

Sunday 14 April 2024 Easter 2 10am Cooma

### Hymn - TIS 96 Sing praise to the Lord!

Sing praise to the Lord! praise him in the height;  
rejoice in his word, you angels of light;  
all heaven adore him by whom you were made,  
and worship before him in brightness arrayed.

Sing praise to the Lord! praise him upon earth,  
in tuneful accord sing praise for new birth;  
praise him who has brought you his grace from above,  
praise him who has taught you to sing of his love.

Sing praise to the Lord, all things that give sound;  
each jubilant chord re-echo around;  
loud organs, his glory tell forth in deep tone,  
and sweet harp, the story of what he has done.

Sing praise to the Lord! thanksgiving and song  
to him be outpoured all ages along;  
for love in creation, for heaven restored,  
for grace of salvation, sing praise to the Lord!

### The Grace

of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.  
**And also with you.**

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

**Lord have mercy on us, and write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit.**

### Sentence of the Day

"Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them!" Mark 11:23

### Prayer of Preparation

**Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

### Prayer of the Day

Eternal God,

you draw near to us in Christ and make yourself our guest: amid the cares of our daily lives, alert us to your presence and make us attentive to your voice, so that we may treasure your word above all else.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son. **Amen.**

### Jeremiah 7:9–15

<sup>9</sup> "Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, <sup>10</sup> and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, "We are safe"—safe to do all these detestable things? <sup>11</sup> Has this house, which bears my Name, become a

den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the LORD. <sup>12</sup> “ ‘Go now to the place in Shiloh where I first made a dwelling for my Name, and see what I did to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel. <sup>13</sup> While you were doing all these things, declares the LORD, I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen; I called you, but you did not answer. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, what I did to Shiloh I will now do to the house that bears my Name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your ancestors. <sup>15</sup> I will thrust you from my presence, just as I did all your fellow Israelites, the people of Ephraim.’

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

#### **Psalm 4**

<sup>1</sup> Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

<sup>2</sup> **How long will you people turn my glory into shame? How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?**

<sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD has set apart his faithful servant for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him.

<sup>4</sup> **Tremble and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.**

<sup>5</sup> Offer the sacrifices of the righteous and trust in the LORD.

<sup>6</sup> **Many, LORD, are asking, “Who will bring us prosperity?” Let the light of your face shine on us.**

<sup>7</sup> Fill my heart with joy when their grain and new wine abound.

<sup>8</sup> **In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, LORD, make me dwell in safety.**

#### **Colossians 1:15–20**

<sup>15</sup> The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

This is the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

#### **Mark 11:12–33**

<sup>12</sup> The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. <sup>13</sup> Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. <sup>14</sup> Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

<sup>15</sup> On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, <sup>16</sup> and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. <sup>17</sup> And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

<sup>18</sup> The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching. <sup>19</sup> When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

<sup>20</sup> In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. <sup>21</sup> Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!” <sup>22</sup> “Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. <sup>23</sup> “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. <sup>24</sup> Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. <sup>25</sup> And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”

<sup>27</sup> They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. <sup>28</sup> “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>30</sup> John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”

<sup>31</sup> They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’” <sup>32</sup> But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.) <sup>33</sup> So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.” Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

This is the gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ**

## Sermon - Jesus and the Temple

### Question Time

#### The Nicene Creed

**We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

#### The Prayers of the People

Let us pray for the world and the church

**Response:** Christ Jesus, intercede for us, and in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

**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.**

**Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

### Scripture Sentence

Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against any one, so that your Father who is in heaven may forgive your trespasses. Mark 11:25

### Prayer of Approach

We do not presume to come to your table, merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table. But you are the same Lord whose nature is always to have mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us. Amen.

### The Confession

God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy, welcoming sinners and inviting them to the Lord's table. Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God, who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith: pardon you and set you free from all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness and keep you in eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Greeting of Peace

We are the body of Christ. **His Spirit is with us.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you. **And also with you.**

### Hymn - TIS 408 O breath of God

O breath of God, breathe on us now  
and move within us while we pray;  
you are the spring of our new life,  
the very light of our new day.

How strangely you are with us, Lord,  
neither in height nor depth to seek:  
in nearness shall your voice be heard;  
spirit to spirit you will speak.

Christ is our advocate on high;  
you are our advocate within:  
O plead the truth, and make reply  
to every argument of sin.

But what a faithless heart of mine:  
the way I know, I know my guide:  
forgive me, O my friend divine,  
that I so often turn aside.

Be with me when no other friend  
the mystery of my heart can share;  
be always known, when fears descend,  
by your best name of Comforter.

### Thanksgiving for Offering

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom.

