

## The Mind of Christ - Lesson 25

August 21, 2019

Let's finish where we left off on the cleansing of the Temple going back to John 2:16-25 ... and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a place of business." <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me." <sup>18</sup> The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But He was speaking of the temple of His body. <sup>22</sup> So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

<sup>23</sup> Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. <sup>24</sup> But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, <sup>25</sup> and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

There are a couple of pretty significant points as we continue this thought. I want to go back to the statement that Jesus made in verse 16 where he said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise." Keep that in mind.

Then in verse 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house will consume me." Really concentrate on that, on the word "zeal" and the words "consume me". So, let's get into what He's talking about here. I'm going to go back to just a little bit of a repeat here on some of the things I said last time.

The second major piece is John 2:17 translated "*consume*" and means to be eaten up. Literally - "will *consume* me". It means to eat up or devour. Matthew 13:4 talks about, "and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up." The birds ate up the seed that fell on the pathway soil. Revelation 11:5 talks about the fire from the mouths of the two witnesses, "fire flows out of their mouths and devours their enemies." Luke 15:30 the older son accuses the younger son of devouring his father's wealth, "but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him." But instead of starving him, the father fed him his best fattened calf. And then in Matthew 24:14, a verse that is omitted in some of the Greek texts concerning "devouring widow's houses" It's not found in the earliest manuscripts but it is found in Mark 12:40 where he talks about the Scribes "who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation." I want you to get this idea of devouring widow's houses or consuming widow's houses. Here are these Pharisees that consume widow's houses.

Jesus is **consumed** with **zeal** for the House of God. So, we have in contrast here of two different ways of being **consumed**. That's what I want to get across here. There is a connection of what is going on in the cleansing of the Temple, so it's not just an 'interesting idea' of how the word is used in both places. There **is** a connection. So **zeal** for God's house **consumes** Jesus while the Jewish leaders are **consuming** the houses of widows. In a sense, there are houses being consumed in both places.

One writer suggests the Pharisees charged widows for their long prayers and thereby impoverished them. In other words, they said, ‘we will pray for you, and we’ll pray even a very long prayer if you pay us to do that.’ I know I mentioned this last week but I want to finish making this point. It’s much like the modern T. V. evangelists who take Social Security checks from widows with the hope, by the widows, that their lives are going to be better if they pay preachers to pray for them!

In Luke 20:47, you also find this idea there as well. (<sup>46</sup> “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets,)<sup>47</sup> who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”

There is a book that I referred to, “The Puritan Mind” by H. W. Schneider, (Jan 1, 1930), which mentions ‘the widow’s mite’. I didn’t read the entire book, but I read some excerpts from the book so I want to give it credit. There are thoughts in this book that suggest the widow is making gifts beyond their means. There seems to be a mismanagement of their funds by lawyers sponging off the hospitality of the widows. All of these are different ways in which they are being consumed.

You might even compare this with the idea of “Corban”, the loophole found in Mark 7:11. The idea of Corban was that if you had money but didn’t want to take care of your elderly parents, you could just “*dedicate* the money to God, and tell your parents that you don’t have any money left to take care of them. But you get to decide what you want to do with “God’s money”. It was a convenient loophole.

But also note that the story of the widow’s mite follows this idea of **consuming** widow’s houses. Here is the widow whose house is being consumed by Pharisees who are exploiting them in various ways, but the widow is spending her last dime, if you will, her last mite, for God’s house. She is consumed with **zeal** for the house of God. They’re consumed with **zeal** for the widow’s money and anything they can get out of her.

It’s just an interesting twist suggested by this story. “The Puritan Mind” book makes the point that this widow may be impoverished, a crime under Jewish Law **and** Christian Law and perhaps so even at the hands of the Pharisees, and in spite of being neglected and taken advantage of, she still has zeal for the Temple, the house of the Lord. One who has been **devoured**, is herself **devoured** by zeal for God’s house. It’s the switching around of things, and Jesus is very good at turning things upside down on people who are doing wrong.

Jesus, too, will be eaten up by the Jews. He will be consumed. And yet it is **zeal** for His Father’s house that **consumes** Him. So, you might ask the question, what consumes you? Are you being **consumed** by evil people, or are you being **consumed** by **zeal** for God? He does not confuse the religion of the Jews with His true devotion with, and to, His Father.

