

4.12.24 pm

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Date: 04 February 2024

Preacher: Reverend John Lachie Macleod

- [0 : 00] Well good evening everybody and welcome to this evening service of the North Harris Free Church combined with the final session of the Island Study Conference. And I do want to pay a very big thank you to the conference committee for the invitation to be here and for giving me an excuse to come back to Harris at the first opportunity.
- So thank you all and thank you for the encouragements, the fellowship and worshipping together has been a real privilege. I've got one intimation to make which is just to encourage you if you're able to stay behind for the fellowship supper immediately after this service followed by a time of fellowship together in closing the conference.
- We're going to begin our worship of God together singing from the Scottish Psalter Psalm 146 the verses marked 1 to 8. Praise God, the Lord praise O my soul, I'll praise God while I live, while I have being to my God in songs I'll praises give.
- And we sing down to the end of verse 8. The Lord doth give the blind their sight, the bow down doth raise up, the Lord doth dearly love all those that walk in upright ways.
- Let's stand to sing. Amen. Praise God, the Lord praise O my soul, I'll praise God while I live, while I have being to my God in songs I'll praises give.
- [1 : 47] Trust not in princes nor man's son, in whom there is no shame.
- His dread he parts to their feet turns, that day his thoughts he gave.
- O happy is that man and blessed whom Jacob's God of hate, whose hope upon the Lord of rest and on his God is saved.
- Who made the earth and heaven's high, who made the swelling deep, and all margins within the sin, who truth doth ever keep.
- For righteous judgments execute, for those oppressed and me.
- [3 : 13] Who to the hungry givers food, God sets the blister's fee.
- The Lord doth give the blind their sight, the bow with doubt doth raise.
- The Lord doth dearly love all those that walk in upright ways.
- Let's worship God as we draw near to him in our praying together. Eternal God, Lord and Father of your people.
- We do find it humbling that we have this opportunity to acknowledge together the praises that belong to the Lord God Almighty.
- [4 : 22] That from the face of the earth, you have gathered a people whose eyes you have opened to give understanding and to give insight and instruction.
- That in our ways in this world, we might live them not in the darkness of our natural spiritual ignorance. But in the understanding we receive through the light of your grace, that as a people we exist by your power.
- We were formed for your purposes. And through the glorious mercies of the cross of Jesus Christ, we can find redemption to have that hope of eternal glory through everything Christ has done for us.

And so we thank you tonight, O God, that in our worshipping, we are not seeking to come and somehow find an answer to the reason we walk on this earth.

But we are coming to express thanks and praise to the one who has made clear to us the reason why we exist, the reason why we are here. And the one who has proved to be incredibly patient with us, who has watched our wandering, who has watched our folly, who has watched us fumble in the darkness of our sinfulness.

[5 : 32] And yet, Lord, you have shown incredible grace. You have shown glorious mercy in that you shine truth into our innermost beings. And you awaken us with the voice of the call of the gospel that encourages us to repent and to believe.

And in believing, to receive from you the wonder of forgiveness, the pardon that sets us free, the peace that secures us, the love that fills us, the joy that invigorates us, and the hope that keeps us.

And so we pray to you, our glorious God and Savior tonight, as we recognize that your kingdom is one of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, because we come to serve you in the name and in the merits and the power and in the person of Jesus Christ, your Son.

We thank you, God, that you have not waited ominously for us to find the perfect sacrifice from our own resources. But you are the God who has provided the perfection of the way in which a righteous, holy God could maintain the integrity of his eternal mind and heart and yet be reconciled to those who rebelled, to those who sinned, to those who fell.

And we thank you, Lord, that that perfection is in him who loved us and gave himself for us. And so we're glad, oh God, that we have opportunity in these days together to encourage one another and to seek to bless one another in the knowledge that the greatest thing we could ever share together is the mutual knowledge, the shared worship of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

[7 : 12] And indeed, we would pray, Lord, that these days will have been for us and will continue to encourage us in the knowledge that we taste on this earth merely a sample of the glory of the life that will belong to you in the kingdom that is coming in the name and power of your beloved Son.

And so, Father, we thank you for the opportunities to worship together, to hear from your word, to pray for one another, to fellowship together, to encourage one another as we're conscious, God, in the day that we live in, we need the fellowship.

