

is a pathway that brings those outside His people into His people. Is there something here for the church to consider? Or have we surrendered even our own healing to the hospitals & doctors? How can we be a people living out the compassionate healing of Christ.

Thirdly the children inspired by God praised Jesus. The children see what the priests did not. Do we enable children to see Jesus as God with God, the one who deserves their praise, the one who heals, the one who breaks down all barriers, the one who alone can bring them home to their Father in heaven?

Fourthly may we without fear of the indignation of others stand up for Jesus as He stood up for us, even to the cross. May we as Paul writes in Philipians want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, even His death, and so come into our own resurrection, which is a now new life as well as a future new creation.

Amen.



**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter 25<sup>th</sup> April 2021**  
Reflection on Matthew 21:12-17

These events follow Jesus entry into Jerusalem as a king, humble, riding on a donkey. Events that climax in the cross, the throne of His kingship on which the world will declared This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. But all this was not obvious then to those who saw Jesus riding into Jerusalem, whose people asked who is this and the crowds answered this is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.

Now in going into the temple area Jesus is the prophet expressing God's word in an enacted parable. What He does is not a sudden anger, but a deliberated action. He overturns the tables of the money changers and dove sellers, under the prophetic cry: it is written, and quoting Scripture, Isaiah and Jeremiah, combined in one condemnation. It is written, My house will be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.

Isaiah 56 proclaims the spread of God's blessing to the whole world, in a call to justice and righteousness. People who were traditionally excluded from belonging to God's people will become included. God's house will be inclusive for all who live faithfully and rightly in the Lord. As the Lord gathered the exiles from Babylon so He will gather others to them. It is a prophecy that the walls between people and people and between people and God will come down. Now Jesus declares that this prophecy comes true in and through Himself, for He does not say God's house but My house.

Jeremiah called God's people to reform their ways and actions. They put their trust in times of trouble in the temple. The house of God had become their safe assurance. How could disaster overtake them for the temple of the Lord was in their midst. Heretically they confused the presence of the Temple with the presence of God, trusting in God's home while living lives inconsistent with God's ways.

Through Jeremiah God tells His people that if they do not oppress the alien, the fatherless, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and do not follow other gods then He will let them live in Jerusalem. But if they did what He told them not to do don't come to my house saying we are safe: this is the Temple of the Lord. For you will have made this house which bears my Name a den of robbers.

We know how the week goes. The Jews are going to shed the innocent blood of Jesus. And in doing that they will openly curse themselves before God, crying out: Let His blood be on us and on our children. If you ever seek a reason why the Jews, who were at that time well-respected in the Roman empire became so badly treated even to the Holocaust surely that self-cursing is the root of the reason. Further John tells us that when Pilate said to the Jews, Here is your king, shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered we have no king but Caesar. Many treated Caesar as a god. For God's priests to substitute Caesar for God as the King of their Kingdom was an appalling act of idolatry. It was Eden all over again.

In His actions and words Jesus was pointing to the future destruction of the Temple, the desolation of the city, the exile of the people, as it was by Babylon, so it would be by Rome.

The temple area was the Court of the Gentiles. It was intended for the prayer of the nations where God-seekers could seek the Lord. But this was Passover season and the space was also used for necessary trading – the exchange of foreign coin for acceptable shekels and the purchase of sacrifice animals. All worthy activities in their own way but did they really have to take place where they did? Making a hubbub of haggling that would have shouted loudly against any Gentiles hope that here they could meet Israel's God. And of course where there's trading there's also abuse in the pursuit of profit, not all personal for much of the money went to temple repairs and other good causes but unfair gain in market dealing doesn't cease to be a sin when wrapped up in the service of God.

And then the blind and the lame come to the Son of David for healing. Why would the priests be upset by that? They were defending a long tradition going back to King David. 2 Samuel 5 tells us of David's conquest of Jerusalem to make it his capital. The Jebusites who then occupied the city, scorned his plans saying You will not get in here; even the blind and the lame can ward you off. It was then that David called the blind and the lame his enemies, and why they say the blind and the lame will not enter the palace. A ruling that came to be applied to the temple. But now the Son of David heals them.

The old barriers are being broken down by Jesus. The walls against the Gentiles will go. The ban on the blind and the lame will go. At the moment of His death on the cross the curtain of the temple is torn in two from tip to bottom. As Paul writes in Ephesians, remember you were once excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. You who once were far away have been brought near through

the blood of Christ. Jesus destroyed the dividing walls of hostility, reconciling all people to God through the cross, and through Him we all have access to the Father by one Spirit.

And all through these events the children have been shouting: Hosanna to the Son of David. The healing of the blind and the lame and the shouting of the children ally the chief priests and teachers of the Law in indignation. Do you hear what these children are saying?

Yes, He says, have you never read: From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise? This isn't a reference to generalised praise coming from human hearts. You have ordained praise tells us that there praise inspired by God. The psalm is a psalm of praise to God: O Lord, O Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth. You have set Your glory above the heavens. From the lips of children and infants You have ordained praise. Their praise is praise of God and Jesus accepts that praise as praise of Himself.

In c12 Jesus says of Himself now one greater than Jonah, a prophet is here and one greater than Solomon is here and as regards the keeping of the Sabbath He refers to Himself as Lord of the Sabbath, in other words one greater than the Law is here. And now He claims praise for Himself, in other words one greater than the Temple is here, as He also asserted in C12. There is only One who can be greater than the prophets, the kings, the Law, the Temple. The Lord God who speaks through the prophets, appoints the kings, gave the Law and established the temple.

Then Jesus leaves the temple and the city to go to Bethany where He spent the night. The city was so packed with pilgrims that many had to find rooms outside the city to stay. Jesus is the same, but perhaps symbolically we can also see Him turning His back on the priests, who failed to recognise Him, will question His authority, will ally themselves with their religious sparring partners the Pharisees, and appeal to Pilate to have Jesus killed.

What does it mean for us? 4 things surely flow from it.

Firstly church buildings are sacred places but even more sacred is the church community, for it is in His people that the Lord lives. We often and rightly so give, even at great cost, to care for the building, to make it an acceptable and welcoming place in evidence of our Lord. Are we as willing to make our lives, even at great cost, fitting living homes for the Lord? Are we in danger of crying: saved by the Lord, while living in ways contrary to His salvation presence?

Secondly Jesus healed in the temple. In the place of holiness He healed the blind and the lame and by that healing restored them to God. The compassion of the Lord