

Sunday 7th March 2021

Revd Nico Hilmy-Jones - "The cleansing of the Temple"

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use whilst we are unable to use Methodist Church premises. We invite you to spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you.

Welcome and

The Lighting of the Candle *(Nico)*

Call to Worship *(Nico)*

Lord God, We have gathered together today because our spirits long to come into your presence. You alone are the hope and joy we seek for the living of our lives. You alone are the salvation we long for. Come and dwell in our midst today. Reach into every heart and soul that has assembled in this place and be gracious to us. Answer our heartfelt prayers and send us away to proclaim the glory of you name in all the world.

Hymn MPC 388

Jesus we enthrone you

Jesus, we enthrone you
We proclaim you are King
Standing here, in the midst of us
We raise you with our praise.

And as we worship

- build a throne x 3

Come Lord Jesus

and take your place.

Paul Kyle (born 1953)

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Opening Prayer and

The Lord's Prayer *(Maddox Family)*

Let us pray;

Dear Lord, Almighty God, you are the source of all true and lasting joy. We praise you for your power which is beyond compare. We worship you for your wisdom which is beyond understanding. You can meet all our needs, even during times of global illness You restore the brokenhearted and heal the wounded.

You have revealed yourself to your people and are building your church, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. We pray for your church in Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and Herm, but also across the wider world and across all denominations, that it will be an even more welcoming and inclusive place, that the House of God will be for everyone and will cross barriers to bring all people into the Temple of Christ. Lord, How great you are. Fill our hearts with love as we respond by singing praises to you, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name; Thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel John 2:13-22 (*Maddox Family*)

¹³When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

¹⁴In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.

¹⁵So 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.

Reflection *(Nico)*

I read a story about a young couple who moved into a new neighbourhood. The first morning while they were eating breakfast, the young woman watched as her neighbour was hanging the washing outside on the clothes line. Known as a rather pernickety woman, she said to her husband: 'That laundry is not very clean. She doesn't know how to wash correctly. You would think she would realise that and get better laundry detergent'. Her husband looked on, and simply said 'yes dear'.

As the first few weeks went by every time her neighbour would hang her washing out to dry, the young woman would make the same comments and her husband would just look and say "yes dear". One month later, the woman was surprised to see nice clean washing on the line and said to her husband sarcastically: 'Look, our neighbour has finally learned how to wash correctly. It took her long enough to see that she needed to change her detergent!' The husband said matter of factly 'Yes dear and then said: 'oh by the way, I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows.' And so it is with life.

What we see when watching others, depends on the cleanliness of the window through which we look.

John's description of the cleansing of the Temple shows us that Jesus came to renew the Jewish faith, to challenge their institutional views of God and to bring both passion and purity back into the worship of God. We read in verses 14 -15: In the temple courts he found men selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. While in the Temple it became clear that God's sanctuary had become a market place with the selling of animals for sacrifice and Jesus' reaction was immediate and filled with anger. By driving the animals out of the Court Jesus was making a statement about the true worship of God saying that the old way of doing faith was no longer appropriate, it's ritualistic ways had replaced their passion for God and now their worship was without meaning.

Then the Jews demanded of him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?," in verse 18.

What they were really saying was "By what authority have you come in here and disrupted the temple?" This act of Jesus is an act of disruption: not disrupting what is happening in the Temple but an act of disruption that cut to the core of the Jewish faith and all it stood for. This is a moment of crisis: not for the money changers but for the people of God.

Jesus' answer was not what they expected to hear, in verse 19, when he says: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Here we see that Jesus is giving the authorities their sign, He is telling them of the ultimate sign which will be His death and resurrection. He is referring to Himself as the Temple of God, and He is also prophesying His coming crucifixion.

In verse 21 it says: But the temple he had spoken of was his body. Through his resurrection, Jesus Himself becomes the new Temple for the people of God. God has once and for all come to meet with His people and commune with them in human form, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is all the Temple they needed. He has come down to them; He is the one who abides with them. He is the Temple.