We need to burn brightly together, so conscious of how we wither and the flame can die so quickly in our isolations. And so we pray, God, that you would bring that breath of renewing power upon us as we worship you tonight, longing to be faithful to the call of Christ, to worship you in spirit and in truth.

We pray, Lord, for the local congregations here and for every congregation represented as we acknowledge to you our need for you, to be renewed in our understanding of our need for you, and to be faithful in the cry of our heart to come before you, that you will not forget us, that you will not pass us by, but that even in these days of darkness, you might show us again a day of your eternal power.

We thank you that your word is a source of strength to us. We thank you that it gives guidance and grace. We thank you for its enlightening power. Father, we thank you, Lord, for its truth and clarity.

[8 : 49] And we pray that as we approach it again this evening, that we would be able to do so with open hearts, with hungry spirits, longing to hear, longing to know what God has to say to us.

We thank you, Father, for all that we learn of you, and we long to have that resolve within our wills, that what you have spoken will be implemented as we return in the coming days and weeks to our everyday responsibilities and livings.

Thank you for the opportunities, for the blessings of the hotel provision and all that was done so wonderfully for the guests who came to stay. And thank you for the welcome in this congregation and in this building.

And we continue to pray for David and his fellow elders that as they minister for you, O God, that the consciousness of your power and anointing upon them would be that encouragement to them.

And that they would see a day of fruitfulness, that they would see continued encouragement as they seek to glorify Christ and to hold him up as we acknowledge, Lord, you still are the only hope we have.

[9 : 59] You are our hope in life and in death. And so we thank you, God, that we can lay hold of you. And we pray that tonight as we come afresh in confession, as we come afresh in the acknowledgement of our need, we pray that we would know the blessing of your presence and the glorying in you that brings life to your children, that that would be our experience as we worship you together.

In Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing in Gaelic in Psalm, from Psalm 67, verses 3 to 5.

David quoted a good excuse for not reading the Gaelic verse this morning. I probably should do the Gaelic language a favor and not attempt the same. But I will just to start us.

We're going to sing from the beginning of verse 3, the two stanzas, to the end of verse 5. Molle and popol us a ye. Molle gach popol u.

Molle gach popol u.

[11 : 14] Molle gach popol u.

Molle gach popol u.

Molle gach popol u.

Molle gach popol u.

Molle gach popol u. Molle gach popol u.

[12 : 34] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS

CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS Well, we're going to read God's word, and we're going to read from the prophecy of Jeremiah, in the seventh chapter.

In the three sessions that I prepared for the study conference, I was looking at one incident, well two incidents, but one theme of the house of prayer, something Jesus stated emphatically about the temple at the beginning and end of his ministry, and we find him in his engagement with the people of his day, revealing something that we don't often associate with Jesus, an anger at the behaviour and actions of those who were in the temple and what they had allowed the temple to become.

And in the first session we looked at John chapter 2, where we see the disciples quote from the Old Testament as they witnessed Jesus clearing the temple and they recognised in his actions the kind of prophecy of who the Lord said would come in the line of King David, one who would be consumed with zeal for God's house.

Somebody who was so passionately concerned that the temple God had established would be true to what it was meant to be there for, which was to bring people to God.

[15 : 52] And in that recognition of Jesus as the man who is consumed with zeal for the household of God, we recognise that it is in Jesus we find through worship.

It is through Jesus that we learn to worship God. It is through Jesus that we learn to pray. There is a person that we need at the heart of the house of prayer.

And then yesterday morning we considered a second Old Testament quotation that Jesus himself used in connection to the clearing of the temple when he said my house shall be called a house of prayer.

And Jesus was appealing to a prophecy of Isaiah whereby the people recognising the prophecy would know that he was referring to a time where God was making a future promise concerning the state of Israel that there would be a day when they would be restored.

We were hearing some great encouragements regarding that through the studies in Haggai. And the Lord had said that the day would come where there would be restoration, there would be hope, the marginalised and the excluded would be brought into the house of God.

[17 : 07] It would be that place where people could call upon God. And when we think of how wonderful the temple is, we might think, well, how did it ever get into such a mess?

But when we think what an amazing thing the Church of Jesus Christ is, we can often ask ourselves the same question. And tonight as we look at the last of the Old Testament quotations from Jesus' lips with regards to the temple, I hope that it will help challenge us, deal with the problems that prevent us from being the house of prayer and people of worship that God would want us to be.

