

Hypocrisy

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[0:00] Amen. Thank you, Kirsty. Well, good morning, everyone. As has been mentioned, my name is Alistair. I'm the assistant pastor here at the church. And this morning, it is my joy to help us think through this passage for the next bit of our service.

So please do have that passage open in front of you. It's key that everything we do here at church is rooted in God's word. Do as I say, not as I do. This defines hypocrisy with words but a few.

That's a little poem that I stumbled across this week as I was reflecting on our passage from this morning. Now, most of us, if not all of us, would agree that we hate hypocrisy.

We get really riled up, don't we, when we see someone who makes the rules break the rules.

Whether that's a policeman speeding down the motorway without any sirens on or a park attendant with his scooter on a double yellow line.

We hate hypocrisy. Those who should be leading as examples, we hate to see them doing the exact opposite of what they say everyone else should be doing. We hate the idea of one rule for the majority and another for the few.

[1:12] And I don't think I need to give many examples of the last few years and how that has played out. We'll all have a few in our minds. But we hate hypocrisy when it happens in our day-to-day lives as well, don't we?

And I think that's a good thing. And believe it or not, God hates hypocrisy too. This morning, as we turn to John chapter 2, verses 13 to 25, we walk into the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem.

The central place of worship for the whole nation of Israel. And the Jews, they knew their Old Testament, you see. They knew that their Messiah was coming, the promised one of God who would come to save God's people.

They didn't know when. They didn't know exactly how. But they should have been waiting for God's king. But they weren't.

In fact, they weren't being anything like the Old Testament said they should have been. They'd become comfortable in their faith. They were not living as God wanted them to.

[2:17] They were saying one thing, saying that they were the faithful people of God, but in reality doing the other. Neglecting God and neglecting his word.

Now, last week in the first half of John 2 with Archie, we saw that the promised king, Jesus, has arrived. Jesus is on scene, showing himself as the one who fulfills the Old Testament prophecies.

Pointing to the fact that he is God's king. The one with power over creation and the ultimate bridegroom. In the first half of John 2, we saw the king in all of his glory.

And now in the second half of John 2, we see that same theme continue. This is God's king in all of his glory. But this time the perspective here is that this king burns with zeal for the Lord and comes in judgment.

To unsettle the religious status quo, to shake the religious establishment and to call people back to faithful worship of God. Here we see Jesus, the revolutionary king, who comes in all of his glory to judge with authority.

[3:32] We'll see that Jesus hates hypocrisy. That he has all authority and we'll see two responses to him. So the first thing we see in this passage is Jesus hates hypocrisy in verses 13 to 17.

Jesus hates hypocrisy. Now John sets the scene for us wonderfully in verse 13. Read that with me. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now according to Jewish law, in Deuteronomy 12, it says that during a national festival like Passover, which celebrated Israel being saved by God from Egypt out of slavery, the whole nation of Israel was supposed to gather in Jerusalem, was supposed to go to the temple and worship God.

So you can imagine that scene, can't you? Not much space. Jerusalem would be absolutely jam-packed to the full. No space to move around. Crowds hustling and bustling, running around. The noise of hundreds upon hundreds of different conversations taking place all around you. It would make the Royal Mile during the Fringe Festival look like a walk in the park.

[4 : 47] And then throw verse 14 into the mix. So on top of the base level noise of a hustle and bustle of a busy city and temple, you hear animals all around making their respective noises.

And you can imagine the smell, can't you? On the one hand, this market made it easier for the worshippers of God to buy their sacrifices so that they can worship accordingly.

People often travelled big distances to get to the temple. And so this was convenient. But people probably paid more for this convenience.

See, the market owners weren't doing this out of a good sacrificial worship of God. They were in it to make money. It was a business. And by conducting their business in the temple courts, they are disrupting the purpose of the temple and disrupting people's worship.

So imagine Jesus standing in the midst of this crowd, looking at everything going on. Marketplace owners shouting out the newest offer. Buy one calf, get one free.

[6 : 06] Money changers offering the best exchange rate, better than the kiosk just around the corner. People bartering over how much that lamb is going to cost so that they can sacrifice it in the temple.

Just imagine the place Jesus finds himself in. And then Jesus finds a quiet spot, I imagine.

