

Closing Prayer

God most high and most holy,
heaven itself cannot contain you,
yet in every generation
you build your dwelling place on earth
as the temple of your Spirit,
founded on Christ, its precious cornerstone.
Hear the prayers of your Church,
gathered in this house
to celebrate its dedication to your service.
Make this community a true house of prayer,
a place of praise to your holy name.
We make this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Celebrating the Christian Year, Dedication, Year A²

CPL • LBC Year A Dedication.odt • 2020-08-06

² *Celebrating the Christian year : prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.*

Dedication Festival

Date of church's dedication or last Sunday in October

Principal Service readings

1 Kings 8.22-30	Solomon prays for himself ('the heavens cannot contain you')
or Revelation 21.9-14	Vision of the messianic Jerusalem
Psalms 122	Prayer for deliverance from suffering
Hebrews 12.18-24	Approaching the heavenly Jerusalem
Matthew 21.12-16	Jesus expels the dealers from the temple

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Jesus in the Temple

¹²Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves. ¹³He said to them, 'It is written,

“My house shall be called a house of prayer”;

but you are making it a den of robbers.’

¹⁴The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David’, they became angry ¹⁶and said to him, ‘Do you hear what these are saying?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Yes; have you never read,

“Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise for yourself”?’

Matthew 21.12-16 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

Matthew has made additions and restructuring from his source, Mark 11.1-11, and has turned Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem into two episodes, entrance into the city of Jerusalem (21.1-11), and entrance into the temple (21.12-16) He has also highlighted the motif of the fulfilment of scripture. Whereas Mark has an intervening night before Jesus cleanses the temple, in Matthew Jesus goes straight on to it after entering Jerusalem. The justification for cleansing the temple lies in Isaiah 56.7:

these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

Isaiah 56.7 NRSV

and Jeremiah 7.11:

Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight? You know, I too am watching, says the LORD.

Jeremiah 7.11 NRSV

Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem takes place from the east, by way of the Mount of Olives. According to the account Zechariah 14.4 an important event is to take place there on 'the day of the Lord' (understood then as the eschaton): 'On that day his [the Lord's] feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which lies before Jerusalem on the east.' The king who enters Jerusalem in Zechariah 9.9 is most likely to be the Lord himself as the divine warrior: 'Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

In imagining Jesus entering the temple area, we should envisage a large area with the holy of holies at its centre. In view of the sacrificial system operating there it was natural and necessary for there to be some commercial activity. Jesus' 'cleansing' actions, then, can be seen as symbolic, in keeping with the symbolic actions of the prophets.

In the temple area Jesus continues his healing ministry, doing what was expected of the Messiah according to the apocryphal *Psalms of Solomon*

17.30: 'And he will purge Jerusalem and make it holy as it was even from the beginning.' Jesus probably thought of himself as purifying the worship of the temple. However, his disruptive activity is likely to have provoked opposition to him, since the city's economy relied on pilgrims spending money on religious festivals.

In Matthew's time the temple had been destroyed, so this is very much in the past. However, Matthew wants to show that Jesus is the 'Lord' of the city and of the temple area. As we enter the week of the Passion, we can see that Jesus is in charge of events, that he is fulfilling the scriptures, and that he is maintaining his identity as 'Lord'.

Quotations

1

Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

John Wesley, 1703–1791

2

The perfect church service would be the one we were almost unaware of; our attention would have been on God. But every novelty prevents this. It fixes our attention on the service itself, and thinking about worship is a different thing than worshipping ... 'Tis mad idolatry that makes the service greater than the god.

C. S. Lewis, 1898–1963

Related topics

For further study:

Mystery of the church