

# Worship At Home

## 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021

For Jesus, the temple was the place to worship the Father. The Father who loves everybody equally and whose love could not be bought. Sometimes we can enter into negotiations with God. We might say: 'if you do this for me, I will do that for you'. We can easily turn our relationship with God into a type of transaction. When we spend time in prayer, do we seek God or do we seek what He can give me? As we come to worship today let's spend a few minutes just focusing on God without any agenda, just in His company.



Loving Lord we recognize Christ as the One who is above all else. Today we recognise you as the One from above. We come to worship. Even although we are separated by distance we gather as one.

We turn our hearts to you. It is good to be together, Lord, with others, together listening for your voice, united by your Spirit.

In this time of worship tell us about your kingdom of kindness so that we can seek it. Open our eyes to see fresh things, open our ears to hear with more clarity, open our minds to recognise new ideas - so that we may be willing to grow and change and to become more like your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. We want to walk with you, humbly, closely, daily. Amen

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - Carol Praise 118 Here I am to worship

Light of the world. You stepped down into darkness. Opened my eyes, let me see  
Beauty that made this heart adore You. Hope of a life spent with You

*Here I am to worship. Here I am to bow down*

*Here I am to say that You're my God*

*You're altogether lovely. Altogether worthy*

*Altogether wonderful to me*

King of all days, Oh so highly exalted. Glorious in heaven above

Humbly You came to the earth You created. All for love's sake became poor

*Here I am to worship ... x2*

I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross (x 3)

*Here I am to worship*

CCLI 620398

<https://youtu.be/g5hN1m55u0M>

"We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are - knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship." *National Worship Team*

Let us pray.

Lord God of all, we gather as a Church family - a worshipping community to honour and to praise You. We gather together - young and old, stalwarts and enquirers convinced and curious. God of love, when we think of how hard it is for us all to get along in this place alone, we lament the times when we have been caught up in times of friction or discord within the community in which we worship the community in which we work the community in which we live. Forgive us, God, we pray.

You tell us it is better to follow you than live like the world. It is better to follow you than to want to be the cleverest or wisest of all people. It is better to follow you than to want to have all the riches the world can offer.

It is better to follow you than to want to be popular, famous or fashionable. It is better to follow you than to want to do what everyone else tells us to do. It is better to follow you and appear foolish to others, because you offer more.

You tell us it is better to follow you than live like the world. We give you thanks for the opportunities we have had to follow you, to serve you and to learn from you.

Today, as we reflect on the ways in which You commanded Your people to live alongside one another, may we be reminded of what it means to be a part of this church our community, our world. May we journey into this time of worship - forgiven loved and free. **Amen**

**Readings:** Micah 6 and John 2: 13-22

### Reflective Prayer

As we reflect on the Gospel, we recognise how Jesus must have felt as He entered the Temple, seeing the commercialism, the abuse and the disrespect.

Where do people worship today?

As our churches are being sold and turned into antique shops where are people gathering?

Shopping centres cause traffic jams on a Sunday morning as our church pews sit empty.

And we wonder where we find God. And we wonder, even, *if* we are looking for God. Then we remember the young girl who turned back to say thanks after her teacher had taken the class out for the day. We remember the boy from town exclaiming 'wow' as he reached the top of a mountain on a school visit.

We remember the Asian and white young people working together on an arts project as the race riots drew to a close. And we find God. In our midst. Here. And now. With us.

As we reflect on the Gospel, we recognise how Jesus must have felt as He entered the Temple, seeing the commercialism, the abuse and the disrespect. We contemplate our supermarkets today. How would He feel if He wandered the aisles? The fruit available all year round, regardless of time or season. The perfect, even-sized vegetables losing their uniqueness to be the right shape and size for the modern shopper. The meat counter with pre-packed cuts that tell nothing of the hardship our farmers have had to endure in recent years. The chocolate and biscuits with low-fat, low-sugar tempting to buy. The coffee traded at the best price for the buyer, without thought for the workers not being paid a fair wage.