He sits down and as verse 15 says, he makes a whip. Jesus proceeds to drive them out of the temple. Read verse 15 with me. So he, that's Jesus, made a whip out of cords and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle.

He scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves, he said, get these out of here. Stop turning my father's house into a market.

Now imagine the chaos. Imagine the scene out into, it's gone from people being everywhere.

[7 : 09] Animals being everywhere. They're now being driven in all directions. People scattering. Money changers scrambling on the floor, picking up the coins because Jesus flipped the tables.

People shouting after cows as they're running away. People dodging out of the way of those lambs running between their feet. Doves flapping like mad in their cages because of the noise and chaos going on around them.

But Jesus doesn't just get annoyed. He isn't seeing red. He hasn't lost it. He hasn't flipped a lid. He isn't flying off the handle. But this is the righteous anger of God against hypocrisy.

Look at what Jesus says in verse 16. Stop turning my father's house into a market. Now growing up as a teenager with a few anger issues myself, I loved this passage.

Because I thought it showed Jesus was a pretty cool guy. Who like me, got angry every once in a while. Enjoyed flipping tables and enjoyed generally making chaos. But that's wrong.

[8 : 19] Because Jesus doesn't have anger issues but he is burning with righteous anger because the Jews have created barriers for people to come and worship the one and only God.

They'd created barriers so people can't get into the temple. Jesus shows righteous anger at hypocrisy. This is the eternal king in all his glory.

Come to shake up the religious status quo of his day. Come to call people back into a relationship with God so that they can live as he wants them to.

Come to usher in a new era for God's people. Come as the revolutionary Messiah who will not stand by as people say one thing and do another.

So what exactly was the problem? Well Jesus clears the temple courts of merchants and cattle not because he was bothered by the noise.

[9 : 19] Not because it disturbed those who wanted to have a bit more of reflection time. Not because it was an inconvenience. Not because it was an inconvenience. But because Jesus is deeply concerned with God's glory and God's honour.

In verse 17 it says that the disciples remember Psalm 69. You'll see that in the footnotes of your Bibles. Which is speaking about God's chosen king who would come and it says that zeal for your house, that's God's house, will consume him.

Jesus clears the temple because he cares about the worship of God. Because the area that this makeshift marketplace was in was the part of the temple known as the court of the Gentiles.

It was the place in the temple, a large open space dedicated for Gentiles, for non-Jewish people. For them to be able to gather and pray to God. It was the place they could enter into God's presence and worship him.

God describes himself in Isaiah 56 that the temple should be a place where all nations, all peoples can gather and pray to him. It should be a place where all peoples were able to raise their voices in worship to and adoration of God.

[10 : 36] And yet the hypocrisy of the Jews is that while they were busy doing things in God's name, their hearts were very far from God.

They were not obeying his commands. They put barriers in the way stopping Gentiles from even coming close to worshipping God in the temple. Creating a marketplace for profit and material wealth in expense of the Gentiles' spiritual well-being.

The problem is that these people were very busy doing things in God's name. They were in the temple preparing for Passover. Getting ready for this religious celebration.

Busying themselves with the things of God but in their hearts far from God. They weren't worshipping God as he commanded and instead using the temple as they wanted to, not as God wanted to.

And so Jesus sees it and he sees the hypocrisy and he hates it. The Jews knew that the Messiah would come to bring in a new era for God's people.

[11 : 47] God makes that abundantly clear in the Old Testament. The Jews knew that God's king would come and purify the temple. Call them back to right worship. Right all wrongs.

But they'd lost their way. They'd wandered from God in their hearts. Jesus sees the hypocrisy and he hates it. And so out of zeal for the Lord. Out of a deep desire to see God honoured, glorified, worshipped properly.

He clears the temple. Now aren't we glad that Jesus acts like this? Aren't we glad that he hates hypocrisy?

I think we are because we get that feeling of disgust, don't we? When we see people claiming to do God's work, living completely contrary to what they say throughout the week.

We hate it when we hear stories of well-known Christians who have been in places of power and influence. Use that power and influence to abuse and hurt people.

[12 : 54] That should disgust us. Because that's not what Christians are called to do. And we also hate it because it can often bring the watching world to think that the gospel and the church is just a structure designed by man to inflict pain on others.

