

East Durham Methodist Circuit:
On-line Service for 7th March 2021

compiled by Rev Alf Waite, Heidi Ure and Aidan Tasker.

Theme: You are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Call to worship:

Lord, we come to you this day with so many things laying claim to our lives, our hearts, and our spirits. Open our ears and our hearts to hear your words of healing love. Prepare us to be faithful disciples for you. For we ask this in Jesus' Name.
Amen

Hymn: 10,000 Reasons

Matt Redman

**Bless the Lord O my soul
O my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
O my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name**

1. The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes **Bless the
Lord...**

2. You're rich in love
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great
And Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons
For my heart to find **Bless the
Lord...**

3. And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near
And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore. **Bless the
Lord...**

Prayers of Praise and Confession:

Almighty God, you have set the whirling cosmos in motion and called all creatures into being.

All that exists speaks of your majesty, yet no detail misses your care and attention.

You know each of us by name, and make yourself known to those who seek you.

Your wisdom delights the human heart and purifies the soul.

We gather to enjoy your presence with us, and to listen for your Word for our times and our lives.

God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, to you alone all worship, honour and glory are due, this day and every day, now and always.

God of majesty and mercy, we are aware that you are present here and everywhere, drawing near to us.

Yet we confess we are often distracted from your presence. Many things compete for our attention.

We are tempted to seek things that cannot truly satisfy. We envy those who are successful in the world's terms, and so pursue our own desires, without questioning the cost to the earth or those in need.

Forgive us, O God.

Send us the Holy Spirit to awaken us to your purposes and pursue them with renewed commitment, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Let us now say **The Lord's Prayer** together:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done - on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
For ever and ever.**

Amen

Hymn: Amazing grace

John Newton / Chris Tomlin

1. Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

**My chains are gone
I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, Amazing grace**

3. The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

My chains are gone...

My chains are gone...

4. The Earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, Who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
You are forever mine

Reading: Psalm 19

Father God, we thank you for your creation; we marvel at the stars and moon by night. We delight in the sun and clouds by day. Above all we admire your wisdom.

We thank you for giving us your law and instruction. Your advice lights our ways and shines on our paths. Your law is perfect. Perfect, Lord, for it revives the soul.

Your instructions are trustworthy, Lord, Trustworthy, Lord, and they make the simple wise. Your standards are right; not only right, Lord, but they give joy to our hearts.

Your commands are radiant and they give light to our eyes.
Your guidance is sure and it is altogether sound.
Your law is more precious than gold, more precious than much pure gold.

Your law is sweeter than honey; sweeter than the honeycomb.
Lord, you are our rock. Lord, you are our rock and our Redeemer.

Hymn: **So will I (100 Billion) Joel Houston, Michael Fatkin, Benjamin Hastings**

1. God of creation there at the start
Before the beginning of time
With no point of reference you spoke to the dark
And fleshed out the wonder of light.

**And as You speak a hundred billion galaxies are born
In the vapour of Your breath the planets form
If the stars were made to worship, so will I
I can see Your heart in everything You've made
Every burning star a signal fire of grace
If creation sings Your praises, so will I**

2. God of Your promise you don't speak in vain
No syllable empty or void
For once You have spoken all nature and science
Follow the sound of Your voice.

**And as You speak a hundred billion creatures catch Your breath
Evolving in pursuit of what You said
If it all reveals Your nature so will I.
I can see Your heart in everything You say
Every painted sky a canvas of Your grace
If creation still obeys You, so will I, so will I, so will I**

If the stars were made to worship, so will I
If the mountains bow in reverence, so will I
If the oceans roar Your greatness, so will I
For if everything exists to lift You high, so will I
If the wind goes where You send it, so will I
If the rocks cry out in silence, so will I
If the sum of all our praises still falls shy
Then we'll sing again a hundred billion times.

3. God of salvation you chased down my heart
Through all of my failure and pride
On a hill You created the Light of the world
Abandoned in darkness to die.

**And as You speak a hundred billion failures disappear
Where You lost Your life so I could find it here
If You left the grave behind You, so will I.
I can see Your heart in everything You've done
Every part designed in a work of art called love
If You gladly chose surrender, so will I.**

I can see Your heart, a billion different ways
Every precious one, a child You died to save
And if You gave Your life to love them so will I
Like You would again a hundred billion times
But what measure could amount to Your desire?
You're the One who never leaves the one behind

Reading: John 2:13-22 Jesus Clears the Temple Courts New International Version

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! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."^l

¹⁸ The Jews then responded to him, "What 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 They 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.

Message: Stop turning my Father's house into a market: John 2:16b

John places the incident in the temple about 3 years earlier than the other gospel writers. It is set at the start of Jesus' ministry rather than at the beginning of the last week of Jesus life, where we are more used to thinking about the clearing of the temple.

There is very strong evidence that the author of the gospel is John the Son of Zebedee, the brother of James. The gospel is certainly written by someone who was an eyewitness to the events. But also, someone who has been a faithful disciple over the years and is reflecting over his years with Jesus and his years as a leader in the church. A man wise in years who is preparing to leave his earthly ministry and wants to leave a gospel to inspire the coming generations.

Placing the temple incident early in the gospel is part of his asking of the big questions about God's relationship with his creation. Here he is asking, what is your heart like? Is it pure? Fulfilling the purpose, it was made for? The 'heart' in scripture isn't just the organ that pumps blood round our bodies - but the core of a person, who and all they are.