Jeremiah chapter 7 at verse 1 reads, The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord. Stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim there this word and say, Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the Lord.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place.

Do not trust in these deceptive words, this is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord. For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harem, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever.

[19 : 05] Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered, only to go on doing all these abominations.

Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord.

Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it because of the evil of my people Israel. And now, because you have done all these things, declares the Lord, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer.

Therefore, I will do to the house that is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you, and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.

And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim. As for you, do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them, and do not intercede with me, for I will not hear you.

[20 : 40] May God bless that reading from his word. Now, I've taken advantage of the hospitality and kindness of the committee and David, and I've added an extra singing to tonight's service, but it really was on the back of some of the talk in our fellowship last night, and the recognition that we really are, and for many of us, living in different days from when we started out in our Christian walk, and living in profoundly challenging times as Christians, in all kinds of spheres of life, there's things happening that many of us would never have envisaged happening in our lifetime.

And in our church, there was a hymn that has become very precious to us. Again, it's an old hymn that's had a new lease of life. The original words have been altered slightly, but the essence of the hymn has remained the same.

And I just think, in terms of our praying and encouraging in the days that we live, that it is a hymn that will strengthen and encourage us. When I fear, my faith will fail.

Christ will hold me fast. When the tempter would prevail, he will hold me fast. I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path, for my love is often cold.

He must hold me fast. And it speaks of the delight God has in us. But for those of you who are here tonight who have maybe never trusted in the Lord, I want you to think when we come to the last verse.

[22 : 15] For my life, he bled and died. Christ will hold me fast. Justice has been satisfied.

He will hold me fast. Raised with him to endless life, he will hold me fast. Till our faith is turned to sight when he comes at last.

So we'll sing the verses and the chorus of the hymn. We'll stand after the introduction and sing together. when I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast.

When the tempter would prevail, he must hold me fast. I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path.

For my love is often cold, he must hold me fast. He will hold me fast, he will hold me fast.

[23 : 44] For my Savior loves me so, he will hold me fast. The Lord, he saves are his delight.

Christ will hold me fast. Precious in his holy sight, he will hold me fast.

He'll not let my soul be lost, his promises shall last. But by him at such our cost, he will hold me fast.

He will hold me fast. He will hold me fast. For my Savior loves me so, he will hold me fast.

For my life he bled and died.

[25 : 02] Christ will hold me fast. Justice has been satisfied. He will hold me fast.

Raised with him to endless life. He will hold me fast. Where I've ridden his arm to sigh.

When he comes at last. He will hold me fast. He will hold me fast.

For my Savior loves me so. He will hold me fast. Also having focused on the fact that Jesus called his temple and reminded us of God's purpose for the temple, that it is a house of prayer, let's have an extra time of prayer as we worship in this session together.

Father, we pray that the profound message of these words would touch our hearts afresh.

[26 : 28] That it was for the salvation of our souls that Jesus Christ bled and died. And we recognize, Lord, that even in a natural sense, the giving of one life for others would be a remarkable sacrifice.

But we know in what he endured on the cross for our sakes, he went into realms of supernatural truth. He went into the realms of spiritual realities.

Whereas the representative and substitute for this fallen people, he would face the punishment we deserved. That from the realms of eternal glory, there could be assurance of the pardon that is passed unto all who believe.

There is assurance of your love for us, even when we feel unloved, and at times with our behaviors almost feel unlovable.

There is assurance of God of the extent of your mercy, that however far we have gone, it does not extend beyond the reach of the voice, the heart, the mind, the vision of an eternal God.

[27 : 56] And the very fact that tonight we're in this place on mercy's ground is an indication to every single one of us that you have not forgotten us, that you have watched over us.

You are the God who records the days of our lives in your book before one of them comes to pass. And so we pray, Lord, that as you write the story of our lives, that it will be one of grace.

One of favor, one of wonder, one of worship. Of a fallen, broken human life. It came to find the fullness and the power of faith in Jesus Christ.

And Lord, as we've been thinking and discussing much about prayer, and as we were encouraged this morning with regards to the power of your promise and the fact that you are an almighty God, we would ask that you would give us the faith to persist in prayer.

That you would give us, O God, the encouragement to continue praying for the things we've maybe given up on praying for. Praying for the people we're almost sore, praying.