Paul also speaks of those being devoured by Christian leaders in 2 Cor. 11:20. “For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face.”

How do people will put up with that treatment thinking that somehow it is going to benefit them? In other words, they will put up with exploitation thinking that somehow it will benefit them. Who knows why they do that? But Paul contrasts those false apostles who preyed upon or **consumed** the Corinthians with the idea in 2 Cor. 12:15 that Paul himself expended himself for *their* souls. “I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls.” Paul allowed himself to be totally **consumed**, eaten up, or expended on their behalf. He did not **consume** them, but he allowed himself to be totally **consumed** for their benefit. That’s the idea that is going on here in Jesus’ thinking in the cleansing of the Temple.

The people in the Temple were being exploited ... being consumed by the businessmen who were making a profit off the people’s religion – their devotion to God. It’s interesting that all of this is in Jesus’ mind. It is the way He is looking at the current political and religious scene of His day. It just shows how different His thinking is over the ‘average’ leader.

Then there is the question of Jesus’ authority. That arose in this context. He did bold things like overturning the money-changers tables and driving out the animals. He did all those things and the religious leaders wanted to know why He thought He could do this. What gave Him the ‘**right**’? By what authority does He do these things? He was told that He needed to prove that He had the “**right**” to cleanse that House. They asked for a sign to prove He had the ‘right’. Even though He had done a miracle, they would continue to ask for additional credentials. I guess Jesus didn’t have a passport here valid enough for their satisfaction because they did not to allow him entry into their lives. It didn’t matter what credentials He presented to them; they were never good enough. They always needed one more piece of evidence.

Now *this* is an important point. The word “sign” is semeion (σημειον). This word was an indicator, an indication, or a sign of something *past*. Get this point. This is a find point: a sign is a sign of something past. I know it can be of something future like a sign on the road that says, “40 Miles to Tampa”. That is indication something that is in the future. But, a sign, typically in the way it is used in the New Testament Bible, is something that has already passed. So when the Grand Jury hands down an indictment, it is a signification of something that has already occurred in the past—a crime. The crime did not occur when the indictment came down. The indictment is the sign or indicator of the crime that happened in the past and there is enough evidence to hand down that indictment. And the indictment must correspond to the past event. You are indicted for something very specific rooted in your history.

Signs designate or distinguish. The sign for Judas was a kiss on the cheek designating Jesus as the One they were looking for. But the kiss was merely a sign of a previous friendship... of something that had already occurred in the past. The kiss would not have meant what it meant if it hadn’t been for the past relationship that he had with Jesus.

The sign of the covenant of circumcision ... and this is really important to understand the importance of a sign. So, when we think about circumcision, and even how the Jews looked at it as a means by which they could be saved ... that wasn’t even the way circumcision was looked at in the Old Testament. It was not the means of saving a little Jewish baby at eight days old.

In Romans 4:11, Paul tells us that [the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he \(Abraham\) had while he was uncircumcised.](#) Abraham was reckoned by God to be righteous in Genesis 15:6, *before* he was circumcised. [“Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness”](#). This was *before* he was circumcised in Genesis 17. The sign does not establish the righteousness of Abraham. Circumcision did not establish the fact that Abraham was righteous. The sign followed it and it marks it.

Historical sites are marked with signs. The sight was historical. Something significant happened there, perhaps long before the sign was ever put up. The sign doesn't establish the history, but it simply marks the history. Circumcision didn't *establish* righteousness, it *marked* the righteousness that Abraham already had when he put his faith in God ... in God's promise.

So the Jews seek signs, it says. The signs were more important to them than the event itself! But they never had enough signs to make them feel that they were on hallowed ground. It would be like Moses asking for another burning bush, and asking until the mountain was on fire, perhaps, and then saying, “Well, I don't know. Are you really sure that you're God?” There's never enough.

So, Paul uses the three-fold designation in 2 Cor. 12:12. [“The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by \*signs\* and \*wonders\* and \*miracles\*.”](#) This isn't in my notes but the signs, wonders and miracles that Paul performed did not establish his apostleship. He was already an apostle when he was designated an Apostle by God. God made him an apostle. The signs followed that. Gal. 1:1 [“Paul, an apostle \(not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead\).”](#) But the signs did not MAKE him an apostle. If that were the case, we have a problem.

