

March 7th 2021

I have come into this place to worship God.

Have I come ready to grow? *(pause and take a moment to answer this question)*

Have I come willing to change? *(pause and take a moment to answer this question)*

I am prepared to put my faith into action, to worship God in all I do? *(pause again)*

Holy God, as I meet with you today, I ask that you renew my love for you.

**Open my eyes to see fresh things, open my ears to hear with more clarity,
open my mind to recognise new ideas – that I may be willing to grow and change and to
become more like your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Sing or read:

- 1 All my hope on God is founded ;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.
- 2 Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust ;
what with care and toil we fashion,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.
- 3 God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom passing thought ;
splendour, light, and life attend him,
beauty springeth out of naught.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.
- 4 Daily doth the almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow ;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
at his hand ;
joy doth wait on his command.
- 5 Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all
ye who follow shall not fall.

Robert Bridges (1844–1930) *(alt.) based on* Joachim Neander (1650–1680) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 455.

**O Lord clear my heart and mind of all unrighteous clutter.
As I seek to be your 'Church' at home.
Let me think not of human transactions – my losses and gains –
for I gather under the banner of your love that demands no price but my love in return.
Help me to sacrifice all that I am to your service,
as Jesus sacrificed everything for us. Amen.**

A prayer of confession

**Lord God, our ancestors turned the Temple into a marketplace; where are the marketplaces in our lives, O Lord? *(pause and take a moment to answer this question)*
We confess that we are driven by the need to possess. In our greed, we plunder the earth of resources and fail to share the good things you have provided for our needs. We are obsessed with the work of human hands, making idols of our houses – and yours.
Forgive us and help us to see that your Church is eternally under construction – in us. Amen.**

Assurance of forgiveness

**It is hard, O Lord when the message hits home,
when we see, in the sins of our forebears, our own,
when getting real has toppled our self-styled crowns
and the weight of guilt drags us down.
But you, dear Lord, always forgive, when in the Holy Spirit we choose to live.
And so, we lift our heads bare and humbled,
casting aside thinking that was dark and jumbled.
In your forgiveness we find the light to walk again in the path that is right. Amen.**

John 2:13-22 Jesus Cleanses the Temple

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.



Prayer: On this third Sunday in Lent if we had been in the church building a money purse and whip would have been added to the Lent cross as a reminder of the cleansing of the temple. Help us to consider what is valuable and precious to us, within our Christian life and how that links to the world around us.



God of wisdom help us to love you and your ways: protect the lives and reputations of those around us, cherish the relationships entrusted to us, and learn the value of your sufficient grace. In Jesus name. Amen

Thought on the reading:

Jesus performed actions as signs of a deeper truth. Recording these signs was important to John to help the Early Church to understand and interpret what had happened. We read that the disciples 'remembered that he had said this' (v.22), that the words of Jesus were handed on to us by those present, and that this was how the theology of the earliest Christian communities was worked out. In the other gospels this episode comes later, but John puts it towards the beginning because for him it is of major significance. In Matthew, attention is on the desecration of the Temple. Instead of a place of prayer and worship, it has been overtaken by commercial activity where laws of financial reward and profit supersede the law of love. While this is true for John, the principal meaning is found in Jesus' answer to the question for a sign. The Jews ask Jesus for a sign to 'prove' his authority. He replies that the new temple will consist of his body after the resurrection. His death and resurrection later gave Christian worship its context and meaning. We remember Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman: that the day would come when people would worship God neither on Mount Gerizim (favoured by the Samaritans) nor in Jerusalem (favoured by the Jews), for true worship would be offered in spirit and in truth (John 4.23). However, the Jews heard that he wanted to destroy the Temple, on which construction work was still under way. They failed to understand that worship of God can never be dependent on physical properties alone but on Jesus' love and life in the believer. If these are absent when we engage in worship, we talk to ourselves rather than communicate with God.

Prayers for others

**In the name of the one who came to cleanse the Temple,
we pray for the institutions by which we organise our society:
for churches and chapels and house groups; for educational establishments,
for places of healing, law and order, commerce, and recreation.
May they serve the greater good and adapt to the changing needs of the time.**

**In the name of the one who came to redeem the world,
we pray for those institutions by which we regulate global relations:
for governments and rulers, democracies, monarchies, and dictatorships,
for bodies that regulate trade, diplomacy, and the balance of peace,
for environmental, development and welfare organisations.
May they serve the greater good and adapt to the changing needs of the time.**

**In the name of the one who came to save us from ourselves,
we pray for those institutions we have in our lives:
for our friends, families, and colleagues; for our local communities,
for the church communities to which we belong.
May they serve the greater good and adapt to the changing needs of the time.
Amen.**

Sing or read:

- 1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.
- 2 Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might —
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.
- 3 To all life thou givest, to both great and small ;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all ;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish ; but naught changeth thee.
- 4 Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight ;
all praise we would render : O help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.
- 5 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Walter Chalmers Smith (1824–1908) Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 55.

A sending out prayer

We came together to worship God.

We have read God's Word.

We have prayed, read and sung songs.

We are in God's world:

to be God's people wherever we are called to go.

Let us proceed in Christ's name. Amen.

The Blessing of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, be with you, with those you love and with those you ought to love this day and forever more. Amen



Now: I encourage you to go and make yourself a nice cuppa, sit in a comfortable place. Slowly re-read John 2:13-22. You may feel that you need to re-read it several times. Note what words or phrases stand out to you. Close your eyes and try to imagine that you are there. Who are you in the story? Are you one of the disciples? Are you just someone who happened to be in the Temple that day? Are you one of the people selling things or a money changer? When Jesus says, "Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" What are your thoughts and feelings? What else in the story strikes you or is new to you? Can you imagine the look on Jesus' face? What are your reactions, do you visualise Jesus looking at you? If so, does he say anything to you? Or do you say anything to HIM? Take your time, there is no rush.