

The one greater than the temple

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Preacher: David Wriglesworth

[0:00] Good evening dear brothers and sisters, David here. Pleasure to try and lead you this evening. We are in difficult times indeed. Just to share briefly some of our news and the family. I continue to be working three days a week but if you're worried about me in London, I tend to only be around the sites for about an hour and a half and we keep well away from each other and have a mask and all those precautions.

Wendy is struggling probably particularly with the isolation business. Nathan and Helen and the family are on lockdown at least until the end of Monday but even then we're still isolating a little aren't we? Very hard with little ones.

Let's just come to God in prayer and then we've got ahead some songs which Phil and Maria and Annika have put together. I haven't heard them yet but they'll be spliced into this. I'll announce those and then we'll read a bit in that. Let's pray.

My Heavenly Father we are all of us hurting and anxious in these times and it is a very important time to turn away from all the things on the news to you to look at your face to ask your help.

We pray our gracious Father that you would have mercy on our country, on our world. We are troubled and we pray that you will bring some stories of goodness.

[1:53] We are picking up little things, community minded people trying to help, but Lord we know that there are many of you who are very lonely, very fearful. We pray that you will protect those who are the most vulnerable and Lord that you will lead us through this hard time.

We are all longing and we hope that there will be some light at the end of this tunnel, that this is just a matter of weeks and not months, that we are in your hands. And Father we pray for ourselves as a church, so difficult to be isolated, unable to meet, unheard of times.

And in whatever way we can, whether by phone call or using this Zoom or other things, Lord help us to find some way to bring fellowship and to have fellowship.

We commit our evening to you and ask you to help us. Thank you for your word. And we commit all this to you in Jesus name. Amen. We have a couple of songs before we will read.

And the first one is number 408 in the book. There will be words on the PDF if you want to look out for that. Steve will tell you where to put them on an email. But Ride on Ride on in Majesty is 408 if you do have a book.

[3:20] And we will follow that one by 407, All Glory, Phrase and Honour. So we will do those both in succession and then I will come back and we will be reading.

We will be reading.

Ride on Ride on in Majesty As all the crowds hold down a cry Through every branching Through every branching celebrate All's a good to be crucified Ride on Ride on in Majesty In Lory Park Ride on to die All died Of CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST CONGREGIST To sin, the reproach, in sacrifice.

Ride on, ride on, in majesty, The last and fierce as boldly thrive.

The Father, my new sovereign throne, Who waits his own anointed son.

[5:23] Ride on, ride on, in majesty, In lollipop, ride on to die.

Bow, you'll be kept to mortal pain, Then take a lot of love and rain.

All glory, praise and honor, To you, redeem the King.

To the hearts of children, Peace and peace of the earth's reign. You are the King of Israel, With David's loyal son.

Now in the Lord's name, Call them, his own anointed one. All glory, praise and honor, To you, redeem the King.

[7:04] To the hearts of children, Peace and peace of the earth's reign. You come to me, O vengeance, For praise and heaven high, And we, with all creation, Together live great life.

All glory, praise and honor, To you, redeem the King. To the hearts of children, The saints of Israel, The people of the Hebrews, To the hearts of brothers, To the hearts of brothers, To the hearts of brothers, To the hearts of brothers, To the hearts of brothers, To the hearts of brothers, To the hearts of brothers, and comes before you represent.

All glory, praise and honor to your Redeemer King, to the palace of children that sweet rose on his name, to your prayer for the passion and sing the hymns of praise, to you the high exalted our melody we praise.

All glory, praise and honor to your Redeemer King, to the palace of children that sweet rose on his ring.

All service and good land is like safe and pleasant bread. In every good delight sing our good and gracious King.

[9:34] All glory, praise and honor to your Redeemer King, O Lord, praise and honor to your Redeemer King, to the palace of children and sweet rose on his ring.

The Bible reading before us this evening is from Matthew 20 and verse 29 through to 21 and verse 17.