If we go back to Moses, the signs that Moses performed did **not** make Moses the leader that God chose. They were simply an indicator of what God had already done. Remember Jannes and Jambres, the two magicians with Moses in Exodus. They did a couple of signs, too. {They are mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:8. [“Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith.”](#) This refers to *Exodus 7:11* where Moses was told “Take your staff and throw it down before Pharaoh, that it may become a serpent.” <sup>11</sup> [“Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts.”](#)} So, if signs establish a person's credentials, now we have Moses, Jannes and Jambres. Which one is really representing God?

Jesus even indicated that many of you will do miraculous things in my name and I will say ‘I never knew you’ in Matthew 7:22-3. [“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”](#)

Jesus asked one time of the Jews, ‘by whom do **you** cast out demons?’ in Matthew 12:27; and Mark 11:19.)

We get another indicator here that Paul had a distinguishing mark, if you will, or a sign in his handwriting in each of his letters. 2 Thess 3:17 says, “I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter; this is the way I write.” It set his handwriting apart from other people’s handwriting. He mentions that he had a distinctive handwriting. I don’t know what it was, but the handwriting didn’t establish who Paul was. Paul was who he was before he ever wrote anything. The handwriting was simply a sign of something to come.

So, in the Temple, they wanted some indication that Jesus had been given some previous authority. Signs throughout Bible history have been attributed to God, Jesus, and the Apostles. Sometimes they revealed future events, as Jesus told the Jews in the passage that ‘He would tear the Temple down and rebuild it in three days’. If He could do that, certainly He could cleanse the Temple. It’s like the time Jesus said, which is harder – to heal someone or to forgive them their sins? Which one is harder? When He forgave someone of their sins, they chastised Him for that. Which is harder to do? In Matthew 9:5, He said, “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, and walk’?” If I can raise somebody from the dead or heal somebody, does that establish the fact that I can forgive somebody of their sin? In other words, if I can tear the Temple down and rebuild it in three days, surely I can cleanse it.

**Mike:** I don’t know where it is, but somewhere it says that God had to exert great strength in raising Jesus. I try to wrap my head around God having to exert great strength.

**Rod:** It’s mentioned in one of the prayers in Ephesians. I think it’s Eph. 1:18-21, {“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you ... That power is the same as **the mighty strength** <sup>20</sup> **He exerted when he raised Christ from the dead** and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.”} It’s hard to understand exactly what that means in the scheme of things with God, but I would say that it was probably harder for God, in one sense, to forgive sins than it was to raise people from the dead because it required His Son’s death to forgive sins. He could raise the dead without sending His Son to die.

Okay - a few more things. Pronouns are important in Scripture. They stand in the place of nouns. If I said, “Look at that” and you didn’t know what “*that*” was, you wouldn’t know what to look at. So, when the Jews ask for a sign, Jesus said, “Destroy **this** Temple and in three days I will raise **it** up.” There are a couple of pronouns there. They thought He was referring to Herod’s Temple which had taken 46 years to build, but He was talking about the temple of His body which they would attempt to demolish three years later.

The word “destroy” is luo (λυο) meaning to loosen, destroy, dissolve, melt, or put off. It is used in **Ephesians 2:14**, “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has **destroyed** the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.” Often something has to be destroyed before something can be rebuilt. And **1 John 3:8** says, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to **destroy** the works of the devil.” **2 Peter 3:10-12** says, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar

and the elements will be **destroyed** with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be **burned up.**” It says that the world will be destroyed by fire. Some millennial folk say that it will be loosed or liberated from its bondage and will essentially be cleansed by fire and will be made new as often happens after a fire. The grass comes back greener than it was before.

