

The Parish of All Saints and Saint Saviours. Lent Study 2021.

Session 3.

The Temple of God.

Bible Reading

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market.' Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?' Jesus answered, 'Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body.

For the Jewish people at the time of Christ the Temple in Jerusalem was the centre of their religious world. It was not only where the Jews met to pray, but also where they offered animal sacrifices for cleansing and forgiveness, as well as in thanksgiving for such things as healing from illness. There was only one Temple in the entire Jewish world, which was the only place where such sacrifices could be offered. Such Jesus's words to the Jewish authorities about destroying the Temple were so shocking because if the Temple were destroyed, there would be no way that the Jews could have sacrifices offered for them, in order to be clean and free from sin in the sight of God. Imagine for a moment what it would be like for us if we did not have All Saints' Church, or anywhere at all to celebrate the Mass in our community.



In the previous two sessions we have discussed how Holy Scripture and the Person of Christ can point us along the road to God. This week, we will be looking at how themes drawn from The Temple; specifically The Church, and The Sacrifice of the Mass can help us in our Lenten journey.

As the Christian family here we meet day by day to celebrate the Mass. Each time that we are doing this, we are re-presenting the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. This is not a new sacrifice (the Sacrifice of Jesus was a once-and-for-all event), but a remembering. The word used in the original Greek of St Luke's Gospel is *Anamnesis* (Luke 22:15) which can be translated as "a past event made present now". In other words, Christ's sacrifice is made real for us now upon the altar. And the enormity of that means that each time we come

to Mass, we have a share in Christ's Passion, and a share in the resurrection that his sacrifice has won for us.

We also believe that at the consecration, the bread and wine upon the altar actually become the Body and Blood of Christ. That means that whenever we come to Mass, we meet Jesus. Not just in some abstract way, but we actually meet our Risen Saviour face to face. How many of us actually come to Church ready for that meeting, or even looking forward to it? For what is left of Lent, let us all get into the habit of proper preparation for Mass, by saying our prayers, and asking God to make us worthy to meet and receive his Son.

The Mass is only one of seven sacraments that the Church gives us to help us live and grow in Christ throughout our lives. During Lent, the one other sacrament that has special significance is Penance, also known as confession. Confessing our sins, saying sorry to God, and asking for his help in washing away our sins is something we ought to seriously consider during Lent. Ask me or any of our other clergy about this important sacrament, and we will help you in both preparing for, and making your confession.

In our reading, Jesus talked about destroying the Temple, and rebuilding it in three days. The Gospel tells us that the Temple he was speaking of was his body. We know that the Church, both here in Weston, and worldwide, is far more than bricks and mortar. If the church burnt down tomorrow we would continue to meet; perhaps in a school, perhaps in another church, perhaps in St. Saviour's Hall or the Vicarage.. And we would continue to offer the Mass. For we, the people of God are the Church here ; we are the body of Christ, his hands and feet, his eyes and ears. This Lent, let us think and pray about what it means to be the Body of Christ here in Weston, and beyond. Let our thoughts and words, and deeds reflect the fact that that we have met with Christ at the Mass, and that he lives in us, and lives through us. That way, when we come to celebrate Easter, the world may know through us that Jesus is truly risen.

Prayer

Soul of Christ sanctify me
Body of Christ save me
Blood of Christ inebriate me
Water from the side of Christ wash me
Passion of Christ strengthen me
O good Jesu hear me
Within thy wounds hide me
Suffer me not to be separated from thee
From the malicious enemy defend me
In the hour of my death call me
And bid me come to thee
That with thy saints I may praise thee
For ever and ever. Amen.