

Sunday Update
7th March 2021

John 2:13-25

13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. 15 So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. 16 To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!' 17 His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

18 The Jews then demanded of him, 'What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?' 19 Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.' 20 The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?' 21 But the temple he had spoken of was his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

23 Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. 24 But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. 25 He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.

Have you ever visited a temple when you've been on holiday? What was your impression of that temple? I'm not sure that I've visited any temples that are still in use; I visited a few ruined ones in Cambodia, at the ancient site of Angkor Wat, where the spong trees are growing through the walls; mind you, there are a few Buddhist monks there so maybe they are still places where people go to worship. Temples are places where God/gods and people meet – that's the thinking behind a temple; it is the place where people go to meet with their god, to worship, to pray, to encounter the divine, away from the run of the mill, noisy, ordinary life. These encounters are meant to lift the spirit and give inspiration and energy for living life again. If they are anything like the tourist-attraction churches and cathedrals, there will be a gift shop in the corner where people can buy souvenirs of their visit, some of which are tackier than others.

The Temple in Jerusalem was the place where people went to meet with God. This was the third temple in the city: the first was built by Solomon, the story told in 1 Kings, chapters 6-8 and 2 Chronicles 3,4; it was destroyed in 587BC when Nebuchadnezzar looted, sacked and destroyed the whole city. The Second Temple was built around the time of Nehemiah, when the city and the wall were also being rebuilt by the people returning from exile. The third temple, the one in our story this week, was called Herod's Temple, the building of which began in 19BC; it was barely finished in AD64 when it was destroyed by the Roman army in AD70. Some references you will read call Herod's Temple the Second Temple because references to the Nehemiah temple are sketchy. The only remnant of these temples in Jerusalem is the Western Wall, the Wailing Wall, which is not part of the Temple itself but is part of the wall round the Temple Mount from the days of Herod's Temple. The site of the Temple itself is now occupied by the Islamic shrine known as the Dome of the Rock.

In Bible times, the Jews would make special pilgrimages to visit the temple for three great feasts each year: for the Passover, for Pentecost, and for the Feast of Tabernacles. The city would be crowded with visitors for these great occasions, with people coming from near and far to celebrate and to worship God in the Temple. Each of these great feasts marked an event in the history of Israel: the Passover reminded them of their escape from Egypt, Pentecost was also the harvest thanksgiving, and the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) reminded the people that they spent 40 years in the desert living

in tents. Each of these festivals was also meant to be an opportunity for the people to celebrate the presence of God with them in the present. *“When can I go and meet with God...?” (Psalm 42:2)* is the plaintive cry of someone who is remembering days past when he could go to the temple for worship, days that are now denied to him; going to the temple and its festive throng was a time to go to meet with God. The Temple was the place where people encountered God in worship and in prayer.

Today’s story is the first of three Passover visits that Jesus possibly makes to the Temple. He arrives expecting a place where the atmosphere leads Him to worship and to pray. He finds something very different. Those coming from a distance needed a place where they could buy their sacrifices rather than bring their gifts with them over a long distance; so there are market stalls selling sheep, cattle and doves to the worshippers to take into the temple as sacrifices. There was a temple tax to pay: everyone who came to these great feasts had to pay the temple tax, but it had to be paid with the correct kind of money, rather than the ordinary change from their purses and pockets. There were people appointed as money-changers, ready to take your ordinary coins and turn them into temple money and from other places it seems as if they were cheating people by their extortionate exchange rates.

I wonder what makes you angry. The sights that Jesus saw and the noise that Jesus heard made Him angry; *“How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market!” (verse 16)* The noise and the smell of the animals was not the atmosphere conducive to worship, so Jesus drove them out of the Temple; *“He scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables.” (verse 15)* What should have been a place for worship and prayer was now a market. People who longed to be there for the presence of the Lord, would have been disappointed and let down. Far from the place of prayer, here was a superficial place, giving lip-service to its real purpose. The presence of God was lost in the melee of the market; the quiet place to pray was lost! Jesus is angry: something so important in the life of the people is being lost and people are not able to encounter God. In His anger, He overturns the tables and chases the market-stall holders out of the courtyard.