My main focus is on Jesus at the temple and we will read all of this. As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him.

Two blind men were sitting by the roadside and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, Lord, son of David, have mercy on us. The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, Lord, son of David, have mercy on us.

Jesus stopped and called them. What do you want me to do for you? he asked. Lord, they answered, we want our sight. Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes.

[11:05] Immediately they received their sight and followed him. As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethpage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, Go to the village ahead of you and at once you will find a donkey tied there with her colt by her.

Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them and he will send them right away. This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet.

Say to daughter Zion, See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a donkey. The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them.

They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

The crowd went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

[12:20] Hosanna in the highest heaven. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, Who is this?

The crowd answered, For this is Jesus, the prophet, from Nazareth in Galilee. Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there.

He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. It is written, he said to them, My house will be called the house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.

The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did, and the children shouting in the temple courts, Hosanna to the son of David, they were indignant.

Do you hear what these children are saying? they asked him. Yes, replied Jesus. Have you never read? From the lips of children and infants, you, Lord, have called forth your praise.

[13:35] And he left them and went out of the city to Bethany where he spent the night. So we've come to look at this passage we've read and I want to go through five parts in the main to what we're doing.

I want to give a quick overview since we don't have a temple these days. we hear about it perhaps in other religions. I want to give a quick overview of where the temple came from in the Bible and how it all started.

Just so you have some idea of what the practice was in the New Testament. And then we'll go on to see briefly Jesus entering Jerusalem. and obviously he goes on within Jerusalem to end up at the temple.

And I want to see what he did there and why. And then we'll see the different reactions and then we'll try and draw some lessons. So without more ado the temple.

Now many of you will know but one or two of you who are less familiar with the Old Testament it might help to know that originally where this all started was a very portable enclosure.

[15:00] This was after the time when the Israelites were rescued from Egypt and they were travelling for 40 years in a wilderness and God told them to make a tabernacle.

It's interesting that word actually literally means to dwell. You can find some of these details in Exodus 27 verses 9 to 19. But they were told to set up this portable fenced enclosure within which was a tent and an altar within a courtyard.

Within the tent there was a holy place and further inside as well the holy of holies. And in that place the very holy place was the Ark of the Covenant containing the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments given to Moses in Mount Sinai.

and for the people for those many years this was the place where God was dwelling. And you know the other pictures around this but near this there's a pillar of cloud by day and by fire at night.

But this was God's visible and strong presence among his people the tabernacle. temple. And then later on we find David wanted to build the temple but it was Solomon in fact who was allowed to do it first and he built a very grand building a very permanent building.

[16:26] and in 1 Kings 6 we get a little detail that this one was using stone and cedar and key areas of this were gold plated almost everything you could see I think it was plated with gold and it was in Jerusalem.

But even Solomon in this stage having built this magnificent building and perhaps he would have had every reason to think that this was great but as he commissions the temple and as he really reflects on what's going he says in 1 Kings 8 and verse 27 he says But will God really dwell on earth?

The heavens even the highest heaven cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built? Interesting thoughts from Solomon there.

But keep in mind the other set up of this is very similar to the tabernacle and within the temple there was very much a sequence of courtyards you went through and depending on who you were you can't get quite so near.

Nearer the Holy of Holies just outside there the priests would be dealing with things on the altar people brought their animals for sacrifice. And again there was this holy place but only the high priest would have gone there and only once a year.

[17:48] So that was the nature of the temple. Think of it's hard to imagine what it might be like for those Old Testament people this focus in the middle of the area where God dwells and a place where you could bring your sacrifices and you could worship.

The thing you have to realise that was so obvious was that God was holy and the people were sinful. Now the reason this was so obvious is because the law had said that on a daily basis there were sacrifices to be made worshippers could not come empty handed and there were priests these were from the tribe of Levi and they had to take these sacrifices and offer them to God they stood very much in the place between God and the people and in a way that makes us walk these days blood had to be shed to atone for the sin of the people and we really find this so hard to understand that in the place where you might go to worship God there would have been blood spilt frequently.

