

Sunday November 28, 2021

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church Welcome & Prayer (Ross L)

Good morning and welcome to our time together today. My name's Ross and I'll be leading our worship today. As Christmas approaches and we start to turn our minds to gift giving, and choosing which present to buy for whom, it's interesting to consider the packaging that many companies use. You know, the large, shiny box on the shelf in the shop, that raises expectations of what's inside, only to find that it is all show, with a product size of little substance, not nearly as large, or wonderful as the packaging promised.

Today, with Stephen, we'll explore further the message from Mark's gospel. From the outside, and further away, the fig tree looked full of promise and the temple, a place of worship, and yet, up close, both failed to produce the fruit that was expected of them. *As we gather together let's fill our hearts with the words of Psalm 9 which encourages us to give thanks to the Lord with our whole hearts, to recount His wonderful deeds, to be glad, to exult in Him and to sing praises to the most high.*

Psalm 136:1–3 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.
 Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever.
 Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever.

We lift our eyes to see your glory. We open our hearts to receive your love. We engage our minds to understand your truths. We offer our songs to praise your name.

Gentle Shepherd ... King of Love, we come to You as we are, not as we pretend to be. The truth is, God, that when we lift our heads above our path, we all too often discover ourselves lost in a maze of choices. We confess from the very beginning of this worship that we are lost... Were it not for You, O great seeker of our souls, patient parent to our childhood, joyful host to our homecoming; Were it not for You, O Lord, we would be lost forever. But, because of You, there is room for us at the great Love Feast. Gentle Shepherd ... King of Love, seek and find us as we are, not as we pretend. Be patient with us, and teach us how to wait. May the echoes of Your celebration reverberate in our midst this hour, transforming our worship from a mournful plea to a joyful song. Gentle Shepherd ... King of Love, lead us. Amen.

Song – Praise to the Lord

1. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
 O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
 All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near,
 Join me in glad adoration.

2. Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth,
 Shelters thee under His wings, yea, so gently sustaineth!
 Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
 Granted in what He ordaineth?

3. Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee!
 Surely His goodness and mercy here daily attend thee;
 Ponder anew what the Almighty can do
 If with His love He befriend thee.

4. Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him!
 All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!

Let the amen sound from His people again;
Gladly forever adore Him.

Bible Reading – Mark 11:1-11 (NIV)

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ²saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’” ⁴They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

¹⁰ “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹¹ Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Announcements for 28th November

SRE Teaching. Have you ever considered teaching Scripture to local kids in our public schools? There are vacancies each Thursday @ 12:30pm at Charlestown public as well as opportunities in other local primary schools. Training would be required but there is currently a grant that would pay for it available. If you would like more information, please see Karen Logan or Stephen

Focus for the month – Creation Care. Throughout November we have been thinking about how we are to care for God’s good creation as one of God’s worshippers. So have we made any changes? Have we made any resolutions? How are we going to look after (better) the world that God has given us to care for?

Lord’s Supper. We will be celebrating the Lords Supper at all of our services next Sunday.

ZOOM Prayer time. Every Monday night the Church meets via ZOOM to pray. It is so important that pray, both individually and collectively for each other, our church and our nation at this time.

Gather Round – A Christmas Celebration. This Saturday! A great opportunity to reconnect again after the lockdown as well as celebrating the festive season! Everyone welcome! Join us on Saturday 4 December from 5.30pm with dinner around 6pm. The evening will include dinner, carols under the stars, kids’ activities and a Tearfund Christmas stall! Please RSVP to Liz Hyslop by 30 November. 0481 704 006 or gehyslop@optusnet.com.au A donation of \$5 pp or \$20 per family would be welcome. Feel free to pay direct debit to the church account BSB: 062 829 Account Number: 1019 4850 Reference: Your name. Gather Round. Or pay cash on the night. Please bring a fold up chair or picnic rug, glow sticks & a singing voice!

Gather Round - Can You Help? We are needing some help with the Gather Round event. This includes donations for dessert (items that can be eaten with hands/ single serve portions or cut into single serve portions), help with overseeing dessert and / or drinks on the night (perhaps a couple of Bible study groups could do this?) and help with set up. If you can help out, please contact Liz Hyslop on 0481 704 006 or gehyslop@optusnet.com.au.