I need to explain the progression of thought in the scriptures concerning the **temple**. Jesus calls the temple, 'His Father's House'. It was believed to be the place where God dwelt, behind the curtain in the Holy of Holies. It was where people went to meet with him. During the wilderness experience and the early years in the promised land He was in a tent, the Tabernacle. King David wanted to build a permanent home for God but was not allowed to, it was God's call to his son Solomon. When built, God filled it with His presence as Israel moved away from God it went into decay. It was rebuilt and took up its place in the heart of Israel's worship again. The temple that Jesus went into was the third build, rebuilt by king Herod. As we read it had become corrupted again and the place was a marketplace. This story is not about church jumble sales though, but about the fact that God was displeased that people were being cheated, having to buy Temple Coins to buy their sacrifices. Jesus saw this as an affront to His Father and he drove them out.

In the gospels, thinking about the temple moves from that building to Jesus being the temple. The fullness of God was in Him. Jesus isn't talking about the building when He says, "Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days." If He was it was well foolish, no one would take that seriously. It had taken 46 years to build it. Rather He is speaking of His resurrection when that came. John setting out the big theme of death and resurrection that would redeem humankind. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

After that, the meaning of temple changes again, it moves from Jesus to His disciples. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your bodies." We are the temple of God as He dwells in us by the Holy Spirit. As we walk around the earth, we are the presence of God today.

So, the physical temple became defiled at different times in its history as the people moved away from God. A sign that the relationship was broken. Note again it was humanity that changed. At the time of Jesus, it was defiled. Those who were responsible for running it ran it with profit and control on their minds. They loved the finance it attracted and the control it gave them over people. Heaping rule on rule on them. They were walking a fine line because they were under the control of the Romans. The last thing they needed was someone upsetting the status quo and disrupting their comfortable life. They had a passion for the place, the temple but no passion for God, for what He wanted.

There is a danger here for us and one that the church has suffered over the years. We are more concerned about our buildings than we are for the purposes of God. Covid 19 has driven us out of the buildings and we miss being there. We cannot really say that the internet is the answer because it has also highlighted our need to be in the physical company of other humans. The building should not be the catalyst for our faith but the desire to see people saved, brought into that loving relationship for which Jesus died. Is that our passion?

Jesus was tempted. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin." (Hebrews 4:15). He was tempted, but did not sin so the presence of God could - and continues to - shine from Him. Now though, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we can be defiled when we give into temptation that displaces God's number one place in our lives. I think of that little chorus, 'Turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.' The problem of temptations is that they can be good things ambition, providing for your family, keeping healthy, relationships, serving God and I say nothing of the debase things that Paul would list to some of his churches, greed envy, hatred, jealousy, sexual sin. The Roman Catholics have 7 deadly sins. Jesus would drive them out of our lives.

When Jesus cleansed the temple, he did it in the authority of His Father, remember it was his Father's House. It wasn't a rash spur of the moment thing but calculated and prepared for the event. He platted a whip as He gazed over the scene before Him, the temple defiled. His preparation to cleanse us first meant Him going to the cross to die in our place, dealing with our sin. Then coming to live in us and giving us time and the power to have pure motives in our living, surrendering the whole of ourselves to His will.

Where does Jesus fit in your world? Is He the light that shines out of you, like the morning star? Or is He a sideline to what you think is important, which in the end will always be found wanting?

Amen

Intercessions: from Stages on the Way

Wild Goose Worship

Lord Jesus Christ, we pray to you because you were tempted like us. In all things yet did not submit;

Because you have promised to come to the help of those who, in every age, are put to the test; and because we are not exempt from the subtle attraction of what is wrong and what is evil therefore we pray to you.

Silence.

We call you to where, in our lives, we exploit our abilities purely from personal gain, and let the human gifts, which were meant to illuminate the world, light up no more than our own vanity.

Silence.

We call you to where, in our lives, we have a show of our religion and made faith a means of attracting to us, at the cost of distracting from you.

Silence.

We call you to where, in our lives, another god, more to our liking, is the object of our fawning., the recipient of our time, attention, or worship.

Silence.

For it is in these places in our lives that we threaten to desert you, the one who has chosen us and who in the wilderness, at the Temple and on the mountain top showed there was a better way.

So we turn from our seeking after selfish comfort, we turn from our inclination to false piety, we turn from our preference for petty loyalties. From these we avert our gaze, turning our faces towards you, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Hymn: **Let Him to who we now belong** Charles Wesley **StF 557**

1. Let Him To Whom We Now Belong
His Sovereign Right Assert,
And Take Up Every Thankful Song,
And Every Loving Heart.

3. Jesus, Thine Own At Last Receive!
Fulfil Our Hearts' Desire,
And Let Us To Thy Glory Live,
And In Thy Cause Expire.

2. He Justly Claims Us For His Own,
Who Bought Us With A Price;
The Christian Lives To Christ Alone,
To Christ Alone He Dies.

4. Our Souls And Bodies We Resign;
With Joy We Render Thee
Our All, No Longer Ours, But Thine
To All Eternity

Blessing:

The Lord fill us with joy, send us out in hope.
Fill us with power, send us out with His word.
Fill us with His presence, and send us out in His service.

Amen