[29 : 24] that transformation would come to them and salvation reached them. Renew our hope, renew our confidence in you, O God, in your ability and power to renew your church and to revive your people and to preserve us in a day of darkness.

give us, O Lord, a renewed appetite to seek your presence and to seek your face to come before you, Lord, humbly seeking you in prayer and in worship, recognizing afresh the blessings and powers that come to life when we know you in that closeness of our walk with you.

Help us, Lord, every one of us in terms of disciplining our lives in order to pray. Help us where we feel we don't have the words.

Help us where we feel there is no language of prayer in our soul. Give us strength and gifts, O God, that would encourage us to know that we can call on the name of the Lord.

And even for any in here tonight who've never known the sincere heart cry of the soul of a human being that knows it needs God that even now they would know that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[30 : 51] And so, Lord, encourage us to be a praying people, to be much in your company, much in your presence, pursuing all that your promises.

Encourage us to pursue for the glory of your name. Amen. So just before we turn to our passage tonight, let's sing a hymn that honors the place of gathering together to worship God and to pray.

we love the place, O God, wherein thine honour dwells, the joy of thine abode, all earthly joy excels. It is the house of prayer wherein thy servants meet, and thou, O Lord, art there thy chosen flock to greet.

we love the place, O God, we love the place, O God, where in thine honour dwells, the joy of thine abode, all earthly joy excels.

it is the house of prayer, wherein thy servants meet, and the Lord, Lord, Lord, our dead, thy chosen world to meet.

[32 : 40] We love the word of life, the word that tells of peace, of comfort in the strife, and joys that never cease.

we love to sing below, for mercy's freely gain, but though we long to know, that I am song of heaven, Lord Jesus, give us grace, on earth to love thee more, in heaven to see thy face, and with thy sins adore.

Can we turn to Mark's gospel just to read another of the accounts of Jesus' action at the temple for those who have been in three sessions, I apologise for areas of repetition, but just to keep the story and the message clear in our minds, we remind ourselves of what Jesus did, the controversy of it, the challenge of it, and the enormous implications of it.

In Luke chapter 11, sorry, Mark chapter 11, at verse 15, it tells us that on reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there.

He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, is it not written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of robbers.

[35 : 02] Mention has been made in, I think, in one of the fellowship discussions of the English churchman and the English churchman and hymn writer, William Cooper, who best known for hymns like Go for a Closer Walk with God, where many a Christian can resonate with his sentiment, where is the blessedness I knew when first I saw my Lord, where is that so refreshing view of Jesus and his word.

He also wrote the hymn, if the tradition is correct, it tells us in response to a miraculous providential intervention in his life when going through one of his profound episodes of depression and struggling with his existence and his life in this world and God intervened and as part of that experience we have the hymn Today God Moves in Mysterious Ways His Wonders to Perform and he wrote a hymn on the subject of prayer and the challenges that we often feel when we come to pray and the fact that prayer can often be hard for Christians.

This is what he wrote, what various hindrances we meet in coming to the mercy seat yet they that know the worth of prayer but wishes to be often there prayer makes the darkened clouds withdraw prayer climbs the ladder Jacob saw gives exercise to faith and love brings every blessing from above restraining prayer we cease to fight for prayer makes the Christians armour bright and Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon their knees peace now the next two verses for me personally are some of the most challenging have you no words

I'll think again words flow apace when you complain and fill a fellow creature's ear with the sad tale of all your care where half the breath thus vainly spent to heaven in supplication sent our cheerful song would oftener be hear what the Lord has done for me it's a very stirring and heart searching analysis of the problems we often face when we want to pray or we come to pray and Cooper as we apparently properly call him was very conscious of his own feelings and his own negative mindset someone who was prone to melancholy and depression someone who knew the struggles of this life and who knew therefore how difficult it was at times to come and to pray to