Kids Church Prize giving is down for Sunday 12th December

Christmas Services will be held at Christmas Eve 6pm (Charlestown), Christmas Day 8am (Swansea) and 9:30am Charlestown). Please use the opportunity to invite friends and family to come along.

Pledges. Many thanks to all those who have pledged money for our Ministry Facilities Fund. When you come to pay your pledges, please can you mark the transfer or the envelope ‘Building’

Working Bee – Saturday 27th November. Many thanks to those who helped out in yesterday’s working bee. Many hands do make light work!

Church Directory. For those who prefer a paper Church directory, there are a limited number of the names and addresses of our people at the entrance to the Church. For the rest of us, the easiest way of getting people's details is on Elvanto, our Church Management System. For more information about how to use Elvanto please speak to Liz Hyslop or one of the elders.

Financial News – October.

Budget Offerings for October	\$30,008
Actual Offerings for October	\$24,870
Deficit for October	\$ 5,138
Deficit for January – October	\$19,218

October continues a difficult year financially for the Church. We had hoped that coming back to face to face services might have reversed our trend to falling short of our budget but instead we had one of our worst months in the year. Please pray that we might have the financial backing to continue to do all that the Lord is calling us to do in our region.

Song – All I have is Christ

1. I once was lost in darkest night
Yet thought I knew the way
The sin that promised joy and life
Had led me to the grave
I had no hope that You would own
A rebel to Your will
And if You had not loved me first
I would refuse You still

2. But as I ran my hell-bound race
Indifferent to the cost
You looked upon my helpless state
And led me to the cross
And I beheld God's love displayed
You suffered in my place
You bore the wrath reserved for me
Now all I know is grace

CHORUS

Hallelujah! All I have is Christ
Hallelujah! Jesus is my life

3. Now, Lord, I would be Yours alone
And live so all might see
The strength to follow Your commands
Could never come from me
O Father, use my ransomed life
In any way You choose
And let my song forever be
My only boast is You

Pastoral Prayer (Joanna B)

Our gracious heavenly Father, we thank You that You are building Your church in this world, and nothing can prevail against it. Thank You that You are Lord of the harvest – we ask that You will send the workers that are needed. Help each of us to be willing to be used by You wherever You have planted us – please make us responsive to the promptings of Your Spirit.

Lord, we think of the nation of Sri Lanka with a population size similar to ours but where the majority are Buddhist. We ask for healing in that nation after a generation of civil war. We ask that freedom of religious expression might continue and that the proposed anti-conversion laws would not be enacted. We pray for the indigenous church to grow and mature, and to be active in spreading the gospel.

Father, we bring before You the financial situation of many Christian churches and organisations. We know that Covid has made it even more difficult for many to continue their work and mission. Lord, You own the cattle on a thousand hills - please provide the funds that are needed for Your work to continue and flourish. Help Your people to be willing to give sacrificially to Your work. Thank You for the way You have provided for us at Charlestown and Swansea; please continue to prompt us to be generous, knowing that You are Jehovah Jireh, our provider.

Lord we pray for the marriages in our churches and city and nation. We know that many are under strain. We ask that You would heal, renew and restore those relationships, and that husbands and wives would put You first and seek the good of their spouse above their own good. Father, we know that marriage is a picture of Christ united to His bride, the church, and we want our marriages to reflect that picture to others in our community.

We pray for our dear brother Josh Montzka serving with Power to Change in Melbourne. Lord, we are aware he has been struggling, and we pray You would sustain Him and comfort him at the times he is lonely or discouraged. Thank You that #Hack actually went better than Josh had anticipated, and we pray that fruit would come from it. Lord, we ask that Josh and the team at Power to Change would reach many people through digital technology – give them creativity and innovative ideas to make the gospel accessible to many. We pray for the preparations for the biennial missionary conference in January, especially as it needs to be in multiple locations.

