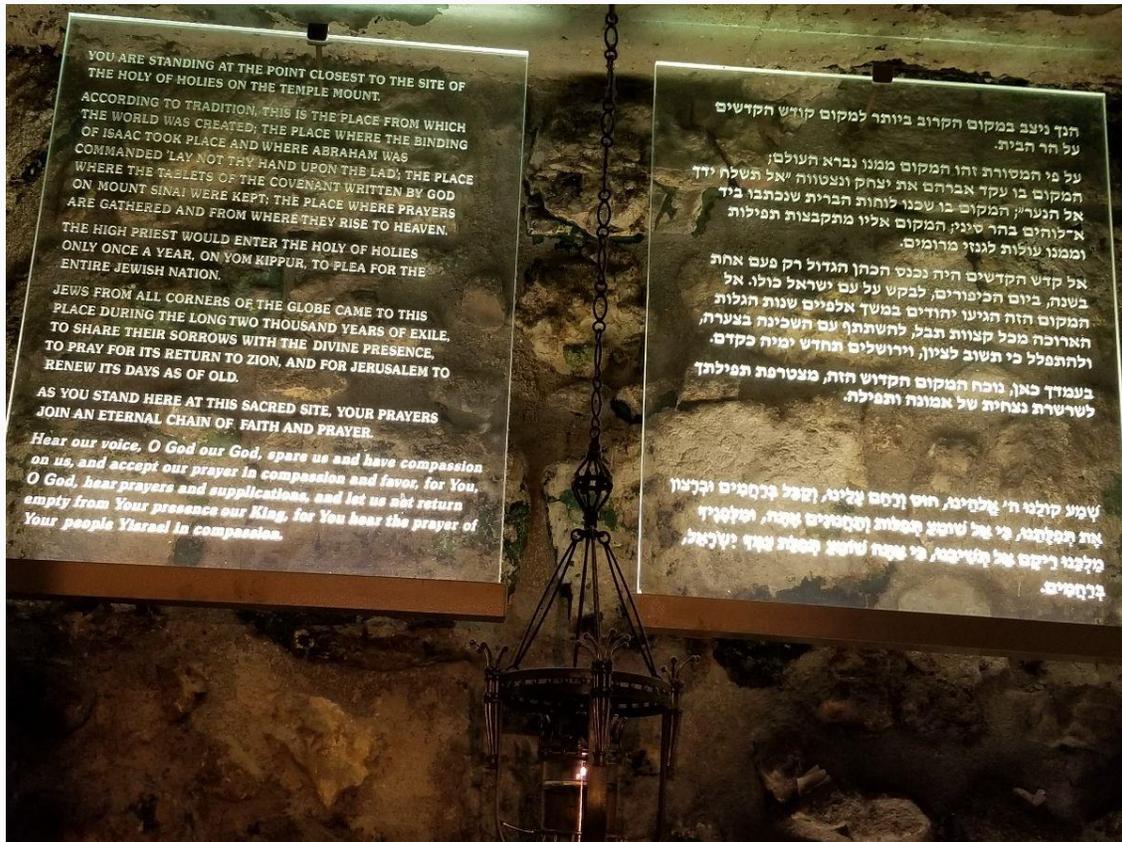
This passage helps us understand how Jesus moved so quickly from Palm Sunday, where he was welcomed as a king, to Good Friday, where he was crucified as a criminal. His mission was to usher in God's kingdom, which required reformation

of the religious system. The temple had become a den of robbers, when it was meant to be a house of prayer...and Jesus wanted all men and women, everywhere and at all times, to be able to worship God.

Jesus, our High Priest, secured this opportunity for us, as we see in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." He ensured that we don't need to go through the motions of religious tradition in order to experience God. He doesn't put conditions on your faith, like how much you give, or how often you pray, or how many people you serve. He simply wants to be with you. Take some time today to just be with God - no guilt, no shame, no obligation - and enjoy the fact that he delights in you.



The temple mount is huge. King Herod expanded it to approximately 36 acres, which means it occupies about 20% of the Old City of Jerusalem. This picture shows one of the courtyards, where today tens of thousands of Muslim pilgrims will gather several time a year, during their holy days.



This was a cool moment, walking through [the Rabbinical tunnels](#) and realizing we were near the site of the Holy of Holies.