God and who had lost sight at times of the power and the wonder of worship and of coming to God and often in life's challenges that is what happens to many a believer it's what happens to many a person who has walked the road for many a year and yet things can happen things can go wrong life becomes so busy life becomes hum drum and suddenly what was once a joy to us becomes a burden to us and then sometimes the failure to pray then the guilt of the failure to pray becomes a further burden to us and the challenges grow and the challenges amount and then sometimes we can substitute other things for the main thing that should be at the heart of our worship and our seeking God we can find we can find religious practices and we can find religious superstitions that make us feel a little bit better than we were feeling but they don't really answer the heart cry they don't really answer what's going on in the soul and when Jesus came to the temple we saw the heart of the son of God angry at the fact that here were people coming to worship coming to the temple doing religious things but in doing these religious things missing the purpose of the temple's being and missing the potential of God's blessing in their lives they might be able to pat themselves on the back and walk away feeling a little bit better about what they did but Jesus' concern is surely that people should know the wonder and value of being part of a house of prayer rather than having their lives gathered in this collective religious expression that he says well you're like a den of thieves now when Jesus used that expression as indeed when he used a house of prayer he would have evoked in the minds of those who were in the temple courts and those

[40 : 42] Pharisees and teachers and those brought up with their Bibles and with their teachings he would have evoked in their consciousness is the context in which these things were said in the same way that someone today might just say the Lord's my shepherd and as soon as you say these words for those of us who know the psalm and have known it well and learnt it and sung it countless times immediately evokes everything that's in that psalm the reminder of God's leadership the reminder of God's protection the reminder of God's provision the reminder that God is going to deliver us one day eternally into his glorious home just these three or four words can evoke all that truth and all that wonder and hope within us so you can imagine those who were listening to Jesus on the day he comes into the temple how their minds must have stirred when he says my house shall be called a house of prayer because immediately he's referring to a passage in Isaiah that is full of hope and so maybe they were thinking what comes next is Jesus going to suddenly bless us and just tell us we're the most wonderful group and our religious behaviour has earned

God's blessings well the next verse must have shocked them because he says but you've made it a den of thieves or a den of robber and that word that verse again would have been so incredibly evocative to those who heard it because as we read it in the context of Jeremiah where it first came we recognised that that wasn't a passage of great hope and encouragement it was a profound warning one of the profoundest warnings that the people of God received just before they would be judged they would be removed from their land and the temple that they thought was their security would actually be destroyed by their enemies it was almost unthinkable to them that the enemies of God would ever destroy the temple they had the temple they were unmovable they were unshakable and God comes along and he says no you're very shakable you're very movable and don't for a minute think that you can come into my temple fulfil the rituals do the sacrifices but then walk out of the temple and go back to your life of sin and somehow think that

I'm happy and I'm blessed as your God and creator and redeemer by the way you're living and by the worship you bring how dare you think what a pathetic image we have of God if we look on God as someone who says well that's good they came to church and son I hope they're back next and that he doesn't care about how we live tonight and tomorrow that he doesn't care to help us that he doesn't care to correct we have a very strange view of God if we think that the God of heaven the God of glory the God of creation the God of redemption is someone who sits with a register to see if we turn up for religious meetings no he's the God who wants to pour life into us he's the God who wants us to come and as we acknowledge who he is we receive from him all that he wants to give us and that warning came so strong to the people in Jeremiah chapter 7

God sent the prophet to warn them that they couldn't come to the temple and perform rituals and somehow think that that excused the lack of godly behaviour in their lives they're sinning they were robbing god of his rightful place and influence in their life remember how he brings the two verses together my house shall be a house of prayer that's the purpose that's what it's for that's why god made it and gave for people to know that their god was a god that they could call upon their god was a god who would hear them and forgive them when they came in repentance to them their god was a god who wanted to relate to them and be with it wasn't just someone building a religious empire and happy if they put money in the plate and some animals on the altar and went away to live their own way again no Jesus no Jesus by appealing to Jeremiah is exposing the fact that in God's sight what was happening at the temple and what was taking place in his day was so dissatisfying to God that as people were performing religious functions but not living with a consciousness of God not living in the practice of righteousness not practicing their faith not really believing in the Lord following the form of worship at the temple but not living a life of worship before him and they were warned by Jeremiah that if they didn't change it would be the end of them and friends they didn't change that generation faced the punishment and judgment of God and as we were hearing in the other series then another day would come when God would rebuild and restore what if you're here tonight and God is saying well this is the moment I've seen you over the years I've seen everything that's happened I've seen the attempts to cover up things with religious behavior or irreligious actions and I'm asking you tonight to put things right and to come to me in genuine heartfelt words amend your ways and your deeds and I will let you dwell in this place is what the Lord had said through Jeremiah and Jesus came and he says you know you need to understand what really matters to God in the temple you've made the temple something that it should never have been you've made it this busy place of commerce you've made it this busy place of convenience you've made it a place of consumeristic religion with no thought of the reality of what God is looking for as he said in Jeremiah's day why are you coming here with these sacrifices but then you go out and you exploit people you hurt people you damage people do you honestly think that God only sees things as they happen in the temple one of the most challenging things we find from time to time in the Bible and something that Jesus exposed often was the danger of this form of religion without as Paul said without the power of people who have a form of worship and a form of religion but they don't know what the true religion is meant to bring and it's meant to do it's meant to be life transformational it's meant to be life changing it's meant to be the breath of heaven as again was quoted earlier in our weekend it's to be the life of God and the soul of man do you honestly think that God is just happy with religious performance

