

Song Creator God you are there

Welcome

Call to Worship

Wanderers, gatherers, home makers, travellers,

We come to Christ

Questioners, adventurers, believers, doubters,

We come to Christ

Workers, menders, seekers, dreamers,

We come to Christ

Hymn Praise to the Lord the almighty

Opening Prayer

Song Hear the call of the kingdom

Response

From what we know, to what we have yet to discover

God is calling us on

From all that binds us, to the truth which frees us

God is calling us on

From the blessings of today, to the possibilities of tomorrow

God is calling us on

Reflection Simply living

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 forever. Amen

Reading [Jeremiah 7:1-15](#)

Song The truth that sets us free

The Grace is said: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

Reading [Matthew 21:12-17](#)

Sermon The new world ii

As I began to write this sermon the heavens opened and the heavy air was lifting. One of those storms where the light hasn't faded nor does the sky seem dark. It was just filled with rain, it's pouring. I could hear the drops of water hitting the roof outside my window. Pounding its incessant beat, softening slightly then growing in anger again. Lulling you into thinking it had given up but you know the moment you set foot outside it would turn up the volume again and within seconds you would be soaked through. It was a torrent.

I had a little cry for help by text by someone trying to make sense of how they were feeling in the light of all the Black Lives Matter protests. The question I was asked was about the Christian journey and in times like these how do you get angry without sinning? They were finding it difficult to know where the line is. A good question. So a very good moment to begin reflecting on Jesus in the Temple challenging those who were going about their daily business not even noticing, unquestioning of the business because this was what it had become. There was no discomfort, no questioning, no theological conundrum. They were all going about their business. Priests, teachers, worshippers, buyers and sellers. Money changers, pigeon and dove sellers, soldiers. A mass of people all simply doing what they did every day. Until someone disrupted it! Jesus disrupted it with his anger.

I'm guessing it would be something equivalent to walking through Broadmead and screaming at people about why their need to go shopping outweighed their need to be safe from the virus. 'You have made this an incubator for a second wave'.

It wouldn't be popular! Those who were nearest would wish they weren't. Just like the seller whose table got turned on its head, whose money that day flew over the stones and into the crowd. And the murmur of the crowd would grow with their shame and indignancy, or worse still, maybe, even laughter and mockery!

In Matthews gospel it's the lame and the blind who came to Jesus whilst the learned Priests and teachers failed to understand, couldn't interpret what was before their eyes. Did they not know the words of the prophet Jeremiah? Surely they could see what the Lord required of them. And then the children try to show them how to worship the one true God. And their anger grew. Children? 'Of all the nonsense! Children know nothing of the way the world works nor do they take responsibility for keeping things running. How dare the lame and blind and children infect and criticise our Temple space.'

All of this sealed Jesus fate. The shadow of the cross deepening around him as if drawing him towards its open arms, ready to welcome him.

That's what happens to those who question the way things are or who ask what if there was another way, what if there were new priorities.

Like this week, a very rich footballer from a much poorer background called on the government to give out free school meal vouchers for over a million children through the summer in families who will be stretched amidst increasing poverty. 22 year old Marcus Rashford said this, 'People are struggling all year around so we still need to learn more about the situation people are in and how we can help them best.'

Now he isn't a child. But he certainly isn't in the demographic of the majority of those who are making decisions about people's needs within our political structures.

Just one example of a challenge to the present 'powers' and where priorities might be set in a different way.

In Jesus day, the 'power' of the Temple was both political and religious. Working hand in hand with the Roman authorities to 'keep the peace' an uneasy alliance had been established between foes that enabled Jerusalem to maintain the business of the day as well as controlling the surrounding area.

These days there is far greater distance between the state and the Church. As Baptists, we were formed out of those who rejected the alignment of the sacred and secular. A paraphrase of one of our ancestors said something like 'The king shall not answer for it. Neither may the king be judge between God and human beings.' Freedom to believe, freedom to set other priorities that may not just go along with the prevailing philosophies and economic strategies of the present day.

Jesus walked right into the temple courts and said 'God's priorities are being ignored. God's priorities have been lost and forgotten and replaced. The Temple was like a market place, buy your sacrifices, get clean with this special offer, doves two for the price of one, real lamb's blood ready for your door posts, and get your spicy kofta's for tea while you're at it.' Jesus anger erupted all over the Temple as he proclaimed 'you have forgotten God' you have lost sight of God. Jesus was angry and he acted on it. Because sometimes things are so wrong it should cause us to act!

Jesus upsets and disrupts the way things had evolved. If one started with a blank page then no one would probably choose to create the system as it stood. Almost like as time passes no one notices what small changes have led to, how simple decisions have had big impacts until one day no one recognises what you've become.

Take the Church for example. From those first believers after the Holy Spirit came, beginning to travel and tell of a new way, Jesus way. A new kingdom, the kingdom of God. Moving from town to city to island to continent, to a Christian Emperor, to the ends of the earth. And now buildings everywhere, in just about every city, town and village. But often fairly empty of people. Struggling to sustain the Temples! Struggling to maintain charity structures. A far cry from Jesus priorities or his parting words to his disciples about making other disciples and baptising people into the wholeness of God. And the worship of God is lost somewhere between the style of songs sung and the colour of the new carpet.

We need to redeem our priorities. To realign ourselves with God's priorities so that the worship of God returns to the centre of our thinking. The worship of God of course doesn't just happen on a Sunday morning at 10.30 am. It's so much more than that. It's how we treat people, how we welcome people, how we offer opportunities for hearing the word of God, how we care for God's children. It's in how we speak words of resurrection into people's lives. It's in how we help people find God's forgiveness so they can be free. And it's also about how we both give and spend our money, how much we release to make these things happen, to set people free from the things which tie them to love of now, love of money, love of self. And we can apply this to our own lives, and our nation, our city, as well as church.

The challenge of Jesus words is always a tough one to hear. It stops us all in our tracks and asks us to think again. A little like this current virus has done. To think again about what we really need to survive and what we don't need. We need an earth that can sustain us, and what a surprising difference locking down human beings has made to the earth. Well, the children have already called us out on that one. We can no longer sit by and allow only wealthy white men's history to be taught and celebrated as if it's the only story worth telling. It's a flawed and incomplete story. And we cannot wait any longer whilst sinful structures diminish God's children.

Jesus calls us to a new way. The old way has been disrupted! And we are noticing that things could change. Priorities could still change if we follow Jesus.

All of this sealed Jesus fate. The shadow of the cross deepening around him as if drawing him towards its open arms, ready to welcome him. That's what happens to those who question the way things are or who ask what if there was another way, what if there were new priorities. But what if the crowd might yet be persuaded by our passion and be set free to worship God.

Hymn Facing a task unfinished

Prayers of Intercession

Song O Lord you hear the cry

Offering

Hymn Be thou my vision

Blessing