We remind this in Hebrews 9 and verse 22 that the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Although we may balk at these ideas it does point up that God's presence was no cosy thing. This is not something that people could bear.

Now you will picture in your mind Moses coming down the mountain many of you will know these stories that where he had been close with God his face was shining and when people saw him people of Israel they couldn't come near.

[19:44] There was something quite scary about the presence of God. There are several other examples in the Old Testament of what God's presence was like and how formidable it was.

One is in 1 Kings 8 verses 10 and 11 and this is around the commissioning of Solomon's temple. When the priests withdrew from the holy place I'm just reading that passage the cloud filled with the temple of the Lord and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud for the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

Now this is the whole idea of God's glory in his presence being a very weighty thing and something the people could not stand. And I will just suggest to you if you want to explore that idea in the Old Testament if you read parts of Ezekiel 10 and 43 where the glory of God first of all departs from the temple and later on returns there is even more dramatic language and description of the weightiness of God's presence and how it made people fall face down.

And Solomon's temple if you want a few dates on this Solomon's temple was built around 1000 BC although it was very glorious and magnificent and meant to be permanent it didn't last forever and this was very much due to the sin of the people it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC God allowed that and then we find the people of God in exile and they returned from exile in 538 BC it's interesting when they were rebuilding the temple and some of this is under Nehemiah a destroyed temple and you can think after many many years 70 or so years the people are now putting things together and you know the story of Nehemiah and Ezra about this particularly Ezra on the temple but it's interesting the mix of feelings because some of the people who were building that temple remembered the old one some of the older people and it's interesting just little details to find in Ezra 3 in verse 12 it says many of the other priests and the

Levites and the family heads who had seen the former temple wept aloud when they saw the foundations of the temple being lain because this new one actually was much more ordinary but still others who didn't have that memory they were shouting for joy so on the second temple went for a while it stayed and then just before Jesus I think King Herod did some quite major modifications so there's just a potted history of the temple picture it in Jesus day of Jerusalem and this was a place where the priests officiated and as I say just imagine these different courtyards perhaps there and not so many could get to the inner courtyards that was the whole process of keeping people distant so now I just want to pick up from Matthew 21 and verse 1 just that section through to 12 that Jesus enters

[23:16] Jerusalem if we picture back what we've been looking at about Jesus' ministry and his healings and his teachings this is the long awaited public coming of the king to his city we read in the story two disciples were sent ahead to pick up a donkey and had coal but even these little details were told in what we read fulfil what was said in Zechariah 9 and verse 9 see your king comes to you gentle and riding on a donkey and on a colt the foal of a donkey and we hear that large crowds spread their cloaks and palm branches ahead of him and that's in verse 8 and palm branches spread down these are a symbol of victory and triumph these words are quite pregnant with meaning victory and triumph but here is a lowly king on a donkey and perhaps as we know so many times the people the Jewish people wanted to crown him king they wanted him to take the

Romans on by force so what sort of victory what sort of victory is Jesus about to accomplish the crowds are shouting Hosanna to the son of David blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord this is around the time of Passover so there are a lot of people who don't normally live in Jerusalem visiting for this annual event the whole city was stirred so then we just move on to verses 12 to 14 and I want to pick up what exactly Jesus is doing in the temple and why of course why is he doing