We ask for our Gather Round event, that many of us would be able to come together as we celebrate advent and Christmas approaching, and rejoice that we will be able to meet again with other brothers and sisters here. We ask it would be a joyous and fun time and that the message of Jesus' incarnation, and the reason He came to earth would be clearly proclaimed.

Father, we pray for our leaders here at Charlestown – for our Session and Committee of Management as they make spiritual and practical decisions respectively on our behalf. We ask for discernment, and that they would look to You for guidance and direction in every decision. We pray for wisdom and good judgement for the committee dealing with the planning for our buildings. We pray for our dear ministers, Stephen and Jon, - we thank You for their dedication, commitment and hard work on our behalf. Please strengthen them, encourage them, and help them to continue to teach and lead us ably and wisely. Hedge them around with Your protection and prompt them to use Your spiritual armour.

Lord, we thank You that we can come before Your throne of grace at any time, in any place and without any mediator other than the Lord Jesus. It is in His mighty Name that we pray, Amen.

Bible Reading – Mark 11:12-25 (NIV)

¹² The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

¹⁵ On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷ And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'^[a]? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" ¹⁸ The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. ¹⁹ When evening came, Jesus and his disciples^[a] went out of the city. ²⁰ In the morning, as they went along, they saw

the fig tree withered from the roots. ²¹ Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”

²² “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. ²³ “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵ And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

Sermon: Jesus is the King (Stephen T)

I haven't had much interaction with royalty. I have been to Buckingham Palace but not inside it for an audience with the Queen but outside watching the changing of the guard. Once in Scotland, our family was delayed because the Queen's car along with all her security detail stopped the traffic in front of us. So not much interaction at all.

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No that's not correct at all. For I am a child of the King of Kings and Lord of Lord. And I talk to my king, King Jesus every day and he listens to me and speaks to me through his word. I actually have a close & personal relationship with the greatest king of all & in Mark 11 Jesus goes public & lets the whole world know that he is their king. Up until now he is always telling his disciples or the people he heals, to say nothing about what has just happened. He has wanted to hose down the expectations but it all changes in Mark 11.

He is coming to Jerusalem for the very last time. By the end of the week, he will end up on a cross dying for the sins of the world. So now he lifts the lid on the Messianic secret. He wants everyone to know that he is the promised King.

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1. The King (verses 1-11)

“As they approached Jerusalem & came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ² saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’” ⁴ They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵ some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶ They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go.”

Now did Jesus pre-arrange for this colt to be left there for him? Or was it some supernatural knowledge that he possessed? The passage doesn't say. But what it does point out is that Jesus is in control. He is orchestrating everything. He knows exactly what he is doing and how the Passover crowds will reaction. You see

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⁷ “When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” ¹⁰ “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

So how do the crowds react? They go crazy. This is like a welcoming home parade for a conquering hero. It's the ancient equivalent of a ticker tape parade for a successful Olympic campaign with crowds cheering everywhere. But it is more than that. This is the Galilean Jews declaring that Jesus is their King, their Messiah.

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The prophet Zechariah had hundreds of years beforehand predicted, *“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”* Zech. 9:9

And even before that at the end of the book of Genesis, Joseph had predicted *“The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs... he will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch”*

That’s why the crowd shout Hosanna God save us. They see Jesus’ riding on a donkey & they know that he is the Son of David, King David. He is the Messiah who comes in the name of the Lord & who has come to save them. Yes, they think he will save them from the Romans but he has come to save them from their sins. His aim is not military but spiritual. He wants to cleanse Israel’s spiritual life. Which is why he heads to the temple not the palace.

For Jesus is not a warrior king but a gentle and righteous king. A humble king. Do you know that when the prophet Mohammad rode into Mecca on a warhorse, he was surrounded by 400 mounted men and 10,000 foot soldiers? Those who welcomed him were added to his numbers. Those who resisted him were killed or enslaved. Mohammad conquered Mecca and today in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, Turkey is the symbol of that victory, his sword!

In contrast Jesus enters Jerusalem on a donkey, not a warhorse. He is greeted by people waving palm branches, a traditional sign of peace. He weeps over Jerusalem. And he comes to establish a different kingdom, a heavenly kingdom where those who want can join him by invitation not by force. Jesus’ symbol is not the sword but the cross.