But in Matthew 5:19 NASB, it speaks of annulling, loosing or destroying, referring to the least of God’s commandments. “**Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**”

The Temple, or the naos, (ναός), this is the Temple excluding the courtyards, means to dwell. Jesus promised to **raise** (εγείρω) “it” (the Temple) up in three days. The word he uses means to waken or to rouse from sleep, from sitting or from lying from disease or death. It is to arise from a pit or to erect a building. But we see that there are many other more primary meanings, but because they jumped to the conclusion (which is a cognitive extortion) that He was speaking of the Temple building in Jerusalem; that He meant to erect one. So they didn’t understand that, and they gave it a different meaning. So often one misunderstanding leads to another. They were taken aback because it had taken 46 years to build Herod’s Temple (government construction costs, overruns, extended deadlines etc.).

There is no indication in the text that Jesus corrected the misunderstanding, but the disciples stored this away and when Jesus was **raised** from the dead (same word) they put it all together. Jesus expects us to put things together. We must listen carefully to Him. He speaks no idle words; they are all pregnant with meaning and purpose.

For me, this story of the cleansing of the Temple is a key ★ event in revealing the mind of Christ. I guess this could be said of all the events, but this one has a number of components that are significant.

**First**, we have a word that captures the essence of Jesus’ personality and spirit. That word is **zeal**. Zeal captures the essence of Jesus’ personality and spirit. Jesus was a Zealot for the right cause. You might say that He was a religious zealot, but not to defend tradition or power structures; but a zealot for God. In other stories we will see Him as a zealot for people. He was a zealot for God **and** for people. His heart was aflame for the Father and His Father’s integrity.

Reading Psalm 69 in conjunction with this story is necessary to understand Jesus’ mindset. Jesus was intense. He was feeling it deeply. His Spirit was stirred up. What stirs our spirit? What is our passion? Whether we have passion and what we are passionate about tells volumes about a person. Jesus found a situation that was totally unacceptable, and He acted immediately to correct it. So this tells us something essential about the mind of Jesus.

The **second** aspect of the mind of Jesus revealed in this story was that He was bold, but he was measured in His response to the situation. We learn as much about Him from what He did **not** do, as from what He did. He made the whip or scourge, He swung it, He turned over tables, He let them know He meant business, but He did not physically hurt anyone.

There was no fire from heaven in the same way James and John wanted to do in Luke 9:54. We do see a similar spirit in Paul in Acts chapter 13. What good is zeal if we do not act at all, and what good are actions if they are counter-productive or inappropriate? There are things we can do in our zeal that would discount the zeal if we do it inappropriately!

**Thirdly**, Jesus articulated the bulls-eye of the matter in one sentence. In this case, He handed down an indictment. He wanted to put His actions in the context of a truth...a reality, in a scene in verse 16, “[Stop making My Father’s House a place of business ...](#) The indictment was that they were “*trespassing*” on the Father’s property. They did not have a permit from the Owner, and what they did while on that property was totally disrespectful to the Owner.

So many things fall into this category. Slavery, abuse and neglect, desecration of God’s Temple with drugs and alcohol, and ignoring those in spiritual and physical trouble – these should stir our spirits. But often, things that we are zealous about are not the things that God is zealous about. So, those are my thoughts on the cleansing of the Temple.

Before I move on, are there any thoughts or comments on the cleansing of the Temple?

Okay. We have a little time left so let’s go to the next section in John 2:23-25.

[Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding the signs which He was doing.](#) <sup>24</sup> But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, <sup>25</sup> and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

Let’s take that apart. It is certainly a precursor to what Jesus will do in Chapter 3 with Nicodemus.

[Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in or on His name.](#) On the contrary, Jesus was not entrusting Himself to them. What is the relationship between our believing in Him and His entrusting Himself to us? It is the same word. The word is Pisteuo, (πιστευο) meaning to believe, have faith in, or to entrust. They believed in Jesus but He didn’t believe in them.

We have an essential need in establishing our identity if we are to entrust ourselves to His name or authority. In other words, why would I entrust myself to someone who I did not know, in reality, could be trusted. I need to know that the one I am entrusting myself to is capable of honoring that trust. So they have to determine, “Who is this man?” That was always been the essential question in the Book of John particularly. Over and over again it is, who is this guy? In John 20:31 he says, “[but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.](#)” As we read, we see various answers being given. But that was essential in determining whether or not they were going to trust Him. We see that in John 6:67 when Jesus asked, the twelve, “[are you going to go away too?](#)” Simon Peter answered Him in verse 68, “[Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.](#)” In other words, if Jesus is the One who has eternal life, if He is the possessor of eternal life, Peter realizes that there is no one else to go and nowhere else to go.