or within sincerity where we come and doesn't james warn us about our praying and our singing to god and then using the same tongue to bless to curse and to speak ill of others using the same tongue to bless god and to curse men do you think that really is what god is looking for when jesus came to the temple he was looking for the sincere worship of god's people for people to be sincere and genuine yes with failings yes with faults that's why they came regularly because they knew they needed atonement they knew they needed forgiveness that's why we come to god continually and constantly because we know we need his help we know we need to be renewed and forgiven and set right again jesus was seeking to rescue them from this false form of religion without its power he wanted there to be a genuineness to their worship a genuineness to their understanding of god a genuineness to their relationship with god when we lived overseas in nassau for just over a year year and a bit we lived quite near the big harbour in nassau new providence where many of the huge cruise ships would come in three or four a day sometimes i don't know how many thousands of passengers coming down from miami and places like that and just on the harbour area had built up a huge marketplace as people sought to sell stuff to the tourists as they came off the boats and one of the common markets were the people who were selling the kind of fake designer handbags louis vuitton i almost looked as if i knew what i was talking about for a moment there fake designer handbags and i always remember one man he had the best sign i'd ever seen he would say genuine imitations genuine imitations i really hope our faith isn't a genuine imitation and when we think of what's wrong with the church what's needed in the church we can come up with all kinds of complicated answers but i think the simple answer is this we just need to get real with god to be genuine in our prayers genuine in our worship genuine in our commitments genuine in our priorities and recognizing that there's nothing that can protect us there's nothing that can save us from the falsehood but the real thing i know in jeremiah's day they had this kind of temple ideology and this temple theology you remember we read it there you know jesus the lord saying through the prophets don't say you know the temple the temple the temple you know you think that's really going to be your security when you haven't thought enough or thought deeply enough or put into practice enough the realities of the temple he says you know they were taking such pride in this glorious construction and it was what they trusted in it was what they believed in and as long as that physical building was there it made them feel that they could go on forever doing what they did with this duplicitous living with this two-facedness before god they honestly believed as long as the temple we're israel we've got the temple nothing's going to happen to us we are the people to quote choice elect of glass regions they had that mentality

[52 : 19] nothing's going to happen to us our church isn't going to die our church isn't going to close our church isn't going to go off the rails or the others might but not us we've got the temple we're right with god god chose us we're safe and secure god says go to shiloh go and look what i did there and if they knew their history they would know that shiloh was a place that had faced judgment when the ark of god had been captured by the philistines and in a previous generation israelites had not worshipped god in the way that he had intended and the way that he had commanded you know and if we in the christian church feel that we're any secure i've heard people talk about you know god's got a great love for scotland we're going to be okay well god had a great love for ephesus god had a great love for smyrna god had a great love for pergum go and visit these places places that once knew great revive we had a great insight today to the the life of the nation of japan and the great need for mission work in that nation and as it came up on the map and you see north korea beside it north korea a place that is undoubtedly one of the spiritually darkest nations in our world today yet once new spiritual revival once new great power and life there are many places where things were once lively and things were once powerful where today there's just the ashes of the burning fires of a bygone age and god in his addressing of matters at the temple was saying to us you know it's not in a kind of legalistic mindset that god is doing this it's it's for our salvation you know jesus is trying to save us from giving ourselves to a religion that cannot save us the religion of our own works the religion of feeling safe because we have a correct theology or feeling safe because we belong to certain groups or we have certain practices no god is wanting us to know the safety that is found in christ alone and he's wanting to save us from being amongst a people who will one day say oh but jesus we did all kinds of things in your name and to whom he says depart from me i never knew you jesus brought these charges against the people in line with what jeremiah has said against the people you're like a den of thieves you're like the guys who go out and they spend all day robbing and they're pickpocketing and then at the end of the night they find somewhere to gather together and see securely and and they pour out their evil goods together and and as they discuss their lives they they kind of feel okay in each other's company there's honor among thieves and and we just pat each other on the back that we're we're doing you know well we did enough and we're okay and god is saying it's not enough just to feel you're doing okay i want you to understand what your soul can know when the power of christ invades it the love of christ fills it the joy of christ secures it the peace of christ governs that's what jesus died on the cross for that's what the spirit came at pentecost for not so that you could just go through some rituals and think that god's impressed with you this quotation as jesus stormed