That is not what we see in the Bible. But we also need to ask ourselves, are we zealous for God's honour and for the right worship of God?

Are we hypocrites or are we zealous? Are we zealous for God's honour in our own lives because we can't be both? Are we zealous for God in our workplaces where all sorts of things are said and done on a daily basis?

Are we zealous for God's honour and praise in our own lives? As we live in a world that dishonours and sidelines God all the time, are we zealous about it or are we indifferent to it?

We hate hypocrisy and so we rightly say in this church, have your Bible open. Check what we say is in line with what the Bible says.

[14 : 14] Don't take what we say for granted and also check our lives. Hold each other accountable, invest in each other so that we know that our words match the way we live.

As a church family, we should all be helping one another, living the lives that God has created us to live in accordance with God's word. And there's a warning here.

Because we can all appear to be doing the right things, saying the right things on the surface. And yet in our hearts, be far from God. Friends, reflect on how you are living in relation to Jesus this morning.

Not just on Sundays, but every day of the week. Are you zealous for God? This is the King in all His glory. A revolutionary King who came and made people uncomfortable with His message.

A King who burns with zeal for the Lord and comes to call people back to faithful worship. And that faithful worship should be a witness to the watching world.

[15 : 24] Reaching out for everyone to see. And there's a challenge, isn't there as well, for how we worship God. Yes, we must worship God with all of our lives. Romans 12 makes that clear.

But it's also important for how we worship God as a church gathering like this on a Sunday morning. Our desire should be to glorify Jesus.

He should be the center of everything we do here. It's not about having the best music. It's not about being moved emotionally.

It's not about going away from a Sunday morning sermon. Being encouraged and uplifted every single time. And none of those things are bad. But our main focus, our main desire should be the glory and honor of God.

Lifting His name above every other name and giving Him all the praise. For Him to be the center and focus of everything we do here at Bronzefield.

[16:24] And to be witnesses to those around us. How many of our neighbors know what we do here on a Sunday morning? How many of your friends and family know what we do when we gather to praise the Lord?

Is He the center? Jesus hates hypocrisy and so should we. The second thing we see in this passage is that Jesus has all authority.

In verses 18 to 21. Jesus has all authority. Now how would you expect the Jews to respond? So remember that they're in the temple.

They should be worshiping God according to His word. They should have been expecting the Messiah, God's King to come and change things. And so you kind of hope, don't they, that they'd respond in humility and repentance?

But instead of reflecting on their practices. Instead of recognizing the barriers that they've created. And realizing the sins that they've done. They turn to Jesus in verse 18 and basically say, What gives you the right to stand as judge over us?

[17:34] What gives you the authority to do this? Read verse 18 with me. The Jews then responded to Him. What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all of this?

You can hear a little bit of a childish tone in their voices, can't you? I'm the middle of three sons. Yes, my mother did not have a very easy life. And I remember times when we were living at home. We all lived together. Then my little brother would do things or say things. And I would tell him off. Sometimes a little bit too harshly. But I would say, you can't do things like that.

You shouldn't speak like that. You shouldn't act like that. And what's the response that the younger sibling always barks back? Who made you the boss of me? You're not my mom and dad.

What gives you the right to tell me what I can and can't do? I can see all the parents nodding along and laughing. That's the kind of thing these Jewish leaders say in verse 18.

[18:32] They arrive. They hear the commotion. They arrive and says, what gives you the right? What proof do you have that you have the authority to do this?

Their concern is not their sin. Their concern is not even with their corporate worship. Their concern isn't if they've done something wrong. Their concern is who is this guy and how dare he?

But Jesus doesn't pull out a passport or an identity card that says, this is the son of God. Listen to him. But his response is maybe a little bit odd. Look at verse 19 with me.

Jesus answered them, destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days. See, the Jewish leaders want a sign to prove for Jesus, to prove his identity to them, to prove his authority.

And he responds by saying, destroy the temple and I will raise it again in three days. The very center of the worship of God, that would be unthinkable for a Jew.

[19:36] The place where mankind can meet with God and Jesus says, destroy it in three days. Why? Well, because as verse 21 clarifies with a little narration comment from John, the gospel writer, the temple that Jesus had spoken of was his body.

