

The raised temple

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[0:00] And we'll be having a look, as Phil said, at that passage in John chapter 2. So do have that! in front of you, that would be really helpful for you to follow along. Well, as has already been! mentioned, it's been a great few days of celebration, hasn't it, in our country. The Queen's 70 years on the throne, the Platinum Jubilee, it's been really wonderful. I actually got to go down on Thursday to London with some friends and enjoy some of the Jubilee celebrations, saw the trooping of the colour, and it was great to just be there and be part of that. But imagine if Thursday came, and instead of seeing the soldiers on horseback, instead of a gun salute, instead of trumpets and marching bands, instead of all that, the Queen is driven along to Buckingham Palace.

And she finds actually that the place has been turned upside down. The place is full of stools, soldiers are there, they're selling those big furry hats, they're offering horse rides to people for five pounds. So some of their best horses are even being sold. Music is playing by those marching bands with buckets to drop money in. If that happens, like, the Queen would be rightly enraged. Like, what have you done to my home? The honour that's due to her for her 70 years of service in this country is turned not to honour, it's dishonouring her. It's for themselves, making all the money that they can, not honouring the Queen. A huge, significant occasion would have been overshadowed.

Well, this morning we're continuing our journey through John's Gospel, and after the excitement of that first miracle recorded in John, the water changing into wine, after that excitement, we find in verse 12, Jesus, his mother and his brothers, only one mother, and his disciples, they're following him into Capernaum, there's kind of a home base for Jesus. And they're there for a few short days before they make their way down to Jerusalem, ready for the Passover festival, where people across the Roman world would have gathered in Jerusalem for this great Passover festival. A bit like how many from across the UK have gathered in London over the last few days to celebrate the Queen.

And this Passover festival, it was to celebrate that time when God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt. And the place that was most central for Jewish worship, it was the temple. And it's there that Jesus makes his way to. It was a place of worship, a place where God dwelt among his people. The outer court of the temple where Jesus enters into, that was designed for even Gentiles to come into, to come and inquire, come and see what the worship of God is all about. And Jesus is heading there, heading to the temple. And remember who we've seen Jesus is so far in John's Gospel. This is God himself come to dwell among his people. And as he enters the temple, surely he is entering what should feel like home. A little of heaven on earth. And you kind of expect that a red carpet to be rolled out for him, a welcome banner to put up. People are ready there, getting their selfies with Jesus. Like, he's come back. This is wonderful.

Trumpet sounding welcome. It's a hugely significant occasion. Verse 14. In the temple courts, he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves.

[5:01] And others sitting at tables exchanging money. That is not a picture of worship, of honor, of God.

It's like they've picked God up and shoved him over to one side. And instead placed there, their own things, selling things, making money, not worshiping God, forgetting him. He's just over there.

That the place should have been a place of prayer. A place where Jesus should have been the most honored guest. Seeing his father worshipped by people.

And instead, it was noisy. Animals were bleating. The coins were rattling. People shouting, come and get your doves. It's a marketplace.

Not a worship place. Animals were being sold there. The priests would have been very unlikely to accept your animals from home.

[6:21] Found something to say that's wrong with them. And so they sold animals there at extortionate prices.

The temple tax was due. But it had to be paid in a very specific form of currency. And so there's money changes there. And they would have received quite a nice profit for the money changing that was going on.

Religious leaders were there. Exploiting people. Oppressing people. Robbing people. For their own gain. This is not the proper worship of God.

This is self-seeking. Financial gain. God's been picked up and thrown over to one side.

And so as Jesus enters there, is he going to just watch and leave it alone? Verse 15.

[7:28] 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.

To those who sold doves, he said, get these out of here. Stop turning my father's house into a market. He made a whip.

He drove people out. He drove the animals out. Shouts, get out. Stop turning my father's house into a market.

His disciples who hadn't been with him that long. Maybe at this point they'd be thinking, oh no.

This is embarrassing. Who are we following here? Maybe it felt like being with mum and dad and they'd do something just so embarrassing.