**Blessed be God for ever.**

### The Great Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

All glory and honour be yours always and everywhere, mighty Creator, everliving God.

We give you thanks and praise for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who by the power of your Spirit was born of Mary and lived as one of us. By his death on the cross, he offered the one true sacrifice for sin, and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

Merciful God, we thank you for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine, and we pray that by your Word and Holy Spirit, we who eat and drink them may be partakers of Christ's body and blood.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread; and when he had given you thanks he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take, eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup, and again giving you thanks he gave it to his disciples, saying, Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded: proclaiming his offering of himself made once for all upon the cross, his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension, and looking for his coming again, we celebrate, with this bread and this cup, his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Renew us by your Holy Spirit, unite us in the body of your Son and bring us with all your people into the joy of your eternal kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, and in whom, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we worship you, Father, in songs of never-ending praise:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

### The Holy Communion

As this broken bread was once many grains, which have been gathered together and made one bread: so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

**The gifts of God for the people of God**

Come let us take this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in remembrance that he died for us, and feed on him in our hearts with thanksgiving.

The Lord's Supper is open to all who love the Lord

Grape juice is available.

Please come to the Communion Rail if you are able, observing appropriate social distancing.

### After Communion

Gracious God, we thank you that in this sacrament you assure us of your goodness and love. Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and help us to grow in love and obedience that we may serve you in the world and finally be brought to that table where all your saints feast with you for ever.

**Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen**

## Notices

### Hymn - TIS 380 Yours be the glory

#### Refrain

**Yours be the glory Risen conquering Son  
Endless is the victory Over death You've won**

**Yours be the glory Risen conquering Son  
Endless is the victory over death You've won  
Angels in bright raiment Rolled the stone away  
Kept the folded grave clothes Where Your body lay *Refrain***

**See Jesus meets us Risen from the tomb  
Lovingly He greets us Scatters fear and gloom  
Let the church with gladness Hymns of triumph sing  
For her Lord is living Death has lost its sting *Refrain***

**No more we doubt You Glorious prince of life  
Life is naught without You Aid us in our strife  
Make us more than conquerors Through Your deathless love  
Bring us safe through Jordan To Your home above *Refrain***

### Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

### Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:  
**In the name of Christ. Amen.**

## Sermon - Jesus and the Temple - Mark 11:12-33

What is the most sacred site for Christians?

Some people say the church of the holy nativity in Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, others the church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Jesus was crucified, was buried and rose again, or others might say St Peters in Rome, the centre of the Catholic church.

It is easier to answer what is the holiest site for the Jews - pretty well everyone would agree that it is the wailing wall, the remains of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

What we now know as the wailing wall is actually the remains of the second temple on the site. King Solomon had the original temple built in about 960BC on the site where Abraham was to sacrifice his son Isaac to God. This temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.

The second temple was built there between 536 and 515BC as recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. This was a much less impressive structure than Solomon's temple, and was expanded into the one Jesus visited in our reading today under King Herod, which was a truly impressive structure.

The temple wasn't just a single building, and it better thought of as an entire precinct, which included the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, the court of the Israelites (which was reserved for ritually pure Jewish men), the Court of the Priests, and the Temple Court where sacrifices were slaughtered and burnt offerings made, and the Temple building itself. The Temple building had three distinct chambers: the porch, the sanctuary (the main part of the building) and the Holy of Holies, the innermost chamber where Israel's priests could meet with God face to face, but only on certain days of the year, and only after much elaborate washing and preparation.

As we read today, Jesus entered the outer courts of the temple, the court of the Gentiles, where a sort of market place had been set up. This was a very practical development, as people would come great distances to sacrifice at the temple, and it was much more convenient to buy sacrificial animals than to transport them. Also, you could buy animals that were certified without defect and therefore acceptable. Also, transactions in the temple had to be in official temple currency, so there was also a lucrative money changing racket which probably helped line pockets of the temple officials.

As practical as it may have been, Jesus had a problem with this. The court of the Gentiles was supposed to allow non Jews to participate in temple worship, even if their worship was much more limited than the way Jews could. But their court was filled up with this market which effectively prevented them worshipping God there. As we read, He overturned the

tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, 16 and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts.

He reminded them of our old testament reading saying, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

Well, we know that the chief priests and the teachers of the law were already annoyed with him, to say the least, but when they heard this they began looking for a way to kill him. Mark tells us the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching, so they feared him, even enough to want to kill him.

Later on, Jesus was to annoy them even more. The chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him and asked "By what authority are you doing these things?" They thought that they were the authority in the temple, and here was this upstart Jesus not only telling people how things should be, but rather violently upsetting their little side earner!