Jesus is proclaiming I am your king. I am not your life coach or your guru or spiritual adviser. I am not here to give you whatever you want. I have not come to give you a safe and easy life or to make you healthy, wealthy and wise. I am your king. You are not the boss but I am. And I think we need to encounter Jesus each day as our king. We need to praise Him. We need to realise that he comes with the authority of the Lord God Himself. He is establishing God’s kingdom here on earth. And so, if we are his subjects, his followers, then that will be our priority as well. We are living for the Kingdom. We are following our king.

And where is the king heading? The cross. For Jesus has come to take his throne and he will begin to reign from a cross. A place of apparent defeat and failure. And that is where we are heading as well. We take up our cross and follow our King Jesus wherever he goes.

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But notice where he firstly goes? ¹¹ *“Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.”* It’s a bit of an anti-climax, isn’t it? A bit like the NZ rugby team coming on before a test match, they sing the national anthem, they do the haka and then turn around and go home! After all the huha it seems pretty strange for Jesus to come into Jerusalem and then do nothing. But it is the quiet before the storm. And on the very next day Jesus will come back and show us who he is king over. For according to verses 12-14 he is

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2. King over Israel (verses 12-14, 20-21)

Because in the OT Israel often takes the symbol of a fig tree. And that is where Jesus is heading next. ¹² *“The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³ Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴ Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.”*

It's a strange incident, isn't it? Jesus is hungry. The leaves on the fig tree seem to say to Jesus, hey there should be some early figs in our branches for you to enjoy. But when he has a look, a closer look, the tree is all show and no substance. It is leafy but contains no fruit.

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And so, Jesus curses this fig tree. But there is no anger, or malice or temper tantrum. Just a visual parable for the disciples to ponder. Just an object lesson that will stick in their brains. So ²⁰ *"In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots."* ²¹ Peter remembered and said to Jesus, *"Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"*

You see the nation of Israel was like this fig tree. It was all show and no substance. It looks healthy but it was not producing any fruit. There was no fruit of righteousness in them. No fruits of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control. It was hypocritical. It looked spiritual but it was nothing of the sort.

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Now before we point the finger at someone else, realise that four fingers are pointing back to us! It was Charles Spurgeon who once said, *"the great majority of persons who have any sort of religion at all bear leaves, but they produce no fruit."*

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Just because we look good, because our leaves are large and shiny doesn't mean that our Churches are producing fruit that is pleasing to God. We come to Church regularly but where is the fruit of righteous living? We have our nice buildings but what difference are we making in our community? We look like we have it altogether but prefer an easy life than a faithful life. At times you and I can be that fig tree as well. And if that is the case, one day Jesus might have a good look at us and curse us as well. For he is a king full of justice.

Billy Graham tells the story of being in a plane and there is a man behaving badly because he has had too much to drink. And flight attendants are trying to get him to sit down and as they direct him to a seat; he notices Dr Graham. And he puts out his hand to Billy Graham and says, "Ten years ago you changed my life". And Billy Graham says to himself, "What change! There doesn't seem to be any fruit in this man's life as it currently stands."

Now what if Jesus was to have a good look at our lives. What fruit are we producing? Where is the fruit that will last for all eternity? Are we all show and no substance? Is this church one where we look like we are serving the Lord & we are really just serving ourselves? You see Jesus is the King, the king of Israel, God's people. But he has cursed the Jews and flung open the gates to the Gentiles because the Jews were not producing any fruit. And as Paul says in the book of Romans, he might well do the same to us, to us Presbyterians, to us Australians if we also fail to produce the required fruit of righteousness that God requires.

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3. Jesus is the King, the King of the Jews **and the King over the nations** (verses 15-19)

"On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts & began driving out those who were buying & selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers & the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶ & would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts." Jesus now heads back into Jerusalem and he again goes to the Temple.

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And the Temple was an impressive place. It soared some fifteen stories above the Kidron Valley floor to the east. It was huge, nearly 400 metres long and 300 metres wide. The outer court of the Temple compound was nearly the size of fifteen football fields. And during the Passover it was filled with hundreds of thousands, maybe even more than a million people. All heading for the centre of all the celebrations, the Temple.