[8:33] Why did you say that, mum? Why did you do that, dad? And you might be sitting here this morning, hearing of Jesus doing this.

Like, is this really Jesus? Is he really bursting out in rage? I thought Jesus was gentle, meek, loving, kind.

Not angry. And yet he shows here right anger. They've turned God's house into a market.

They're exploiting people for money. What Jesus is doing here isn't embarrassing at all. This is standing up, saving people from exploitation.

Overturning the tables to make sure people could freely come and worship God alone. So, what comes to the disciples' minds isn't, oh no, this is embarrassing.

[9:45] What comes to their minds is a verse from the psalm, zeal for the Lord's house consumes him. It's from a psalm written by King David who was zealous for the temple.

That it would have the right worship of God. We sang another psalm earlier about how good it is to be together in the temple of God, in the worship of God.

Bringing honour to God with God's people. But here was the complete opposite of that.

Here was a marketplace. Jesus shows zeal for the Lord's house.

Showing a passion for pure worship. Worship that is right. Worship that is honouring to his father.

Not exploitation. Not turning the place into a market.

[10:50] Worship centred on God himself. Not throwing him to one side and forgetting about him. We're going to see three things from this.

First of all, Jesus cares about pure worship. Jesus cares about pure worship. In Malachi, the book of Malachi, that last book we have in the Old Testament.

It says, And suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver.

And here we have this prophecy fulfilled. The Lord has come to purify the worship of God's people.

He wanted pure worship. Not people trading and gaining profit. Not self-seeking. Not greedy. Not in it for self.

[11:58] But for the glory and honour of God alone. He wants people to come back to God alone. God alone who had rescued his people from slavery in Egypt.

Have him at the centre. A few months ago, I was really, really sad to watch a documentary about a church which has a business, worldwide business model, which is designed to make as much

money as possible.

And the church's founder was found to have found guilty of inappropriate behaviour with a few women. And it was just really sad to see.

Like, that's not what we want to hear about God's church. People who are supposed to be following Jesus. And that would make Jesus angry too because he cares about pure worship.

And so it's right that we ask ourselves, how does God view our worship of him? Is it centred upon God alone?

[13:20] Or has he been thrown over to one side? We've put ourselves or other things in the centre. As I said earlier, the outer court where Jesus enters into, that was a place for even the Gentiles to come and see.

Come and see the worship of God. As people come amongst us, do they see a bunch of people seeking their own glory?

Or people whose hearts are filled with worship that's based on God alone? God alone at the centre of it. And so there's a responsibility for those of us who lead services, who choose songs, who preach, that we're making sure that we're doing it to glorify God alone.

Not to show off how ourselves, but to lead us to God. To make sure that it's him at the centre, not us.

And for all of us, there's a responsibility too. We've sung songs which should bring great honour. We've sung to God.

[14:44] Jesus is the name we honour. To God be the glory. Songs which have God alone at the centre. His glory.

They help us to direct our hearts to worship him alone. We need to make sure our hearts are in the right place.

Another psalm. Psalm 51. David wrote these words. You do not delight in sacrifice or I would bring it. You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise. As we come together, are we remembering we are broken?

We are sinful. We need the Lord. Are we coming expectant to hear his words? Coming wanting to make sure he is at the centre of what we do here.

[15:57] As a church, we gather together in the Lord's name. Let's take this seriously. Just as Jesus does.

Come as a people knowing we're broken, knowing we're needy. Coming as a people wanting to praise God alone for his grace that he has shown to us.

Come with broken and contrite hearts that God will not despise. Jesus comes to his temple.

He throws out everything that gets in the way of the pure worship of God. Because he cares about worship that is centred on God alone.

Secondly, Jesus cares about access to God. Jesus is the true meeting place between God and human beings.

[17:04] The temple was just a shadow of what Jesus was to come and do. The temple for the Jewish people was the place where they met, were able to come and be together and worship God.