Unfortunately for them, not only did Jesus have the Old Testament on his side, they weren't consistent with the way they dealt with John the baptist's authority, and they knew it. Jesus asked who they reckoned gave John the Baptist his authority, and this rather embarrassingly held them over a barrel. They couldn't say John had God's authority, as they didn't want to follow him, and they couldn't say he was only acting on his own, or had human authority as he had so many followers and they didn't want them upset. So, rather than admitting they had lost another argument, they tried the coward's way out and said they didn't know. Yet again they had to leave with their tails between their legs.

So, twice in a few verses, the temple authorities were shown up by Jesus. They really weren't having a good day, but it would have been even worse if they heard what else Jesus was telling his disciples. You may be wondering what the strange section about the fig tree were about. Our reading started with Jesus cursing a fig tree when he couldn't find any fruit on it, even though it wasn't fig season. Later, the apostles found the tree withered from its roots. When I first read this I thought it was a bit rich of Jesus to do this particularly as it wasn't fig season! Hadn't Jesus told a parable in Luke 13 about leaving an unproductive fig tree alone for one more year, digging around it and fertilising it. Saying 'If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.' So why was Jesus so harsh with this tree?

Jesus was obviously making a different point, and as this is happening around Jesus's interaction with the temple, it is most likely really about the temple, and Jesus really didn't have an issue with non-fruiting fig trees. If we look at the passage carefully, Jesus is really



using the fig tree as a metaphor for the temple. He is saying that the temple is unproductive, and as a result, its days were numbered. It was unproductive because it wasn't doing what a temple should do, providing a place for people, Jews and Gentiles, to meet with God and be reconciled with God, it had been turned into a money making venture that was actually preventing people from meeting with God by charging exorbitant rates for sacrifices and limiting who could get in where. In fact, we know from history that the temple's days were indeed numbered, and it was almost entirely destroyed about 40 years later by the Roman emperor Titus in 70AD, leaving only the wailing wall.

Knowing this, it is still important to understand Jesus's answer to the apostles: Have faith in God," Jesus answered. 23 "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."

After saying that the temple will be destroyed, the mountain that he mentions here is specifically the temple mount. He says that if you were to tell the temple mount to throw itself in the sea, and do not doubt in your heart but believe that what you say will happen, it will be done for you.

Many people ignore the context of Jesus' answer, and say that this is simply about the power of faith, that God will even throw any mountain into the sea if you pray with enough faith. But it is much more than this. A Jew would only get rid of the temple if they didn't need it to relate to God, which is precisely why Jesus came. Jesus came as the one true sacrifice, so animal sacrifices are no longer required. Jesus came to restore our direct relationship with God, so the holy of holies was no longer required to meet God face to face. He came to make the temple redundant.

The letter to the Hebrews 10 tells us in Hebrews 10:11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest (that is Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

And how do we gain this access to God through Jesus Christ? We gain it through prayer, direct to God, without needing the intermediaries provided by the temple: priests, sacrifices, the holy of Holies, or even elaborate rituals. As Jesus says: whatever you ask for in prayer, even if it is as much as free access to the omnipotent God of the universe

(which is much greater than merely throwing a mountain into the sea), then all we have to do is simply believe that you have received it.

After he said this, the temple officials asked Jesus the source of his authority. I mentioned earlier that his response, asking where John the baptist's authority came from, annoyed them. But it should have prompted them to consider the same two possibilities for Jesus. Did his authority come from man, and therefore far less significant than the authority of the temple, or did it come from God, and was therefore vastly more important?

We need to ask ourselves the same question. If Jesus's authority came from man, then this building we are meeting in today is just a poor facsimile of the temple, and no matter how often we come here to perform the rituals, to consume the Lord's Supper and even confess our sins, we will always need to keep coming back, year after year, as the Jews needed to with their temple. Rituals under man's authority can never save us from our sins, and we will keep coming back to our sins as a dog does to its vomit.

If however, Jesus's authority comes from God, then the building we meet in is the place we meet with others who are also eternally forgiven by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The rituals we perform remember the salvation he has won for us on the cross, and praise and worship him as our Lord and God Jesus Christ, along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit as our triune, true God.

I started this sermon asking the most sacred site for Christians, and the true answer is that it isn't a place, it's a relationship. The most sacred place for Christians is to be friends with God, saved from sin by the blood of Jesus. The most sacred site for Christians, the most sacred site for the entire world is where Jesus Christ is Lord, amongst his forgiven people. It's a site not divided up into sources for Jews, Gentiles and women like the temple was, but it's open to all who have put their faith in Jesus.

Are you in this sacred site?