

Trustworthy Hands (Week 5)

Luke 19:41-48; Matthew 21:18-19

OPEN

What do you think of when you hear the word: *institution*?

Do you think of this word more positively or negatively? Explain.

DISCUSS

One big idea: Institutions are the way that POWER is preserved and moves through time...we are to fight for the good of institutions.

What do you think of this idea? Can you think of good examples of institutional power?

Another big idea: Without "vital" institutions, power frequently stalls or becomes subject to corruption.

Do you agree? Why or why not?

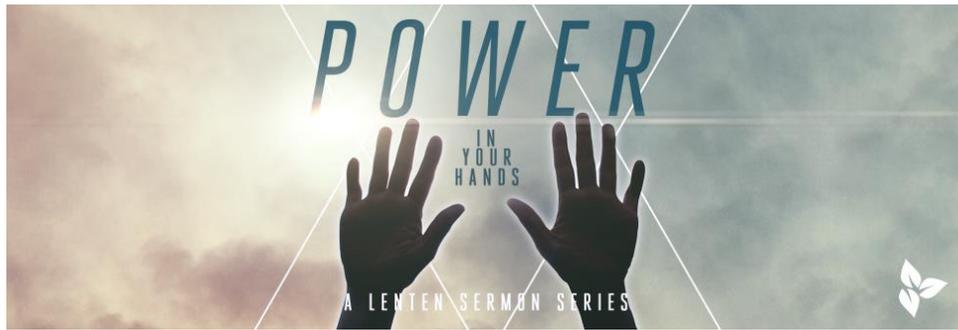
Read the Scripture passages above.

- Where do you see institutional breakdown in these verses? Are there other examples from Jesus' day where institutions were working against God's purposes? (Think of the context)
- What seems to have gone wrong, even with the Temple? How did Jesus respond? Do you think this reaction to extreme or appropriate? Explain.

Read and respond to the following quote:

"In Matthew's version of this same incident, the gospel writer follows with the story of Jesus' cursing of the fig tree that is bearing no figs (Matthew 21:19). Christ's action there suggests how upset God is when the things he has made for the flourishing of life no longer produce such life but simply take up resources.

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Institutions can be like that too. Our families, the church, industry, democracy, the justice system, healthcare, journalism, academia, the arts, and sports all eventually lose a sense of their role as bearers and builders of the divine image in people and this world...Sooner or later, every institution becomes about sustaining the status quo, maintaining the club, keeping the elites comfortable, suppressing the inconvenient people, instead of sharing power and advancing the commonwealth the way that God himself models.”

- What is the good value of the “world’s” various (and many) institutions?

Is the church *different* than other institutions in the world? Why or why not?

- What is the value of the church in the world? (Any other questions come to mind as you think of the church?)
- Many people have said, “The local church is the hope of the world.” Do you agree?

In which institutions do you see people placing the bulk of their hope?

The third big idea: God is a God who brings order out of chaos. He is a God who created for the purpose of meaning and flourishing. *God is looking for faithful TRUSTEES of institutions to reflect God’s glory of meaning and flourishing for the good of all.* Make no mistake, being a trustee is serious business for great is the impact of the institutions in which God has placed you.

Where are you a *Trustee*?

How can you be more of a trustee where God has you?

YOUR NEXT STEP...

- Reflect on the institutions to which you are directly connected. How are you helping these institutions thrive for good—honoring God’s intentions for flourishing and meaning in this world.
- Reflect on the role of the church in this world. Think of the church as more than an institution, but the very kingdom of God incarnate (present) in the world today. How are you helping the church thrive in your setting for the hope of the world?