The place where God dwelt with his people. But now Jesus had come. Now Jesus was that meeting place between God and human beings.

And the sacrifices that happened in the temple. Remember a few weeks ago we saw Jesus was the sacrifice. The Lamb of God. The one who came to take away the sin of the world.

To bring us access to God. And we see how he shows us. How he makes this possible in this passage.

Verse 18. The Jews then responded to him. What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this? It was dramatic, wasn't it, what Jesus was doing?

[18:20] You can, I can picture, I've been picturing in my head Jesus overturning these tables, whipping, making sure these people and animals go out.

It is dramatic. And so, of course, people are going to say, well, why, how, what authority do you have to do this? It's a bold thing.

Either he's got some authority to do this or he's a complete lunatic. Jesus is the son of God, is the new temple.

He has all the authority in the world to do this. And so, Jesus, he answers the question in verse 19. He says, destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days. But that would sound really weird. [19:19] Destroy a temple, destroy a building and it will be back in three days. If this building here was to be destroyed this afternoon, it's not going to be back in three days.

What's Jesus on about? Well, Jesus speaks about himself. He's going to show a great sign. Destroy me, the true and living temple. And I will be raised again in three days. You can't keep me down. That's what Jesus is saying. Destroy me and I will be raised again in great triumph over death.

Because Jesus cares about access to God so much. He was willing to offer his life for us. To bring us back to God.

[20:31] That the final sacrifice made the way for human beings to be able to meet together freely with their God.

No, nothing in the way. No market in the way of getting to meet God. Only coming to Jesus. The true and living temple. The disciples, we see that they come to understand this.

But it wasn't until after these events happened. Verse 22. After he was raised from the dead. His disciples recalled what he had said.

Then they believed the scripture. And the words Jesus had spoken. What Jesus is saying.

[21:29] Destroy this temple and we'll be raised again in three days. It's hard for people that are listening to Jesus to get their heads around that. But it all made sense.

If you go and read later on John. Towards the end of John's gospel. Read of Jesus' death. But then read of his great resurrection. Then it can all make sense.

That Jesus died. He was buried. But he's been raised again. So that we can meet with God. So that we can have access with God.

As we gather together in the name of the Lord. People should see something different from the world around us.

If you want people buying and selling. Go just wander down the road. We want people to come here and see that Jesus has changed everything.

[22:33] That he has died. That he has been risen again. And we can now meet with God. We can worship God alone. We can hear from him and sing praise to him.

The one who brings us access to God. And it's wonderful. Let nothing get in the way of people coming.

To find that access to God. That Jesus has made possible. In his death and resurrection.

The work is all done now in Jesus. The way is freely open. Sinful people can now come and be saved.

Jesus cares about pure worship. Jesus cares about access to God. So in this church where we meet together.

[23:32] To worship the Lord. What's our priority? I think it should be this. Jesus alone. It is our priority that this good news.

Of Jesus who died and rose again. Is proclaimed. That people can come and freely hear about this good news.

That people can come and freely gather together. And worship him. Have him at the center. That's what it should be.

Jesus alone is our priority. It's like at school. Like we go and we learn. Learn the alphabet. We learn to use commas and full stops.

In those early days of school. But then we can go on and learn more. More complex things. Things that I probably don't understand. More punctuation.

[24:34] More big words in English. But all that big and complicated stuff. Is no good if we've forgotten the alphabet.

Forgotten how to use a full stop. And so with the gospel. And so with the gospel. So with gathering together. Let's never. Ever ever move away.

From Jesus alone. For salvation. Never let anything get in the way. Of Jesus. Who died. And was buried. And rose again. And was buried. And was buried. It's by faith alone. In Jesus alone. That we're saved. And can have access.

To the living God. But those priests. In the temple. They put things up. In the way.

[25:31] Of people. Coming. To God. Coming to worship him alone. Are we putting things in the way?

Do we say yes. Come along. Come and. Come to church. But. But. But make sure you're dressed. In a smart. Casual way. Or.

