

20th October

22nd Sunday after Pentecost

The True Temple of God

Jeremiah 7.1-14

Psalm 84.1-11

Eph.2.13-22

Mark.11.11-18

Key Verse: Mark 11:17 – “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.”

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today we gather to explore the theme “The True Temple of God.” Throughout the Scriptures, the concept of the temple has been a central theme in understanding God’s presence among His people. While the physical temple in Jerusalem was significant in ancient Israel, we are reminded that God desires to dwell not just in buildings made by human hands but in the hearts of His people. As we delve into our scripture readings today - from the prophetic warnings of Jeremiah to the words of Jesus in Mark - we will unpack what it means to be the true temple of God. We will also see how the church, the body of Christ, embodies this temple in the world today.

I. The Warning of False Worship (Jeremiah 7:1-14)

Our journey begins with the prophet Jeremiah, who delivers a powerful message from God regarding the people’s false sense of security in the temple. The Israelites believed that because the temple stood in their midst, they were safe from God’s judgment. They thought they could continue in their corrupt practices, relying on the temple as a shield against their moral failings. Jeremiah’s message is clear: the temple is not a magical refuge. God does not delight in empty rituals or superficial worship. In verses 9-10, he asks, “Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, 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?” This passage serves as a profound reminder for us today. It challenges us to examine our own worship and the condition of our hearts. Are we coming to church out of routine, or are we genuinely seeking to encounter the living God? Consider the story of a man who attended church every Sunday without fail. He participated in all the activities but often felt disconnected. One day, he was confronted by a friend who asked, “Do you truly seek God when you come here, or are you just going through the motions?” This question pierced his heart, and he realized he needed a deeper relationship with God, one that transcended mere attendance. In our own lives, we must strive to ensure that our worship is genuine and heartfelt. God desires truth and authenticity rather than mere outward appearances. He calls us to be transformed by His presence, which means engaging with Him in sincere worship.

II. The Longing for God's Presence (Psalm 84:1-11)

Psalm 84 beautifully expresses the deep longing for God's presence. The psalmist begins with the heartfelt question, "How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty!" This is a song of yearning, reflecting the desire to be in God's presence, to experience His love and guidance. In verses 10-11, the psalmist declares, "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked." This sentiment encapsulates the essence of our faith: the yearning for intimacy with God. As the true temple of God, we are called to cultivate a space in our lives where God's presence dwells. This can manifest in our personal lives, in our homes, and in our community of believers. When we prioritize our relationship with God, we create an atmosphere where His presence can flourish. Reflect on the story of a family that transformed their home into a sanctuary of prayer and worship. They set aside time each day to read the Scriptures, pray, and worship together. Over time, their home became a refuge for friends and neighbours, a place where others could encounter God's presence. As we strive to be the true temple of God, let us cultivate a longing for His presence in our lives. When we make room for God, we experience the joy of communion with Him and the transformation that comes from being in His presence.

III. The Unity of Believers (Ephesians 2:13-22)

In Ephesians, Paul elaborates on the theme of unity within the body of Christ. He reminds us that through Christ's sacrifice, we who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. The wall of hostility that separated us has been torn down, and we are now fellow citizens with God's people. Paul's description of the church as a holy temple being built together emphasizes the communal aspect of our faith. Each believer is a living stone, contributing to the larger structure that is the body of Christ. This unity is not merely a superficial agreement but a deep connection rooted in our shared faith and identity in Christ. In a world marked by division and strife, the church must stand as a beacon of unity. When we come together as the body of Christ, we reflect the true temple of God - a place where God's presence is manifested through our love and acceptance of one another. Consider the impact of a diverse community coming together to serve a common purpose. A local church organized a community service project, bringing together members from various backgrounds and cultures. As they worked side by side, barriers were broken down, and friendships were formed. This unity in action demonstrated the love of Christ and became a powerful witness to their community. As the true temple of God, we are called to promote unity and love among believers. Our actions should reflect our identity as a community of faith, inviting others to experience the transformative power of Christ.

IV. The Authority of Christ in the Temple (Mark 11:11-18)

In our Gospel reading, we find Jesus entering the temple and confronting the corruption that had taken root. He sees merchants and money changers exploiting the space meant for worship and prayer. With righteous anger, Jesus drives them out,

declaring that the temple should be a house of prayer for all nations. This passage reveals the authority of Christ over the temple. Jesus is not merely cleaning house; He is redefining what the temple represents. The true temple of God is not a place for commercial transactions or religious exploitation but a sacred space where all are welcome to encounter God. When we embrace the true nature of the temple, we recognize that our lives should reflect the same values Jesus emphasized. We must be vigilant against practices that detract from the essence of worship. Are we making room for those who seek God, or are we creating barriers that keep them away? Reflect on a time when a church community reached out to those on the fringes - those who felt unworthy or unwelcome. By opening their doors and hearts, they created a space where people could experience God's love and acceptance. This aligns with Jesus' vision for the temple: a place where all can come and find refuge. As we strive to embody the true temple of God, let us ensure that our communities reflect the inclusiveness and grace of Christ. May our hearts be open to all who seek God, and may we extend His love to every corner of our lives.

Conclusion

As we reflect on the theme "The True Temple of God," we are reminded that God desires to dwell within us, shaping us into a living temple filled with His presence. The Scriptures today invite us to examine our worship, to cultivate a longing for God's presence, to embrace unity within the body of Christ, and to uphold the authority of Jesus in our communities. Let us commit ourselves to being the true temple of God - a place where His presence is evident, where authentic worship occurs, where unity thrives, and where all are welcomed into the loving arms of Christ. As we embark on this journey together, may we always remember that we are not just a building or an institution but a living embodiment of God's love in the world.

Prayer

Gracious Father, we thank You for the privilege of being called Your temple. Help us to live in a way that honours You, reflecting Your love and grace in our lives. May our worship be sincere, our longing for You genuine, our unity as believers strong, and our witness to the world inviting. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit and guide us as we seek to be a true reflection of Your presence in our community. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.