It is only under the authority of **His** name that we have authority, meaning credentials, or standing or identity, and that is a big distinction to make. He has authority in and of Himself. We only have authority for anything that we do because it has been conferred on us from Him. It is not inherent in us; it has been given to us. His authority was given to Him by His Father but it is inherent in Him because He is God. But we don't inherently have authority for anything. God even gives us permission to breathe, to live, to exist. We have no authority in and of ourselves but God gives us authority in the name of Jesus.

Since all authority is in the name of Jesus, he has no need to entrust Himself to us. He does not gain his authenticity from us or from our testimony of Him. We'll see later on in John 5 when He's going through the testimony of His Father and the testimony of John the Baptist, he says I don't need a testimony. I only give it to you because you need it. Verses 36-37  
“But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me. <sup>37</sup> And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me.”

Jesus is saying that it helps our faith to hear the testimony of others but He doesn't need it to establish Himself. It doesn't add anything to who Jesus is just because I say I believe in Him, or that I confess that He is the Christ, the Son of God. Whether I say it or not doesn't change the fact that He **is**. He is the great I AM. I AM THAT I AM.

He establishes us, we do not establish Him. He isn't entrusted because of His signs. They may have *believed* in Him because of His signs but what sign could *we* give to Him, or others, that would make them entrust themselves to us? What possible sign could I possibly give to Jesus so that He could believe in me? All humans are essentially unworthy of trust because we have each shown our ability to fail and have no way to absolutely promise our success in the future.

Jesus has both a flawless past and the power to fulfill promises in the future – and one of those was to rebuild the Temple in 3 days – the resurrection. If Jesus knew better than to entrust Himself to man, how can we do so? By implication, if Jesus wouldn't entrust Himself to us or to any man, why should I entrust **myself** to any man, or any person? Even in marriage ... am I entrusting myself to someone in marriage?

First, what does it mean that Jesus did not entrust Himself to man? Man could put complete trust in Jesus for all areas of life, knowing He was sufficient to meet our needs with right motive, and with appropriate response. Other people, no matter how well-meaning, no matter how skilled, cannot meet the same needs in the same way. But it is precisely because of our relationship with entrusting ourselves to Him, that we can, to some degree, entrust ourselves to others, knowing that Jesus will be faithful to us even when we run into bumps in our relationship with others.

In other words, if I am going to entrust myself to some other person and they are going to entrust themselves to me, like in marriage, (Brenda and I entrusting ourselves to one another), if I am going to establish my ability to do that, and she is going to establish her ability to do that, to be someone worthy of trust, just on our own merits, we're going to have a tough sell.

If I am going to establish my ability to do that, or she is going to establish her ability to do that, (be someone worthy of trust just *on our own merits*), we're going to have a tough sell. We might be able to do it by saying, "Well, you have a proven track record or history, you never killed anybody; you're not an ax murderer, (and we can list all the things they **haven't** done), but if you're looking for somebody who is absolutely, totally trustworthy, you won't find it in any other person. It just cannot be found in another person. But the fact that I entrust myself to Jesus, that I believe in Him, I entrust myself to Him, adds force to all of the trust relationships that I enter into with anybody else in the world. So if someone says to me, 'why should I trust you', I think the best answer that I can give them is, "Because I trust Jesus." Because I have entrusted myself to Him; because I trust Him, and because I believe in Him, that makes a difference in my life. That gives you, at least, the greatest possibility of trusting me. But that's a trust that we need to be very careful not to violate, because we are **doing something in the name of Jesus**. Now it becomes very, very serious because not only is our integrity at stake, but His integrity is at stake as well. We are saying that His influence over us is so strong that He is going to make us a person who can be trusted. But if in fact, we consistently violate that trust with another person, they are going to think, "Well, I guess either Jesus doesn't have very much influence over you, or He's not very powerful, He's not very strong, or maybe you are just telling me a fib. You don't really trust Him at all, do you? You have a fake relationship with Him."