this verses 12 tells us that Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there he overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves so that was you have to picture in the outer larger courtyard now this would be probably the courtyard of the gentiles because the gentiles were now being included although I think some of the Jews were probably a bit slow to really really welcome that the Jesus ministry was going out there probably in this outer courtyard there was a lot of activity buying and selling now if you were a worshiper in those days and you brought your perfect sacrifice it had to be a good quality lamb or whatever it was you were asked to bring if you come from a distance of course your animal may be in a terrible state it might not even survive the trip so you might have had to buy the acceptable sacrifice in the temple courts there was also a temple tax to be paid that had to be paid with Jewish coins not Roman coins so there would have been money changes and the feeling of what was going on there is that this had become a place where there was a lot of profiteering and there was a collusion between some of the chief priests and the traders and the poor were being exploited people who couldn't afford to buy the things that were good to give to God and there was something really bad about this so Jesus comes and you see him angry you see him driving out those who were buying and selling and overturning tables but then why why does he do this he quickly tells us also in verse 12 verse 13 he says my house will be called a house of prayer and he's quoting from Isaiah 56 and verse 7 but you have made it a den of robbers so Jesus had come to his city he'd come to the temple the focal point of where heaven and earth meet and he didn't like what he saw he was rejecting it the temple was meant to be a place where people met with God he he had and perhaps even more remarkable is that he appears to be unchallenged you can't quite imagine you pick almost any established religious establishment in our country where someone goes in and really changes what's going on and you don't think it'd be very long before the security men are handling you and removing you and restoring the peace but not here you wonder why that might have been perhaps in the background of great popularity of Jesus and the crowds around Jerusalem made the priests and the temple people very afraid but perhaps also just this was God and he had an authority but this one man was stirring things up and he was unchallenged it's as interesting little details you pick up there are some parallel passages in Mark and Luke but in Mark 11 and verse 16 we get a little extra detail that Jesus would not allow anyone carrying merchandise to go through the temple courts so that suggests not just the sinfulness of the activity but the busyness of the activity was also something that Jesus did not want in a place where people were seeking or should be seeking God unholy activity and excessive busyness and we see the righteous anger of God what's the third thing you can go to turning the tables and driving out the traces what's the third thing a rather unusual thing we could cut here in verse 14 the blind and the lame came to him at the temple and he healed them what an interesting contrast that imagine any of us have been very angry and moving around to suddenly find a very big change of mood and a vulnerable group come to him in the temple such a compassion is shown here and he does heal them in itself a lovely story we've also noticed in the earlier part we read in Matthew 28 and 20 sorry 20 and 29 there were some blind people healed just before he comes into Jerusalem but there is a little more to this I wonder in terms of who Jesus was and I just ask you to hark back to [30:28] John's question that was sent to Jesus when John was in prison remember the one are you the one who is to come or should we expect someone else what did Jesus reply this is in Matthew 11 verses 3 to 5 go and report to John what you see and hear the blind receive sight and the lame walk so that's an answer from Jesus are you the Messiah he doesn't answer it quite directly but he says that's what's going on that should tell you the answer and there is an earlier prophecy it's a couple of times in Isaiah but I just quote one of them to you this is in Isaiah 35 and verses 4 to 6 your God will come to save you and then the eyes of the blind will be opened ears of the deaf unstopped the lame will leap like a deer the mute tongue will shout for joy so there are older writings predicting that when the

Messiah came this is the kind of thing he would be doing so this is drawing attention to Jesus such a Messiah but it's interesting perhaps even beyond the compassion and that those references to the Messiah healing blind and lame it's interesting to notice also that the Jews typically excluded the blind and the lame from the temple and there was some perhaps some perhaps muddled

history on why they did this one aspect of it goes back to a story when David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites and this is recorded in 2 Samuel 5 and around verse 8 a little bit before and after the Jebusites up on the city in Jerusalem on a high hill and feeling very impregnable they mocked David's attempt to take the city and said oh we're so confident you can't get us we're just going to put the blind and the lame on guard there's no those of you who know this story David cunningly eventually his people find a plan to go up the water shaft and they do take the city but they don't forget the way that these people mocked and in 2 Samuel 5 and verse 8 there is a sense that the blind and the lame were kept away from God's house at least that was the provocative hate that David had at the time I don't think he completely stayed with that as you say you will also know some of you have heard of Mephibosheth a friend who was lame and came to stay with David that he was not consistently keeping out blind and lame people but there was a part of that but also there was something in Leviticus 21 about in the same way that people bringing sacrifices had to bring perfect sacrifices certainly on the priests operating the temple they had to be people largely without defect but I think the Jews had probably taken this a step further and they had kept the blind and the lame out of the temple altogether so there is something else apart from the compassion of healing blind and lame

