

Hornsea URC – Journeying with John Chapter 2 : 24th January 2021



Welcome to our service today. We meet together to worship God and to read His word. Today we are continuing our 'Journeying with John' series.



We start with the hymn- [O Lord all the world belongs to you](#)

Reading- Psalm 24 verses 1-6

The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it;
For he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters.

Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?

Who may stand in his holy place?

He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.

He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Saviour.

Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, O God of Jacob.

Prayer of Approach

In the church building we would often start with a prayer as we come into God's presence, or more accurately become aware of His presence with us.

As we meet 'apart but together' online let's move from being watchers of a service, or Zoom participants to worshippers. You are invited to listen to this next song:-

[O Come All you unfaithful](#)

Prayer-

Lord God as we gather, we acknowledge to you and to each other that we have trespassed- we have gone where we shouldn't, in our thoughts and words and deeds. For this we are sorry and ask your forgiveness.

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

We turn to you God of love and we accept your grace
We accept your pardon
We accept the gift of a new path
Through Christ our Lord
Amen.

Hymn - [I stand amazed in the presence](#)

Introduction to reading- [Journeying with John](#)

Many years ago, I was at a church where we were invited to choose which gospel we preferred and gather in groups to show our preference. Needless to say, the smallest group were the ones who liked to read John's gospel. John tells us his reason for writing down the story of Jesus- (nearly at the end!) in chapter 20 verse 31- he says

"..these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"

John's gospel is very different because he is more concerned with showing us events to help us believe than to give an orderly account. It's as if he is an enthusiastic sort of 'tour guide' saying "Look at this, and this" -so we are journeying with John and today we are stopping to look at an event that took place in Jerusalem.

Did you guess the reading from the pictures? We are looking at the second part of the second Chapter of John's gospel. It is sometimes called 'Jesus clears the temple'.

Prayer-

When we open God's book may we remember that we're looking for Jesus, the rescue He offers and how to live as His children. Amen

John Chapter 2 verses 13-22

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 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. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!"

His disciples remembered that it is written "Zeal for your house will consume me"

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

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple and you are going to raise it in three days?"

But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After 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.

Sermon

Jesus is going to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover. (He had been before- we read in Luke Chapter 2 that his parents 'lost' him on a visit there) The city would have been packed with people- the festival attracted pilgrims from all over, coming to remember the liberation of the children of Israel from Egypt.

The significance of the temple

The temple was regarded as a special place, a place where somehow heaven and earth met. God's design was for His temple in Jerusalem to be a gathering place for worshippers from all nations; a place where prayers would rise like incense from the hearts of the faithful to the presence of the living God. If you wanted to go and be at the temple you had to do certain things, to undergo rituals of purification, so many people arrived beforehand to do that.

It was also a place where animals were sacrificed as a symbol to show the Israelites that God wanted to stay in his relationship with them- His chosen people- and to remind them of the serious nature of sin which spoils that relationship. The animals brought for sacrifice had to be perfect. Jews were expected to pay a 'temple tax', and even this had to be paid in the right (Jewish) coins.

The temple was sort of a large campus. In the middle the temple building itself, contained the 'Holy of Holies' where it was believed God was present in a unique way. Outside that was the priests' court, outside that the court of the Jews, where the average Jewish worshippers gathered. Outside that was the outer court for the Gentiles, the non-Jewish worshippers.

What Jesus found there

When Jesus entered the temple courts, we are told in this reading, he found people being taken advantage of, being cheated by the money lenders charging them exorbitant exchange rates and by the animal sellers selling them 'temple approved' animals on the pretext their own were unworthy. This wasn't how it was supposed to be and He was very angry!

What Jesus did

Jesus put a stop to it by overturning the tables and freeing the animals and driving them out. His words would remind them of Jeremiah the prophet (Jeremiah 7 v 9-11) who rebuked Temple leaders of his day for going through the motions of their religion while oppressing the needy saying "Has this house which bears my name become a den of robbers to you? Jesus calls the temple 'my Father's

house'. This was a shocking event. In order to get a sense of His anger I thought it would be useful to look at a film version of this story.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE FILM CLIP](#)

Reflection

Having stopped to look at this, do you think the title in your Bible describes what this is about?
Do the coins and animals tell the full story?

Is this a picture of anger or of love?

Let's stand back and look at the bigger picture as it were. It struck me that the people were all there in the Temple to worship God- they were looking for an encounter with Him.

The Jewish leaders were looking back at their history and making sure the law given through Moses was kept, to keep their place as God's people. They demanded Jesus prove his authority to upset the temple practices in that way. When he spoke of destroying the temple (v19) they missed the meaning, the prediction of His death to reconcile all people to God.

Worshippers were trying to make themselves more acceptable, to bring the right sort of sacrifice.

Keeping every letter of the law will not make us good, goodness and mercy are gifts from God, something we don't earn but receive as a gift, made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus (Chapter 1v17)

They were all trying to 'work their way up' to God, not realising that He had come down to them. Here was Jesus amongst them.

Maybe their idea of who God's people are was too small?

John the Baptist recognised Jesus (Chapter 1 v29) "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" We started this year and the season of Epiphany with the story of the Magi, strangers from foreign lands with no connections to the promises of Israel, coming to worship Jesus. Here at the beginning of John's gospel, maybe he is pointing us to God's bigger plan of redemption for all through Jesus.

Hymn [Take my life](#)

Prayer for others:

Let us pray:

We pray for all people in all parts of the world
and in all kinds of need.

For those who live in danger of violence, persecution, oppression,
displacement and injustice because of race, belief, gender or who they are.

We pray for all the countries struggling because of coronavirus.

For the leaders as they make difficult decisions

For doctors and medical staff caring for the sick and dying

For those who are grieving.

We hold before you Lord.

All who are feeling the effects of the virus.

The isolated

The lonely

Those missing family and friends
Teachers having to adjust to online lessons.
Children missing school and friends.

We pray for our church family and for those in our prayer book this week and bring before you in a moment of silence those on our hearts.

Draw near to us all now, bless us with your presence and your gracious love.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. **Amen**

Hymn [To God be the Glory](#)

Closing prayer

Lord God, as we journey on with you, we ask that you would
Reveal in us your presence
Reveal to us your will
and reveal through us your Kingdom
Amen