I think this balance of relationship is essential to our spiritual and emotional health. So the reason we can join together in a family can be on the basis of many things, but if it's a Christian family, it's a family where every person in the family is trusting in Jesus and you have a bond that is very strong within that family. In the church, if everybody is trusting in Jesus, it has a bond that causes us to be able to trust one another. But if you remove that, we would end up being skeptics and always suspicious. We'd think, "Now, I don't know about you. I'm not sure I can trust you."

I tend to want to believe a car salesman who is a Christian, as opposed to one who I don't know if he's a Christian or not ... or any other field. I want a doctor who is trusting Jesus; Someone higher than himself. I think we can glean that from this. It's us to Jesus. We are entrusting ourselves to Jesus. We can entrust ourselves from one person to another, but Jesus doesn't entrust Himself to us, because there is really nothing that He gains from that.

Does the Bible ever say God or Jesus, "Trust us?" He may entrust a job to us. He might entrust a message to us. But is this different than entrusting Himself to us? And if God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, wanted to entrust themselves to us, how could they? How could they do that? How could I take care of God or meet His needs?

The reason John gives for Jesus not entrusting Himself to men is because He knew all men and He knew what was **in** man. What did Jesus know was in man that makes us untrustworthy? Look at our history... our personal history and the history of mankind.

The human race has not proved itself, in general, to be a very trustworthy race of people. I might make a better argument that animals are more trustworthy than people because animals do what God programmed them to do.

Well, the book by William Conrad, “Lord Jim” if you are into books that were written about 150 years ago... I’ve read several of his books and he is masterful in his description of things; of painting pictures. If you don’t want to read the book, you can probably find an old movie called “Lord Jim”. But the story about Lord Jim is typical of this internal struggle of man. Jim was tormented throughout his life by the event of abandoning ship, and leaving women and children to die in the sea.

The ship was bringing a load of Muslims from one place to another, women and children mostly, and the ship began to take on water. The crew of Englishmen jumped ship. Jim was tormented by that all of his life—of jumping ship and watching all of those women and children die in the sea.

Later in life, to prove that there was something more noble in him, he struggled to prove that his life didn’t have to be defined by that one act of cowardice. The rest of the story is about him trying to prove that there was something nobler in him than what happened on that ship; that he really was not the monster that he was made out to be. Because he underwent trial, he was banished, he ended up going to a very remote part of the world, I think somewhere in Asia, and he tried to redeem himself by becoming the defender of those people even putting himself in harm’s way. He defended those people to show that he really wasn’t a monster.

So man struggles to prove to the world that they are not as horrible as they seem to be. But the words of Nathan, the prophet ring in most, if not all, of our ears, “Thou art the man!” (2 Samuel 12:7). So Romans 8 makes it clear that man is flesh and spirit, all that is noble and right resides in us, because we are created in God’s image; but we also bear the image of Adam, and in our own flesh we do not do what we intend always.

Our new relationship with Christ and with His indwelling Spirit tips the scales on personal integrity, but we ride on His coattails and sail by the wind of His Spirit. To face the reality that Jesus cannot trust me as much as I can trust Him is difficult. I want our relationship to be mutually beneficial. I would hope I could be as useful to Him as He is to me. But it will never be.

I need Him to exist and to live – to really live. He does not need me, and that is tough to swallow. I want to believe that he *needs* me. He *wants* me and He *chooses* me, and He *seeks* me and He *loves* me, but He does not **need** me to make Him complete. I must have Him to be complete. I know what is in Jesus. He knows what is in man; I know what is in Jesus. He has consistently proven it. He has never wavered in His faithfulness. His integrity is impeccable, flawless and excellent. Mine, not so much, as we say. I must be content with this unequal yoke but rejoice that He will always yoke up with me.

Now, think about the story of Nicodemus over the backdrop of what we just learned tonight. That is our next study. Here is Nicodemus coming to Jesus – a religious leader probably with a higher estimate of himself than he should. He thinks he is worthy of a relationship with Jesus and Jesus strips that away quickly. Nic has to realize that Jesus doesn’t really need him, but he surely needs Jesus. He needs to realize that and he will come to where we came tonight. I don’t think it’s a mistake that we have these stories back to back, or that the story of the widow’s mite is so close to the Pharisees’ devouring of widows’ houses.