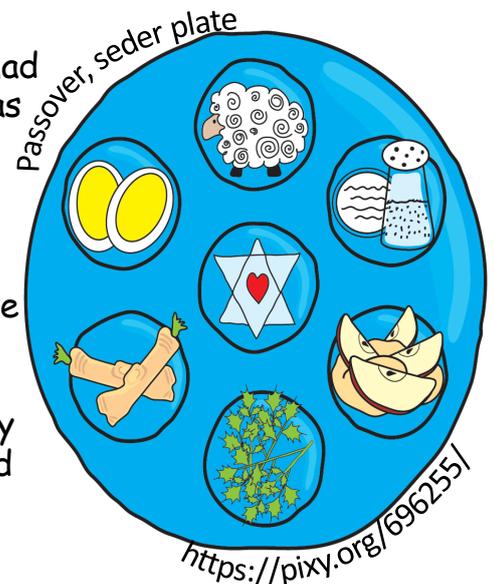
And we wonder what Jesus would think. And we wonder what I would do if I was Him.

And I pray for the courage to do what He would do. **Amen**

### Reflection: True worship

As we read in John 2 verse 13, Jesus, like every Jewish male, had come to Jerusalem on pilgrimage to celebrate Passover. This was in accordance with one of the laws listed for proper Worship found in the book of Deuteronomy (16:16). This is the first Passover Jesus would attend after His public ministry started. He would attend two more, the third being at His crucifixion..

We can imagine the anticipation the worshipper had during these days of the Passover celebration, together with Jesus' passion and zeal for pure worship. Passover was one of the pilgrimage celebrations. This means that worshippers would make their way to Jerusalem to the Temple to make the sacrificial offering and worship God (Lev 23:4-14; Num 9:2-5; 28:16-25; Deut 16:1-8). Along the way often the Psalms were sung also commemorating God's deliverance during the Passover.



It's very interesting that the Lamb of God would come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Jesus did this every year. Luke records one of the trips Jesus made with His family when He was young. Now, it's different, He comes as an adult worshipper.

A chaotic scene - but a highly excitable and thrilling experience for everyone there. And, of course, it was a time for peak business for all the religious artefact traders: selling lambs and oxen and pigeons for sacrifices and appropriate food to eat for that season and all the other bits and pieces that would be associated with Temple worship. Jesus walked into the Temple, into the midst of all the chaos and the noise and the hustle and the bustle. He looked around him at the pilgrims and the prayerful, the tradesmen and the touts, and his emotions rose to fever pitch. It would be wrong to suggest that Jesus got caught up in the heat of the moment. He took time to reflect and time to make the whip: the action of temple cleansing was not done in the heat of the moment. He had reflected and thought through what he was going to do...

When the anger of Jesus became evident: He drove out the sheep, the cattle, scattered the money all over the floor, overturned the tables, and threw out the dove sellers. No-one was spared the anger of Jesus in that moment. And then he shouts, "How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

It is an act of disruption: not disrupting the events in the Temple but an act of disruption that cut to the core of the historic Jewish faith and all it stood for. This is a moment of crisis: not for the dove sellers and the money-changers: there would always be more doves to sell, more currency to trade. This was a moment of crisis for the people of God. Jesus was saying that the old way of doing faith was no longer appropriate, that the heart of faith had become lost in the ritualism, that it was passion for God that had sold out, not pigeons for sacrifice. Jesus is confronting the people of God with a deeply uncomfortable truth: this was a moment for them to re-assess. Was it enough for them to be tied to their ritualism or did they need to find the heart of their faith once more?

