

Sunday 7th March 2021 – Bulwell United Reformed Church

The reading for the second Sunday of Lent is **John 2.13-22**. Jesus overturning the tables in the Temple is a shocking act but seems nothing compared to what he says next. The Temple was believed to be a space where heaven touched earth, but Jesus speaks of destroying it and rebuilding it in three days. However, Jesus isn't speaking about the physical Temple, but his body. Jesus signals that his death and resurrection makes the whole world into the Temple of God. *A short service for personal communion focusing on confessing Jesus is Lord is included. Please have your bread & wine/juice ready.*

A gathering prayer

Holy God, as we meet together today,
we ask that you renew our love for you.
Open our eyes to see fresh things,
open our ears to hear with more clarity,
open our minds to recognise new ideas –
that we may be willing to grow and change
and to become more like your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Loving God, as we worship, we are aware of our faults and failings, forgive us Lord:
for the times we have not seen you as you truly are,
for the times we have not heard your voice,
for the times we have followed our own way, despite the promptings of your word.
We need your cleansing touch on our lives
So that we may leave behind our sins and follow you anew.

Declaration of forgiveness

The Lord Jesus says to all who come to him in repentance

“Your sins are forgiven; come, follow me”

Amen, thanks be to God.

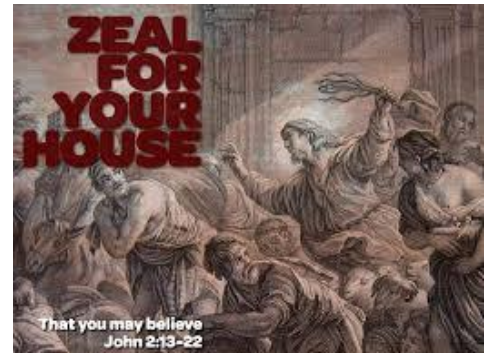
Our Father who art in heaven...

Song O Breath of Life, come sweeping through us

[\(399\) O Breath of Life, Come Sweeping Through Us - YouTube](#)

John 2: 13-22 - Jesus clears the temple courts

¹³ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. ¹⁵ So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts,



both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶To those who sold doves he said, 'Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!' ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'

¹⁸The Jews then responded to him, 'What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?'

¹⁹Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.'

²⁰They replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?' ²¹But the temple he had spoken of was his body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. (NIVUK)

Jesus clears the Temple

Like all other early first-century Jews, Jesus viewed the Temple as God's dwelling place, the meeting point of heaven and earth, the navel of the world. Trading in the Temple was convenient for the Jews who could not use Roman coins to buy sacrificial animals. However, the situation was open to abuse.

Jesus responds passionately to the exploitation of the people and the disrespect shown to God. He ruthlessly drives the traders out. God's house must be cleansed. It is to be a house of prayer not commerce.

The Jews question Jesus' authority for this action and ask for a sign. Jesus replies that if this temple is destroyed, it will be raised in three days. The Jews become angry that he is threatening the Temple building. But Jesus is referring to the temple of his body - an ambiguous reference to his death and resurrection.

In effect, what the Jews heard was that he wanted to destroy the Temple, on which construction work was still under way. They failed to understand that worship of God can never be dependent on physical properties alone but on Jesus' love and life in the believer. If these are absent when we engage in worship, we talk to ourselves rather than communicate with God.

This links in with Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman: that the day would come when people would worship God neither on Mount Gerizim (favoured by the Samaritans) nor in Jerusalem (favoured by the Jews), for true worship would be offered in spirit and in truth (John 4:23).

Jesus is saying that he is the Messiah. The one who will die and rise again and usher in a new covenant. Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures, being himself 'the temple' in whom God 'lived among us' (John 1.14). We are people of the new covenant. Our worship is not constrained to place e.g. a temple. We are very privileged - we can know Jesus in our everyday lives.

Romans 12:1 Says, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship." Our worship is lifestyle, a framework for life, worship and commitment to God, relationships within the family and the standards to be set in the community.

Yes, we need our buildings to aid us in our mission, to be places of worship and a focus of hope for our community. A building is very likely to be a helpful visible presence and it facilitates the worship and witness of the kingdom of God – proclaiming the good news of the Jesus Christ and carrying out his practical ministry today. If we can get the balance right between maintenance and mission then surely many people’s lives will be touched by Jesus.

Intercessions

Almighty God, we pray for our world
We pray for all who work for peace and justice
All who work to challenge injustice and change unjust structures
That they may be empowered by your love and your righteousness
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer ...

Lord Jesus, healer of many hurts
We pray for all who are sick in body mind and spirit
For all who work to care for them
And for all who research and produce new medicines, vaccines and methods of healing.
We pray especially for all who have been disadvantaged by the Covid 19 pandemic around the world.
And for all who are working to overcome obstacles of hunger, thirst, access to education and employment
So that we may all come together in love at your table
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer ...

Holy Spirit, Comforter,
Come to all who are lonely, who are separated from loved ones, who mourn the loss of family and friends
Come to the discouraged, the downtrodden and those who feel they have been forgotten
Reassure them of your great love for them
In a moment of silence we pray for those particularly in our thoughts this day (pause)
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Song Breathe on me, Breath of God - Harding University Concert Choir, Searcy, Arkansas

[\(399\) Breathe on Me, Breath of God {Tune: Trentham} \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

Holy Communion – Third Sunday of Lent

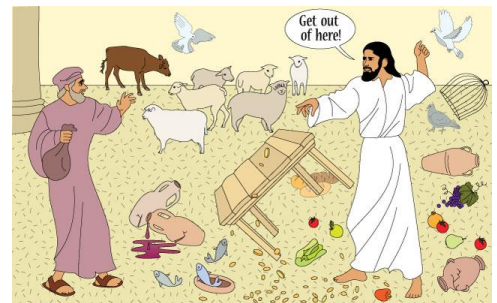
We give you all thanks and praise, O God,
for the Word of your cross, though appearing foolish,
is the power and wisdom which save us.

When the world, in its sophistication and pride,
made an idol of money
and a marketplace of your temple,



using your name only to boost profits,
you sent your Son, Jesus Christ,
filled with zeal for your honour.
He was torn down by the fury of evil and corruption,
but rose again in three days,
forever establishing the foolishness and weakness of God
as the pathway of life and salvation.

***Therefore, with our hearts lifted high,
we offer you thanks and praise at all times
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.***



The Sharing of the Bread and the Wine

We give thanks to you, O God, that you cause the vine to yield fruit.
We bless you for Christ, the true vine, whose blood was poured out for us.
By your Holy Spirit sanctify us and this wine, that the cup which we bless may be to us the communion of the blood of Christ, and that through abiding in him we may bear fruit that shall last.

Eat this bread. It is the bread of life.

Drink this wine. It is the cup of blessing.

Prayer after communion

Most gracious God, we praise you for what you have given and for what you have promised us here. You have made us one with all your people in heaven and on earth. You have fed us with the bread of life and renewed us for your service.

Now we give ourselves to you; and we ask that our daily living may be part of the life of your kingdom, and that our love may be your love reaching out into the life of the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A sending out prayer

We came together to worship God.
We have read God's Word.
We have prayed and sung songs.
Now we go into God's world:
to be God's people wherever we are called to go.
Let us go in Christ's name.
Amen.