the temple is such a challenge for us if coming to church is just a cover-up for all our bad desires and behaviors then it benefits nobody but if we come genuinely longing to encounter god in sincerity and in truth in spirit and in truth god wants us to be these people that the blessing of his heart and mind might be poured out upon us and through us to others because it's a house of prayer for all nations we don't come as he says to worship just to satisfy ourselves we come to encounter god and in the blessing of knowing who god is to bring that light and that truth and that power to the world as we go out as the body of christ that's what the temple is today we know that when jesus spoke about the temple in these moments of his life he challenged the disciples to understand this the tearing they were so impressed with the physical temple and jesus says you think that temple is amazing tear down this temple and i'll raise it up in three days because he was talking about the temple of his body my body which is given for you i'm giving this for you god has opened a temple for you to come and to know him to come and to worship to come and to love to come and be transformed by to come and be forgiven by because many of us know as we go on in life we we feel more and more the need to forgive us when we used to go to eastern europe one of the expressions they often used when they were talking about their testimony was you know that was when they repented in line of what the gospel says when jesus calls people to believe the good news and to repent and i remember one time one of them turning to me and says when did you repent i said well hopefully this morning because as you go on in life and as you go on in faith you realize how much more you need the grace of god you don't need it any less as you go on you feel you need it more and god is saying here is what what the temple was to represent that with all the problems of life with all the difficulties of life with all the challenges of life and we know them we're conscious of them here's a place of help here's a place of healing here's a place of power here's a place to receive strength but you're coming in and going out and you're so caught up with your own busyness you're not even discovering what god is offering you what god is saying to you what god is giving to you as they walked in and they were so impressed with the grandeur of the structure and so caught up in the in the physicality of the building losing sight of the spirituality of the sacrifices and of the presence and thinking somehow that that like that that god was here but he wasn't anywhere else whereas what they were being reminded of in the temple was to grow in faith and to grow in trust of the god who would be with them everywhere who would watch over them everywhere who would shepherd them everywhere and then as we've touched on in a previous session they had transformed what should have been a thought provoking mind stirring heart breaking act of worship when they were coming at passover and we hear all kinds of descriptions about the rivers of blood that would flow in jerusalem as as they were reminded of the enormity of sin and yet that atonement was being made so that the enormity of sin would not stop people coming to god and jesus had come to deal with that once and for all and you're so busy talking to the money changers and

choosing an animal he says you're so caught up in the busyness of have you actually appreciated what's being proclaimed what's being said what's being shared as the worship of god is taking place and again the fact that they had the money changers and all these sellers there to make it convenient for people remember david who said that he wouldn't offer to the lord that which cost him nothing why is it so many churches today want to have worship and life that really thinks of offering nothing to god what's convenient for me seems to be the kind how does it suit me does it fit in with all the other things i have to do in life or is the priority to give god the glory and to give him the first and rightful place that he deserves they were so caught up in the noise and the commotion jesus turns the tables over drives the people out and i would ask every one of us to ask ourselves this tonight what's in our hearts in the temple whether we think of it collectively or individually that is stopping us from enjoying the presence and the power of the atoning love of god in jesus christ is it the busyness i was reminded of that actually as we listen to life in japan because i've heard it from so many sources how being busy is so important but it's become the way of life for us we validate ourselves by our busyness i think if any of my congregation asked me are you busy and i said no i haven't done a thing all day they would probably have a stroke what's wrong with them if your diary is not full and the appointments aren't flowing we almost feel invalidate validate but is that what god made us to be the god who created us and in our very first experience as created beings was to enter into his sabbath rest that enjoyment that understanding that relationship that blessing jesus came to the temple and it broke his heart it stirred his spirit it angered he says there's so much going on here that shouldn't be going on and therefore the people are missing out on what should be going on they've turned it into a location just like the the thieves have their wee secret location where they go and validate each other's lives that's all that's happening here people are coming in just validating one another without ever thinking of the god who loves there are three titles that are used with regards to the temple and the various records of the cleansing process and i think it's interesting when we read them and they remind us of what god wants for us as we worship him the house that bears my name where the identity of god was shared in all the process that's why if you go through the studies of all the furniture in the in the in the temple it wasn't simply because it would look nice against the wall or whatever it was specifically chosen because it would speak to something of the spirituality of who god is and who we are and how these things can be reconciled in god's mercy and grace god was to be discovered there that was the house that bears my name you go in and you know who the person is there's a gentleman my son and i visit and he supports a certain team and