Jesus is welcoming groups that were previously kept away and the only other part of this idea of the invitation to access to God widening is that in the Mark parallel passage in Mark 11 we get a little extra information we heard about Jesus responding saying this is meant to be a house of prayer but Mark says for all nations he adds and we heard Phil reminding us so many times of the temple up on the hill and that the nations will stream to it this was the vision of where this was all going that other people would also come and enjoy God and access to him there was an earlier episode when Jesus came to the temple and did something fairly similar clearing the temple with anger this is recorded in

John chapter 2 verses 19 and 20 perhaps a little bit before that and when the Jews at the time asked Jesus to give a sign to them he said and they took it as a bit of a riddle he said destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days now they thought he meant the building but the temple he had spoken of was his body so this is not in our passage but in an earlier very similar event at the start of Jesus' ministry ministry what a clear statement there was of how the temple had a short life and that Jesus was going to fulfil and replace the temple very clear words here they thought he meant the building but the temple that he had spoken about that Jesus had spoken about was his body so we see Jesus entering

[36:12] Jerusalem the lowly king and he is rejecting what he finds particularly in the temple and we've seen a little from the reaction of the chief priests in the temples that they didn't like Jesus they weren't going to get in there and stop him physically but they were angry they were angry and as a result of this discord even if it was a little in the background at the moment as we all know in the story soon enough Jesus would be crucified as they couldn't tolerate him any more we also noticed in that earlier here in the temple in John too that the animals in the temple courts were also driven out that isn't expressly mentioned in our passage but it is also a hint of Jesus being aware that these would soon be unnecessary even if temporarily they should have been taking on the buying and selling somewhere else and not profiteering on it so the days of the physical temple building were numbered but as we have just touched on this idea that Jesus is the temple

Jesus has become the temple it's worth touching on a couple of other scriptures there's one here in John 1 the word became flesh and made his dwelling literally tabernacled going back to that temporary sense that we talked about earlier the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us we have seen his glory the one who came from the father full of grace and truth we know also from 1 Corinthians for in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form so Christ was he had all of God in him dwelling the new temple notice the two different reactions this is in verses 15 and 16 the children in the temple courts what were they doing shouting Hosanna to the son of David they saw what happened and that was their response but the chief priests and the teachers of the law they were indignant and asked him do you hear what these children are saying yes Jesus replied have you never read from the lips of children and infants you have called forth praise and

Jesus left them I think we've touched on the different aspects of the story and I just want the remaining moments to draw a few lessons for us perhaps the primary one especially if you've got in your mind that formidable story of the Old Testament practice of God dwelling there in a mighty way in a place you couldn't easily draw near to others having to act on your behalf the priests to make sacrifices for your sin one of the first things

I pick up from this is that of course in Christ this is not keep away anymore but draw near so Christ is the fulfilment of the temple but in Christ believers have become the place where God dwells this is expressly stated in 1 Corinthians 6 and 19 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 so in the Old Testament fear keep your distance in the New Testament this is in Hebrews 4 since we have a great high priest Jesus let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need perhaps in the current times we are in what a need there is to approach this mighty