But Jesus is not impressed at all. He looks beyond its leaves and searches for the fruit. And instead of a place of praying it was a place of paying and preying. Instead of the centre of worship, it was the centre of commerce. Instead of a house of prayer it was a den of robbers. For the authorities had allowed the selling of the animals sacrifices to happen right there in this place of worship. So, you could buy your lamb, or your dove or your grain, certifiably pure and perfectly right, here, here in the temple, at inflated prices. Too easy.

And you had to pay your temple tax not with coins that had pagan or idolatrous images on it but with a coin specially minted by those in power. And so, you exchanged your dirty money for clean money, at a price of course. And this was a great little earner on the side. So as Jesus comes to worship God he sees extortion, bribery, greed and dishonesty in this religious bazaar. So, what was Jesus going to do about all this? Well, he became a bouncer and kicked those who were doing the wrong thing out of his father's house.

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Does God get mad? Does he get angry? He sure does. When people stop others from knowing about God. When people put money and profit ahead of faith. When there is hypocrisy – on the outside we seem to be doing the right thing but inside we are only interested in ourselves. Jesus shows us that God gets angry and when he does, it isn't a sin. For he is protecting, upholding, promoting God's name and worship.

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Christian psychologist Dr. David Seamands has a helpful comment. "The person who cannot feel anger at evil is a person who lacks enthusiasm for good. If you cannot hate wrong, it's very questionable whether you really love righteousness." So not only is it not wrong for Jesus to get angry here but he would be doing wrong if he didn't get angry. There are things that should make our blood boil, there are things that should get our juices pumping. 95% of Australians will not be in Church this week! Many worship the creation & not the creator. Some kids are being raised in abusive homes. If you don't get angry over some of these things and then want to do something about it, there is something wrong with you.

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But Jesus anger and his zeal at this time was focused on reclaiming the temple as a house of prayer for all the nations. ¹⁷ *"And as he taught them, he said, 'Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"* ¹⁸ *The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching."*

Jesus shows a zeal for the Gentile's salvation. You see the Temple was arranged in such a way that the people of God, the Jews had access to the inner court and could bring their sacrifices there so that they could have their sins forgiven. But the Gentiles were not left completely out in the cold. They had their own spot where they could worship God; where they could be taught about God; where they could pray to God. But the place where the missionary work to the Gentiles should be at its climax had been turned into a market.

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Now have you ever tried to pray in a market? Have you ever tried to sit down and think about God when there are shoppers everywhere, with the stall owners yelling out the bargains, where the smells make you think you are in a farm rather than God's house?

Where's the worshipful atmosphere? Where's the serenity? So, Jesus kicks these traders out of the temple and in doing so he restores access to God to those outside the Jewish nation. He shows us that he is the king not just of the Jew but also the Gentile. He looks after their rights by exercising judgement on those who are stopping their access to God. Now it was popularly believed that when the Messiah, the King came, he would purge the temple of all Gentiles but what our King Jesus does is purge the temple to allow

Gentiles to come as well.

You see on the outside this Temple was a great, magnificent building. But on the inside, it was rotten to the core. It was just like a business. But God doesn't look on outward appearances, he looks at the heart. And here Jesus, the one who comes in the name of the Lord, judges those whose hearts are not clean, who are not right with God. Like the fig tree if there is no fruit, all will come under the King's righteous judgement.

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Now that is a real warning to us too, isn't it? There is much about the modern Church that has lost its sense of worship and instead is more about entertainment or marketing or hype. We can come today and seem like we have it all together with God, but sometimes that too is a facade. We can be here every week, but does it make one iota of difference? Or we can stop coming each week and put other things, less important things, before our worship of the great king. Is this place really a house of prayer? Are the nations really welcome here?