when you go in from the moment you go into his house you know it's everywhere the colors on the walls the carpets everything says you should be coming to the house that bears my name i know this is about me this is for me because that's going to do you more good than ever thinking it's about you it's the house of prayer that place of intercession and of help jesus struck out against the self-centered self-serving form of religion that he witnessed in the temple because he knew it was meant to be a place where we came to learn to call to god to cry to god and it doesn't have to be eloquent and it doesn't have to flow and it doesn't have to be long it just has to be real call on god and find his help it was the place of help and blessing a house of prayer and as jesus said it is my father's house jesus struck out against the commercialism that had crept into the temple because it was meant to portray this place was meant to portray the reality and the blessing of intimate relationship with god the wonder of a god who had called a people to belong to him it's my father's house and isn't it interesting that jesus who goes to the temple and says my father's house is the jesus who taught us to pray our father jesus is father and our father so we can come to know i have a saying forgive me if you've heard me use it i i it fascinates me so much i wish i could remember where i heard it but the truth that it bears out i think is so telling of of the church in the western world today it's someone who said when the church left jerusalem it was a family by the time it left rome it was an organization by the time it left britain it was an institution and by the time it leaves america it will be a business and there's so much truth in that statement but let's go back to the beginning of what was the church that left jerusalem a family who knew the help of the holy spirit who knew the power of what the elder brother our elder brother had done for us in opening up his inheritance to us opening up his love and his identity to us to bring us into the security of the father's salvation so that one day we'll go to be in his house forever that's spiritual reality that's what it means to be a real house of prayer to come before god in that hunger and in that longing to know his power to know his presence to know the concerns we have for our own lives and for the lives of others and to know that our father is with us as we face them all to worship said a bishop is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of god to feed the mind with the truth of god to purge the imagination by the beauty of god to open the heart to the love of god and to devote the will to the purpose of god and as we do that we will fulfill the purpose of the house to which we belong as children who pray to our heavenly father lord may nothing

be our security tonight save the blood and righteousness of jesus christ your son may our confidence for eternal glory come from nowhere else but from the cross and the empty tomb and the promise of our eternal father lord we long to worship you lord the service will be over shortly but we know through worship never ends so lord clear our hearts save us from the busyness that we might be found in your presence to know you and to love you and through you power of your grace and truth to share you with a world that desperately desperately needs you and we pray it for the glory and honor of your son our savior jesus christ amen we're going to sing in closing from psalm 51 from verse 11 cast me not from thy sight nor take thy holy spirit away restore me thy salvation's joy with thy free spirit me stay we'll sing down to the end of verse 17 a broken spirit is to god a pleasing sacrifice a broken and a contrite heart lord thou wilt not despise we stand to sing ask me not from thy sight nor take thy holy spirit away praise for me thy salvation's joy with thy peace with me stay then will i teach thy ways unto those that those that transgressors be and those that sinners are shall then be turned said to thee god of my salvation god me from blood guilt

[71 : 50] NINGNINGNINGNINGNINGNING Let them be open, then shall thy praises by thy mouth abroad be published.

For thou desirest not sacrifice, else I give it thee.

Nor will thou with burnt offering at all delighted be.

A broken spirit is to God a pleasing sacrifice.

A broken and a contrite heart, Lord thou wilt not disguise.

[73 : 50] And so as you go from this place of worship, may the spirit of worship continue to rise from your hearts.

In adoration of the eternal Father, who gave his one and only Son, in order that you could be reconciled to him forever.

And may the blessing of the Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you this night and forevermore. Amen.