



Church in a Bag

Sunday 7 March

Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

Through the creation of the universe You love us, Lord
Through guidance, call and commandment You love us, Lord
Through the gift of Your Son, Jesus
You love us, Lord
Through our worship and our
response to Your word,
We love You, Lord.



Preparation – Just a Nice Guy

Some people think Jesus is a Mr Nice Guy. I wonder what you think? Here's a story about Jesus. He was going to the biggest church he knew in the biggest city he knew. When people went to that big church in those days, they had to buy an animal, maybe a sheep or a dove, and they gave the animal to God as a way of saying 'thank you, God' or 'sorry, God' or 'help me, God'. But lots of people had no money to buy anything to give God. It wasn't fair. Surely God listened to people saying thank you and sorry and please help me, even if they had nothing to give God when they prayed. Jesus walked into the big church and saw all the rich people selling their animals and making money. He saw all the poor people feeling sad, thinking God wouldn't listen to their prayers. Jesus decided to do something about it. He chased the animals out and tipped the plates of money on the floor! "Get out of here!" he shouted, "This is a place for everyone to pray, it's not for shopping!". I wonder why he did that? I wonder what he was thinking? I wonder what you think about Jesus not being just a Mr Nice Guy?



Can I encourage you to explore the idea that there is more to some images than first meets the eye? Of course, the same can be true for people! Who is Jesus? Gentle, meek, mild, insipid? What kind of Saviour is that? Wishy-washy, ineffective. Not someone we'd respect. So why is it shocking to discover that Jesus is a man of passion, seized with righteous anger, wielding a whip, driving out those who drive out others, and make God's house exclusive?

Why should we be surprised that Jesus doesn't just speak out but takes action to ensure that all people, everywhere have access to the love of God? And that, following this feisty man means that we too must be people of action.

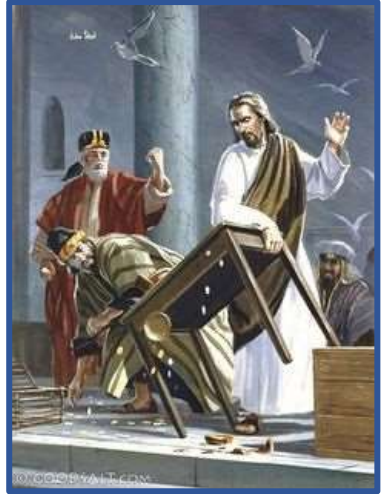
Reading: John 2:13–22

Reflection

This Sunday is the third Sunday in Lent. The readings for this week show us a God who cares enough about us to set boundaries and show us standards to live by where we can be loving to those around us and in turn show our love for God.

This reading from the Gospel of John is one of two accounts of Jesus clearing/cleansing the Temple. Jesus, like every Jewish male, had come to Jerusalem on pilgrimage to celebrate Passover, in accordance with laws listed for Worship found in the book of Deuteronomy (16:16).

Jerusalem was at the centre of the religious and political world of Palestine. It was here that the Messiah's return was anticipated to take place. Jesus observed the Temple, God's house of worship being used to promote dishonest trade on the part of the money changers and merchants. He decides that it is time for God's work to return to the centre of the life of the Temple and proceeds to turn the tables of immoral commerce over. Jesus clearly sees the actions of the money changers and merchants as making a mockery of God, which brews a righteous anger within Him. In this gospel the "Temple" alluded to is Jesus' own body. Jesus, God's only Son, was standing right in front of these people, but they were far more concerned about their precious building than the body of their Saviour. I wonder would they have believed the claim any more if they knew who Jesus was?



We have had to adapt and react to new and everchanging rules, regulations and laws as a result of the very unpredictable Coronavirus pandemic, and the majority of society has conformed to them in the name of safety and out of love and respect for those around them - be it family, friends, neighbour or stranger.

This week, why not take time to think about the rules that we observe in our daily life. What would life look like without them? Following this, think of how, like the laws and regulations we live by, some people question and struggle with the message of the cross as found in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and choose to view such a loving act as foolish. God loves us enough to set caring and lifegiving boundaries and even loves us enough to send Jesus to demonstrate that God's love is eternal. Even when we break the rules and go off course, God is willing to go to the ends of the earth to show God is the same God who was prepared to die in love for all humankind.

A song to sing or to read: Jesus Christ is Waiting

Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets
where injustice spirals and real hope retreats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too.
In the Kingdom's causes let me rage with you.

Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets
where each sign of hatred He, with love, defeats.
Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too.
On suspicion's graveyard let me dance with you.

Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets
"Who will join my journey? I will guide their feet."
Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few.
Walk one step before me; I will follow you.

*Music in the public domain, and lyrics by John L Bell by permission Wild Goose Publications
Used with permission CCLI 173204*



Closing Prayer

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

We follow God who leads us into the world. We follow Jesus the man of action. We follow the Spirit who gives us courage. Father, Son and Spirit, leading us on to make a difference until all know the power of the love of God. And now, trusting that we are cared for and not controlled, loved and not law-shackled, blessed and not bound, 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**

With thanks to Rev Mel Graham for preparing today's reflection

