



Church is a movement that includes

By Dave Parr

CHAPTER TWO.

An open movement. Matthew 21

This episode will help you **engage, reflect and respond** to Church is. We encourage you to explore each episode with friends - if you do, let us know! We'd love to hear about it and your thoughts and ideas.

Each episode has a companion video and each episode title mirrors one of its key themes. Thanks for downloading.

Companion video: churchis.co.uk/daveparr

Chapter: TWO of FOUR



W W W . C H U R C H . C O . U K



An open movement

Matthew 21 (NIV)

Jesus at the Temple



¹² Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³ “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’”

¹⁴ The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple courts, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they were indignant.

¹⁶ “Do you hear what these children are saying?” they asked him.

“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read,
“From the lips of children and infants
you, Lord, have called forth your praise’?”

¹⁷ And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany, where he spent the night.

Everything has changed.

In first century Jerusalem, the temple consisted of a series of courts that were considered increasingly holy as you moved towards the centre of the complex and to the Holy of Holies. In some ways it acted as a filtration system; the outer court of the Gentiles was open to anyone, Jew or Gentile. The next court was for Jews only and was as far as women could go. Then a court for men, a court for priests, a court that only the duty priest could enter and ultimately the Holy of Holies, which only the high priest was allowed to enter on the Day of Atonement. Disabled people weren't allowed into the temple complex at all.

The message was clear. God was more available to some than others.

The money changers feature heavily in this story and had dual roles – changing money to ensure it was appropriate for temple sacrifice and acting as bouncers to prevent undesirables getting in.

We've often turned this chapter into a story about Jesus' irritation at temple exchange rates – Jesus complaining about the price of temple coinage those days. But what if Jesus' message was really something different. Perhaps this was a stark demonstration that he had come to replace the temple. In turning the tables over, he was making a clear statement. The rules have changed. God is available to everyone and particularly those who are excluded or marginalised by society. Verse 14 tells us that, for the first time, 'the blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them.'

We're a Christ-centred community

Jesus doesn't come with boundaries. The question is not who's in and who's out. Instead Jesus calls us all to journey with him. To become more like him. To centre our lives around him and to throw the doors open.

Church is a community where everyone is counted in if they choose.

So for me church has to reflect this understanding. We shouldn't draw boundaries. Instead church should be an unbounded community that always seeks to draw another bigger circle to include people in. A community that supports and encourages anyone who chooses to go on the life-changing journey towards Christ.

Please continue to the next page for the discussion questions

Questions:

Following

- If church is a Christ-centred community, where are you on your journey to becoming like him? Are you moving closer in, are you static or are you walking in the other direction?

Church

- What boundaries are there in your church? They may be obvious or there may be subtle boundaries that others feel which you have not thought about before.
- What could your church do to break down these boundaries and barriers?

Action

- What implications does being a Christ-centred community rather than a bounded community have on the Church's mission?