

16th May 2021

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service set out below.

Opening Prayer Almighty God, Heavenly Father you alone are worthy of all praise. Forgive us for the times we do not live up to your call to us to be transformed into the likeness of you Son. Thank you for your superabundant grace and the gift of extravagant joy. Help us live in this fulness of life you offer us today, and like your miracles, may we be a sign of your Kingdom, which draws others into your light, love, and life. **Amen**



Song:

Grace, what have You done?
Murdered for me on that cross
Accused in absence of wrong
My sin washed away in Your blood
Too much to make sense of it all
I know that Your love breaks my fall

*The scandal of grace
You died in my place
So my soul will live
All to be like You
Give all I have just to know You
Jesus, there's no one besides You
Forever the hope in my heart*

Death, where is your sting?
Your power is as dead as my sin

The cross has taught me to live
In mercy my heart now to sing
The day and it's troubles shall come
I know that Your strength is enough

The scandal of grace...

Bridge:

And it's all because of You, Jesus
It's all because of You, Jesus
It's all because of Your love that my
soul will live

All to be like You...

Give all I have just to know You
Jesus, there's no one besides You
Forever the hope in my heart.

Read: John 2:12-25.

God brings renewal. *A summary of the talk given by Lorna Littlewood.*

The scene of today's reading is in the Temple just before the festival of Passover. Understanding the significance and purpose of the Temple is key in understanding Jesus' actions in this reading.

The temple is a place where God and humanity meet. This begins as the Garden of Eden, and later becomes the tabernacle and later the Temple in Jerusalem. The temple is evidence that God chooses to be with his people but after the fall, this is no longer a place where his people can just waltz into his presence. Sin makes us unfit to be near the presence of God, and so the temple becomes the place where God's people bring their sacrifices to be restored in their relationship with Him.

Ultimately, the temple is a place God's people come to be in relationship with Him; it is a place of worship. There are three main words usually translated as 'worship' in the Bible, and they mean the following:

1. To honour / bow down / humble oneself to: God's people came to worship him at his place on his terms. God set out the rules for sacrifice and worship, and God's people recognised his authority in following these instructions.
2. To serve: God appointed specific people – the Priests and Levites,

to serve him in the temple through specific roles.

3. To revere / fear / respect: God's people had a keen appreciation of the holiness and power of God. There were strict rules about how close certain people could get to the Holy of Holies where the presence of God was. They knew that God was holy and powerful, and they respected him.

However, when Jesus came into the temple courts in our reading in John 2, he found stall holders ripping people off and making money. He found a noisy, smelly marketplace bustling with people and animals. He found people more interested in serving their own gain, than in serving God, and in doing so, they were taking more than they should from those who were seeking to bring a sacrifice to God. This scene is unjust, offensive, and evil – quite the opposite of the worship God requires.

Re-read verses 15-16. It's easy to read this and picture Jesus simply losing it – going mad with rage, flipping tables and chasing people with a whip. But there is a big difference between reacting and responding and verse 15 tells us that Jesus took the time to make a whip, suggesting that his actions were not the result of an uncontrolled temper; this was a reasoned response.

Edmund Burke is famously quoted as writing "The only thing necessary for



the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” In the temple that day, Jesus encountered something that was evil – something that was in direct opposition to the kingdom of God.

When we see modern day equivalents – how will we respond?

Jesus’ response was a strong one, and it didn’t go unnoticed. When questioned by the religious leaders, Jesus explained that they could tear down the temple and he would rebuild it in three days. Of course, he was referring to himself – in Jesus, we find the ultimate fulfilment of the Temple. He is the place where God and humanity can meet. He is the true place we can bring our worship. And later on, Paul tells us that we are like mini-temples – we are the place where the Holy Spirit dwells. Are our lives reflecting the kind of worship God requires in His Temple?

So I would encourage us to take a moment to reflect with Jesus. Picture

sitting beside him as he braids his whip in the temple – ready to drive out all that isn’t honouring God. In the temple of our own lives, what needs driving out?



Is there anything in me that is arrogant? How could my life show greater honour to God?

Is there anything in me that is selfish? How could my life be of greater service to God?

Is there anything in me that is prideful? How could I live in greater reverence of God?

Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Philippians 4:4-6)



- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, for neighbours, for family and friends.
- Pray for the Church.

Collect: 7th Sunday of Easter. O God the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**



The Lord's Prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

Blessing: God the Father, by whose love Christ was raised from the dead, open to us who believe the gates of everlasting life. God the Son, who in bursting the grave has won a glorious victory, give us joy as you share the Easter faith. God the Holy Spirit, whom the risen Lord breathed into his disciples, empower you and fill us with Christ's peace. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

The Notices: We are now holding ticketed and socially distanced services in the building on Sundays at 9.30am. Further information on our website or by ringing our vicar, Howard.

If you know of others who would like to receive this, or you would rather not receive it; or if you find yourself isolated and not able to get neighbours, friends, or family to help, then ring Howard, 01420 563344.