Or come. But. But. But only if you can. Name me all. All the books. In the Bible. Or come. But. Only if you can sing well.

Come. But only if you. Bring a bit of money. To pop in the offering box. Please come. Please come. But don't sit in my seat.

Something I have been so encouraged by. In this church. In getting to know you. Over recent weeks. Is your love for the Bible.

[26:32] It's so good. It's so good. To see. How. You just want to get stuck into. Looking at the Bible. Hearing it. It's really great.

It really is encouraging. And please don't stop. But. But. But let's not. Let's not let. I love. The Bible. For God's word. Let's not let that get in the way. To other people. Let's not expect. That other people. Are going to know everything. There is to know about the Bible.

Let's not. Let people feel like. There's some. Bible quiz. To enter into the kingdom of God. Let's never move away from Jesus. Alone.

Who can save. The Jubilee celebrations. They've been all about one person.

[27:30] They've been all about the queen. Her rule for the last 70 years. It's been such a significant occasion. And this passage.

Is an even more significant occasion. As Jesus enters that new. Temple. At Passover time. As Jesus. The new temple. Comes in.

And shows. That. The worship. And honor. Of God alone. That's to be. What happens. Anything that gets in the way.

Jesus overturns it. Don't shove him over to one side. Have God at the center. Honor God. Him alone.

Jesus alone. Can save. You know what? That overturning. The tables. Driving out.

[28:31] Of the money changes. And market sellers. There's. That's how he feels about our sin. And too. Like when we.

When we sin. We're saying. Shove off God. We move God over to one side. And we. Do what we want. And.

So sin needs. Dealing with. Sin is serious. It needs to be dealt with. And wonderfully. God has dealt with sin.

Not as we deserve. But he's given us the Lord Jesus. The new temple. The new. Meeting place. With God.

And human beings. The one who's come to take away our sin. To bear our punishment for us. So that if we call upon his name.

[29:31] We can be saved. Jesus cares that nothing gets in the way. Of people coming.

To find that salvation. He's not looking for sinless perfection. Because we can't bring that. But he is looking for broken. And contrite hearts.

Those God will not despise. So if we come before him. And ask for his forgiveness for sin. He will be gracious.

To us. If you come and ask God. To forgive you. Today for the first time.

He will. He offers it freely. To you. And maybe this morning. As we've been listening. There's. We know actually.

[30:26] Our hearts have. Moved. Far away from him. And we need to come back. To God. Again.

Because we've seen those things. Which have been getting in the way. Of us. Having God alone. At the center. And so let's ask him.

To come. To deal with our hearts. To cleanse us. To help us worship him. To have him alone. At the center. Let's be a church. Let's be a place.

Where Jesus. Is on it. Where we don't put religion. Stuff. In the way of. People coming to hear about Jesus.

Who alone can save. Where we invite people. To come freely. Without any money. Freely. To hear the good news. And to worship him alone.

[31:30] In a moment. We're. We're going to sing. Sing some words. Which are a prayer. To God. A prayer to God. To help us. Be a church.

Where Jesus is known. Where he reigns. Where he's worshipped. Where he's preached. But I think it'd be great. If we. Spend a moment. Just being.

Quiet. Responding. To God. And I'm going to. Help us. In that. As. As I pray. The last verse. Of the hymn. That we'll sing. And then we'll.

Sing it. Prayerfully. To God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Lord of the church. We pray. For our uniting. True to one calling.

[32:26] By. One vision. Steps. One cross. Proclaiming. And. One creed. Reciting. One.

In the truth. Of Jesus. And his words. So lead us on. Till toil. And. Trouble. Ended.

One. Church. Triumphant. One. New. Song. Shall sing. To praise. His glory. Risen. And.

Descended. Christ. Overall. The everlasting. King. We pray this. In Jesus name.

Amen. Say. Mark's going to come. He's going to lead us. In that hymn together. Amen. Stand and sing.

[33:28] It's like this tune to London Derry Air. Let's sing.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[36:00] Thank you.

Thank you.