God who is sovereign and in control even of the crisis that we are in but to feel that we can approach boldly and receive mercy and find grace in our time of need the other thing which is interesting to note yes the sacrifices the specific type of sacrifices being offered in the temple are no longer required because Jesus wants and for all death and the shedding of his blood as one without sin meant that these sacrifices were no longer required the sacrifice was sufficient for our sin but we are still to offer sacrifices and Hebrews 13 in verses 15 to 16 says this through Jesus therefore let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise the fruit of lips that openly profess his name and do not forget to do good and share with others for with such sacrifices God is pleased and other lovely words in Psalm 51 and verse 17 my sacrifice

[41:57] O God is a broken spirit a broken and contrite heart O God you will not despise it's a very healthy thing to have a brokenness in our hearts that can in one you see our sin in another see the awful pain and punishment of Jesus for our sin and holding the both together our spirits are broken this is a healthy and a good sacrifice to offer to God the next lesson is about holiness but it really does matter that was one of the reasons why Jesus was driving out these unwholesome practices and if we now see that in Christ God dwells in us it's got to be an obvious question for us as we look within us are there things deep within us that need driving out things that are getting in the way of us drawing near to

God and experiencing him more fully all of us I'm sure would long for his presence to be more felt we long to experience them but in keeping with some of what we've read I wonder if we do realise what that may mean there are some words in Malachi that warn us this is in Malachi 3 verses 1 and 2 it says then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple and I think in a measure we may see that fulfilled in what in this passage we're looking at the messenger of the covenant whom we desire will come says the Lord Almighty but who can endure the day of his coming who can stand when he appears for he will be like a refined fire or a laundress soap and that's the final thing maybe a more minor point from all that we've been looking at but apart from the bad practices and evil ways that may be needing to be removed just the sheer fact of busyness in the temple of God was needing to be stopped so that people could hear from him you may remember even the stories of old when

Hannah was hearing from God and she was near the temple she wouldn't have been able to hear from God if the priest wouldn't have even noticed her praying if there was such busyness the temple needed to be a quiet place so deep within us we need to know how to be quiet to draw near to God so I hope all of that skim through has been a blessing to you I will lead on to a couple of songs now and after that I will pray but even beyond that please in your homes just fellowship together and pray a little more until we meet again in whatever form Amen so we'll have two more songs now in succession one of them again the words will be on the pdf if you can access that

Steve will have told you how the first one is 298 Hosanna in the highest and that will be followed by 341 you are the king of glory Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna to the highest Hosanna Hosanna Hosanna in the highest glory lift up your name with your hearts full of praise be exalted alone my God

Hosanna and the highest glory glory glory glory to the king of kings glory glory glory glory to the king of kings glory lift up your name every every will praise be exalted our lord my God glory to the king of kings You are the King of Glory

[47:36] You are the Prince of Peace You are the Lord of Heaven You are the Son of Righteousness Angels bow down before You Worship and let go for You You love the words of eternal life You are Jesus Christ the Lord Hosanna to the Son of David Hosanna to the King of Peace Glory in the highest heaven O Jesus the Messiah reigns You are the King of Glory You are the Prince of Peace

You are the Lord of Heaven You are the Son of Righteousness Angels bow down before You Worship and let go for You You are the Lord of Heaven You are the Son of Righteousness You are the Lord of Heaven Hosanna to the Son of David Hosanna to the King of Peace Glory in the highest heaven Lord Jesus the Messiah reigns Hosanna to the King of Heaven So Lord we'll close in prayer now Our Heavenly Father we ask You to help us just to take these simple thoughts about Your presence

The temple that You require holiness To help us to look within and to challenge ourselves And in this time of increased isolation that we will take the opportunities to draw near to You As we stand back amazed There is in a sense so much going on How this practice of the temple and the sacrifice had gone on for so many years And soon after Jesus' death and resurrection That function of the temple was gone And Jesus was now the primary place where the spotlight was that God dwells on earth And through His Spirit given to His people we carry this on Lord we pray that You will remind us that we are temples That You will help us to keep our house in order To clear it and sweep it clean

That we may be holy And that in the sense of communing with You we will not be busy Do bless us we pray in Jesus name Amen Amen