What this story teaches us today is that there is a deeper meaning to the cleansing of the Temple. Israel had transformed the acts and offers of sacrifice into an empty ritual to give them the power for their own salvation. Are we guilty of doing that today in our own Churches? For Jesus, the Temple no longer did what it was supposed to do. Instead of connecting the people to God, or being that place where people could find God, the Temple had become a barrier to their relationship with God. And so, this reading challenges us as Christians to reevaluate our religious practices and Churches.

As we are moving back into our Churches and trying to make our faith relevant what do we need to do differently in order to honour and live the teachings and ministry of Jesus? It prompts us to reevaluate how we think of other people and how we live up to being Followers of Christ. Jesus is calling us back, as he did with the Temple Authorities to focus on what true worship is and how we live out the true message of God when we follow Jesus.

Our reading today, calls us to respond. Our challenge then is to be the Body of Christ, where the House of God shall be a house for all people, a house of equality and hospitality for every nation, every language, every person, no matter what their gender or sexual orientation is, regardless of status, especially for the poor, the marginalised, and the outcast. Answering the call of God is life changing and Jesus empowers us with the Holy Spirit and sends us out as Followers of Christ to live resurrected lives, and to carry a message of forgiveness, hope, and transformation to all people.

We must be willing to cross social, racial, and economic boundaries, overturn tables of corruption and honour the Temple of Christ, in the world.

If Jesus leads you to cross barriers to reach the lost: Follow Him.

If Jesus leads you to help those in their time of need: Follow Him.

If Jesus leads you to offer others compassion and hope: Follow Him.

If Jesus leads you to be more active in your Church: Follow Him.

If Jesus leads you to offer others His Grace: Follow Him.

Today, we must symbolise the message that Jesus is our Holy Temple who teaches us to love ALL people and not just some. Who teaches us that all people are worthy and not just those who look like us, act like us and live like us. My God is mighty and loving and loves even someone like me, flawed and different, but still a child of God. Breaking down the walls of separation is honouring our worship, honouring our faith and honouring the Temple of God.

Perhaps before we can even do this, we need to clean our own windows in our life and see, again, the transforming message of Jesus and be a community that embodies hope and love for everyone.
AMEN.

My Hope Is Built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

*On Christ the solid rock I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.*

When darkness veils
His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath His covenant and His blood
Support me in the whelming flood:
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.

When He shall come
with trumpet sound,
O may I then in him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless we stand
before His throne.

*Edward Mote (1797-1874)
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Prayers of Intercession

(Anne Pryke)

Let us pray, Lord, you came to cleanse The Temple. We pray for for all organisations which make up our society, and strive to help others. We pray for our Churches, our schools and Universities, our hospitals and care homes, and all who work for the common good.

*May they serve
the greater good
and adapt
to the changing
needs of the time*

Lord, you came to redeem our World. We pray for our government, our rulers and those who regulate trade, and who make difficult decisions. At this time, we pray for organisations especially 'All We Can', Christian Aid, who work and support to make our World a better place. We pray too for the WHO, as they begin to distribute vaccine to third world countries and strive for a fairer society.

*May they serve
the greater good
and adapt
to the needs of the time.*

Lord, you came to save us. We pray for our local community, and those who play a part in it. We pray for our families, whom we may not have seen for many months or given them a hug. We pray for our friends and bless them for being part of our lives. We pray for those whom we know who are not well in body or mind. We cling to your promise to come into our lives and we open ourselves to your coming.

*May they serve
the greater good,
and adapt to the needs
of the changing time.*

We offer all our prayers in the name of Jesus, who came, who comes and will come.

Amen

Philippians 2:10

Hymn Singing the Faith 317

At the name of Jesus

every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of glory now;
'tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season,
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners,
unto whom he came;
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed;

Bore it up triumphant,
with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures,
to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast,
filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest.

Surely, this Lord Jesus
shall return again,
with His Father's glory,
with His angel train;
for all wreaths of empire,
meet upon His brow,
And our hearts confess Him,
King of glory now.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-1877)

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Blessing and Benediction *(Nico)*

May God enfold you in a tender
and lasting love. May Christ Jesus
be beside you in times of struggle;
and may the Holy Spirit guide you
back to the path whenever you
stray.

May the blessing of God the
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be
among us and remain with us
always. AMEN.