Christianity doesn’t have temples. Jesus said *“destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days... The temple He had spoken of was His body.” (verses 19,21)* We don’t need a temple to go to in order to encounter God; the “place” where God and humanity come together is Jesus Himself. He is both the Son of God and a real human being; He is the “temple” in that sense. When we want to go to meet with God, we look to Jesus, because He brings the presence of God into our lives. His body was “destroyed” when He died, but on the third day, He was raised from the dead, making these words come true. We don’t make sacrifices anymore, offering animals or grain to God as part of worship; Jesus offered the sacrifice of Himself on the cross and that sacrifice is enough for all of us, for all time.

Our church buildings are places where the Church meets for worship, places where we meet to praise God and to pray and to listen for His word; but because of Jesus, we can meet with God anywhere, and praise Him, pray and read His word anywhere. Jesus is the One who connects us with God; we are joined with God in Him and by faith. The temple He visited had lost that sense of “encounter”; its worship was superficial, and its prayer almost gone. We are denied access to our buildings for now, but we are not denied access to God; because of Jesus we can praise God, pray and listen for His word; find a quiet space today and meet with God, and find grace, love and hope for your lives!

Prayer: Father, thank You that You promise to be with us; thank You that in Jesus, God and humanity come together, Jesus is the Son of God and a real human being; thank You that Jesus has opened the way for us to meet with You in praise and prayer and listening for Your word. “When can I go to meet with God...?” Lord, may we find You each day; help us to take time to praise You, to pray, to listen for Your word in reading the Bible; help us to have the sense of God with us each and every day.

*Day by day, dear Lord of you
Three things I pray:
To see you more clearly,
To love you more dearly,
To follow you more nearly,
Day by day.*

Please take time during the week to pray for the people referred to in these topics:

- For people who are searching for God, looking for meaning and purpose in life, looking for peace or hope, looking for a sense of being loved and cared for; help them to find these gifts with You through Jesus Christ.
- For those who have taken *TryPraying* booklets from the box outside the church building, that they will read and make good use of these booklets; may they encounter God in such a way that leads them to faith in Jesus.
- For people who have contracted Covid and are in hospital, that they make a good recovery; those NHS staff who are caring for them, under pressure by the numbers of people in hospital and trying to manage the care they provide.
- For people who mourn because a loved one has died; help them to find comfort and peace.
- For the roll-out of the vaccine to be efficient and effective, reaching the people who need it most; for those waiting for the letter; for the vaccine to make people safe, as promised.
- For people who are isolated again by lockdown, spending time on their own again and feeling lonely; for people in care homes, again cut off from family and friends, and the staff who care for them.
- For schools: pupils at home and some in schools; for families trying to manage their children and helping them to take part in learning however it is delivered; for teachers working in new ways and finding that very demanding.
- For businesses that are shut: the pubs and hotels, hairdressers, and others; for those who own these businesses and it is their livelihood; for those who work and are again on furlough; for the gaps left in the social interaction of many people, adding to their sense of isolation.
- For Churches, with buildings again closed; help them to care for all of their people; may the technology be a lifeline for lots of people; help churches across Scotland to be a light in their community and share the light of Jesus with others.
- For people we know...
- This week, take time to think about these words and pray them into your own heart: *“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)*

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love.

Praise my soul the king of heaven	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyRIVbdsi4c
From the rising of the sun	From The Rising of the Sun To The Going Down of the Same OLPS ODCD 2018 - YouTube
Behold the lamb (communion hymn)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACHPwx7EGQA
Ye gates lift up your heads	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRMImZyfseg
When I survey the wondrous cross	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_fvFfPqjO4

Remember the prayer e-mail line at prayerjgpc@gmail.com

Some other resources:

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the “sermons” tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – www.jgpc.org.uk
- If you have a smartphone, a tablet or an i-pad, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)
- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#