So what happened to the fig tree and what happened to the Temple could happen to us. We all may be judged. For Jesus' kingship extends not just to a region or a country or even the nation of Israel but it is for all those who want to know God. In fact, elsewhere he says to the authorities, "Destroy this Temple and I will build it again in three days." But he wasn't talking bricks and mortar here, but his own body. Jesus will be the new meeting place between God and man. Through Jesus all people, Jew or Gentile, black or white, male or female, old or young can have direct access to God Himself. Which means that lastly

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4. Jesus is our King (verses 22-25)

²² "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. ²³ "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

If Jesus is our King, we will have faith in Him. We will not doubt in our heart that God can do anything. Even throw mountains into the sea. For that is how powerful God is. As one writer has said, "*Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible & receives the impossible.*"

Scottish preacher Andrew Murray said "We have a God who delights in impossibilities."

And that is true! We should have the quiet confidence that nothing is too hard for the Lord. Just like small children believe their parents can do anything, we are to have childlike faith, knowing that our God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do!

Of course, that doesn't mean he will always give us what we ask for. As a good heavenly father, he's the king, not the children. And he knows best. So, when the answer is no, we can always thank God that he has something better in store for us.

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The evangelist D.L. Moody once said, "I prayed for faith and thought that someday it would come down and strike me like lightning. But faith didn't seem to come. One day I read in Romans that 'faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.' I had up to this time, closed my Bible and prayed for faith. Now I opened my Bible and began to study and (my) faith has been growing ever since."

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Faith and fellowship. Prayer is as much about drawing near to God than asking things from God. It is about enjoying the presence of God. It is about worshipping God. As Archbishop Temple once said about worship, "*it is about quickening the conscience by the holiness of God, feeding the mind with the truth of God,*

purging the imagination by the beauty of God, opening the heart to the love of God and devoting the will to the purpose of God."

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Faith, fellowship and then forgiveness. ²⁵ *"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."* That's the kind of fruit God wants us to bring and to bear. And so, Jesus is saying that if we retain a stubborn, bitter heart. If there is still an unwillingness to forgive others no matter what they've done to you, then maybe we are all show and no substance. Leafy but no fruit.

For that is what the Lord is looking for in the followers of the king. Fruit. Forgiveness. Faith. Fellowship. The very things he wanted to find at the Temple. The very things that need to be in the people of God are the things that Jesus and his Holy Spirit will cultivate in us.

Slide 22

I want to end with a quote from JB Philips the English translator who when he translated the book of Acts & saw this sort of fruit in the early Church wrote... *"It is impossible to spend several months in close study of this remarkable short book... without being profoundly stirred and, to be honest, disturbed. The reader is stirred because he is seeing Christianity, the real thing, in action for the first time in human history. The newborn Church, as vulnerable as any human child, having neither money, influence nor power in the ordinary sense, is setting forth joyfully & courageously to win the pagan world for God through Christ."*

Yet we cannot help feeling disturbed as well as moved, for this surely is the Church as it was meant to be. It is vigorous and flexible, for these are the days before it ever became fat and short of breath through prosperity, or muscle-bound by over organization. These men did not make 'acts of faith,' they believed; they did not 'say their prayers,' they really prayed. They did not hold conferences on psychosomatic medicine, they simply healed the sick. But if they were uncomplicated & naive by modern standards, we have ruefully to admit that they were open on the God-ward side in a way that is almost unknown today." If only the followers of King Jesus would be like that again. Impossible? Nothing is impossible for the Lord.

Song – This Life I live

1. This life I live is not my own
For my redeemer paid the price
He took it to be his alone
To be his treasure and his prize
The things of earth I leave behind
To live in worship of my King
His is the right to rule my life
Mine is the joy to live for him

2. I died to sin upon the cross
I'm bound to Jesus in his death
The old is gone, and now I must
Rely on him for every breath
With every footstep that I tread
What mysteries he has in store
I cannot know what lies ahead
But know that he has gone before

3. There is a voice that pierced the grave
A power that rolled the stone away
A sound of life, I know I'm saved
The voice of God has called my name
So I will rise, and in the air
Behold the glory of the King
I will not fear to meet him there
I know my life is hid with him

Benediction *"Hosanna!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"* ¹⁰ *"Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"*

Morning Tea Why not give someone a call and have a cuppa together?