It's important to say that Jesus was not opposed to Jewish tradition and not opposed to the rituals of Judaism *per se*. Jesus was a Jew, born and brought up, learned in the law and the ways of the synagogue. And it was *because* he was a committed Jew that Jesus overturned the tables in the temple. He was acting in the line of the prophets, in the line of Micah who, hundreds of years before had written: "Will God be pleased with thousands of rams, with 10,000 rivers of oil...God has told you what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"

And what of our worship today? If, our worship does not engage with these attitudes and actions, it is not true worship. God is not primarily interested in beautiful worship. He is interested in pure worship. And the two are very different indeed: though not mutually exclusive. By the time Jesus visited the temple on that day, the Jewish nation had lost sight of the difference. The purity rituals had become rituals of discrimination: Jews in the Inner Court, Gentiles in the outer court, Men here, Women there, Sacrifices the poor could afford, sacrifices the rich could afford. In the beauty of the ritual, the heart of purity had been lost and that had made Jesus angry and, as a prophet, he had to make a stand...

Jesus stood in the line of the prophets, calling for his religious institutions to forsake exclusive purity and forsake a desire for beauty and embrace instead compassion and acceptance and love for the marginalised.

If we take worship seriously, we must be sure that what we do on a Sunday is only reflective of the values we hold the rest of the week. Our true worship is worked out Monday to Saturday as we care for the vulnerable and the weak and the hurting, as we share the Good News of God's love with our neighbours, as we model the forgiveness and patience of Christ within our families. That is our worship; that is the worship God requires of us, and what we do on a Sunday is a summing up, a bringing together of all that.

Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." Go and do likewise.

As Micah 6:8 reminds us, "What the Lord requires of you is to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" Fulfilling that command must be our priority, our life's work. Worshipping God accurately and purely is of the utmost importance. This text reminds us that we have to see how precious it is to worship God. True worship is important, it reminds us that we need to always be refining and reforming our worship practices to be more in line with the Scriptures.

Listen or sing or read the words of this hymn - As I have loved you, love one another,

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*As I have loved you, love one another.  
This new commandment, 'love one another'.  
By this shall men know you are my disciples,  
If you have loved one to another.  
If They have loved one to another.*

<https://youtu.be/UlcrDsrgBvQ>

As we pray - you might like to repeat the words of the hymn or play it again and listen.  
Let us pray

Where war denies the right to life; where refugees are driven from homelands; where people are scarred physically and mentally: let tears fall as we feel the pain of conflict and make us holy as we are challenged to live your shalom (peace).

Although it may not be on our doorstep people are being mindlessly killed across the globe, as a result of unnecessary conflict, corporate greed and evil regimes. And these people are part of our community too. For we all belong to You, God.

We pray for all who are mourning loss this day.

*As I have loved you, love one another. This new commandment, 'love one another'.*

*By this shall men know you are my disciples,. If you have loved one to another.*

*If They have loved one to another.*

Although it may not be hitting our bank balance, people are being robbed in every corner of this planet. Land and livelihood - snatched by corrupt governments. Crippling interest rates from payday loans and credit cards are causing vulnerable people to lose their homes and possessions, despite some seeing this as the only way to put food on the table or heat and light their home. And they are part of our community too. For we all belong to You, God. We pray for all who are caught in the spiral of debt.

*As I have loved you, love one another. This new commandment, 'love one another'.*

*By this shall men know you are my disciples,. If you have loved one to another.*

*If They have loved one to another.*

God of love, open our eyes and ears to these situations.

Inspire and guide us to play our part in bringing about change - standing against injustice; speaking up and stepping up.

Inspire and guide those with the power to make a difference to act to intervene to save lives to rebuild and to restore.

Hear us, we pray using the words above (or sing the hymn again)

*As I have loved you, love one another. This new commandment, 'love one another'.*

*By this shall men know you are my disciples,. If you have loved one to another.*

*If They have loved one to another.*

Trusting that all are cared for, loved and blessed. Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord. And may the blessing of God Almighty Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you, those who you love and those you struggle to love now and forever **Amen**

*Thank you to those who have taken the time to contact me. Take care out there this week. May the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you this day and each day.*

*Rev. Susan Thorburn, [sthorburn@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:sthorburn@churchofscotland.org.uk)*

*If you choose to email me, please can you tell me who you are and where you live. Thank you. 4*