DAILY BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS - New issues of “**Word For Today**” and “**Word For You Today**” Booklets for February, March and April are now available. Please contact Michael Merriman who will be delighted to arrange copies. Other Bible Study materials are also available with Ian Aitken. **Let the Bible feed you.**

Communion – this Sunday we are going to celebrate Communion as part of our service; if you want to take part, then please bring some bread with you and some wine, juice or water, so that you can eat and drink with everyone else at the appropriate time.

trypraying

Over the past few years our Church family have actively supported the “trypraying” campaign both financially and prayerfully, contributing to both the advertising campaign on buses or outside our church building and making available the trypraying booklets to “people who don’t do church”, encouraging them to start their journey of faith and try praying.

During this difficult year almost a hundred of the trypraying booklets have been taken from the box attached to the railing outside the church. Hopefully they have helped bring some light, hope and peace into the lives of those in our community who picked one up.

For 2021, the trypraying campaign is wanting to adapt and try something new, to take the campaign where they know people will be - on their computers and phones. The average user spends nearly two hours on social media each day.

By investing in the setup, content and management of new social media profiles, they will be building a new platform for the long term, making this and future campaigns reach more people than ever. This will largely target Millennials and Generation Z, using social media to “do” ministry and not just “promote” ministry.

A creative idea being considered is trypraying live. This would turn the seven day trypraying guide into a live stream on You Tube guiding users to think and pray along with the video, asking questions or for prayer from the team using the live chat.

Raising the £24000 needed to run these social media platforms for a year and create quality videos would be an amazing blessing. Later in the month we will be raising some money for trypraying, so watch this space.

Jesus goes to the Temple

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Loving God, thank you for being in our lives, for walking with us, for helping us. Thank you for guiding us as we try to figure out the best way to live and the choices we should make. Thank you for loving us and showing us that love every day in different ways. We gather now to remember who you are. Amen.



Question...



When was the last time you were angry about something, or felt something was unfair?

What did you do?

Challenge...

What do you think the ideal church looks like? What's important and what's not? Is it just a building?



Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in John 2:13-22. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage. This video may help too:

<https://www.bible.com/videos/25299-cleaning-the-temple>

Talk together...



- Does anything surprise you in the story?
- Why do you think Jesus was so angry?

The Temple was the place where people came to worship God. It's where they would make animal sacrifices to receive God's forgiveness. During this visit, Jesus saw God's home being treated like a marketplace. Animals were being sold at unfair prices, money was being exchanged and people were being overcharged. Does this sound right to you?

- What places are special to you and why?
- How would you feel if someone spoke about those places being destroyed?
- What are some of the things that you see in the world which are wrong and make you feel angry? Is there anything you could do to help those situations?

We don't have a Temple nowadays. We do have a church building but really we are the church, we are the place where God lives, through his Holy Spirit. (See 1 Corinthians 3:16!)

- What things in our lives do we need to "clear out" to help us be closer to God?

Play together...

Play a game of Jenga. If you don't have this, try to build the tallest tower you can out of things you have around you.

Make something...

Sometimes we get caught up in how we should or shouldn't act or whether we're doing the right things; but God loves us for who we are and there's nothing we can do that will make him love us any more or less than he already does. Find a stone and decorate it with a heart shape and the words "God loves you". Put it somewhere you'll see it a lot and every time you look at it remember the truth of those words. If you can't find a stone, make a poster or card to display somewhere.

Do something...

Are there things in your home you don't need, want or use anymore? Toys, clothes, food, books...? Why not have a bit of a spring clean this week and get rid of some of those things. You could donate them, sell them, gift them. You could make a difference to someone else by tidying!

Pray together...

Dear God, Thank you for the story of Jesus clearing the temple.
Thank you, God, that you care about justice. Help us to stand up for what is right and speak out when we see things that are not fair. Show us the areas where we need to stand up for fairness and justice in our world today. Help us to make our churches places of justice and righteousness. God, show us what things in our lives need to change so we can be closer to you and more like you. Amen.



Praise together...

[This little light of mine](#)



[Be still for the presence of the Lord](#)