Jesus is basically saying to the Jewish leaders, you will see a sign that will prove to you that I am God's king, but it won't be like you think.

It won't be me sitting on a throne. It won't be me bringing in an army to kick out the Romans. The sign you will see to prove my identity and that I have the authority of God is that a day is coming where all of you will conspire against me and you will put my body to death.

But three days later, I will rise again. Now, here's where we need to think, where we need to think a little bit more about what this means. See, the temple was the place where people met with God.

It was the symbol of God's dwelling place with his people. A daily reminder of how God cannot fully dwell with his people because he is perfect and we are not.

[20 : 51] And so they had to go make sacrifices every day almost. A constant reminder of their need for forgiveness because we rebel against God all the time, don't we?

Jesus says all of that will be changed. Because the moment he dies on the cross, taking the sins of the world on himself, Jesus fulfills what the temple was supposed to do.

Jesus' death was the moment that the whole temple worship was pointing towards. So do you see what Jesus is saying? The place where God now dwells with his people, the place where forgiveness can be found, isn't in a building, but it is in the body and completed work of Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection.

Brothers and sisters, this is precisely why the cross and resurrection of Jesus are key to the Christian faith. If you're here this morning and you're still on the fence about Christianity, the place I would encourage you to start investigating is the resurrection.

Because if the resurrection didn't happen, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15, that the Christian faith is futile and Christians should be pitied above everyone else.

[22 : 16] The greatest proof for the identity and authority of Jesus is the resurrection. That's why we as Christians make such a big deal out of it. Because without the resurrection, our faith means nothing.

If the resurrection didn't happen, we would serve a dead savior who is buried somewhere else, like every other key figure in every other religion. With a gravestone somewhere in the world where pilgrims go to worship their God.

But as Christians, we have no such grave because Jesus is alive. As Christians, there is no such headstone because on the third day the tomb was empty.

As Christians, we do not travel to a specific place to worship God or to be in the presence of God because Jesus promised that he would be with his people now until the end of all time.

We serve Jesus, the eternal king, who is alive and seated at the right hand of God. That is precisely what the temple was pointing to.

[23 : 21] Jesus has all authority and the ultimate proof of that is the resurrection. And then the third and final thing we see in this passage is two responses to this king in verses 22 to 25.

Two responses to the king. Read the first response with me in verse 22. After he was raised from the dead, that's Jesus, his disciples recalled what he had said.

Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken. So after the resurrection, the disciples remembered everything Jesus had spoken to them here and they believed.

Jesus told them that they would remember in John chapter 14, verse 26, that we'll get to in the coming months. Because the Holy Spirit would bring to mind the things that Jesus had taught them. But what exactly did they believe in? Well, verse 22 says the scriptures and the words Jesus had spoken. They believed the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Jesus.

[24 : 29] They believed that there were things written in the Old Testament hundreds of years before Jesus' arrival on earth that point to him and the things that he would do. Just like they remembered in verse 17, that zeal for the Lord's house would consume him.

Now there is no way that all of the Old Testament prophecies written hundreds of years before Jesus came could have been manipulated to make it seem like Jesus fulfilled them when he didn't actually.

The disciples remembered what the scriptures said.

Believe in him. They respond with lasting faith. They gladly submit to Jesus' teaching and abide in him, a key theme in John.

They aren't drawn in or just simply excited by the miracles and good things Jesus was doing. They were excited about him. Excited about who he is.

[25 : 55] And the truth of what he came to do, reconciling man with God. The disciples had lasting faith. But the second response is in verse 23.

Read that with me. Now while he, Jesus, was in Jerusalem at the Passover festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name.

See, the response of the crowd is superficial faith. They see the signs and believed in his name. But the basis of their belief is the signs, not Jesus himself.

The crowds were drawn in by the miracles rather than the one doing the miracles. And the whole purpose of signs or miracles in John's gospel is that they are displays of power that point to Jesus and his identity as the son of God.

John puts these signs in his gospel in a way to build up a picture of who Jesus is. And as John says in the end of John 20, he did this so that we might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God, and that by believing in him, we may have life in his name.

[27 : 08] But the response of the crowd is superficial faith because whilst they believe in his name here, later on in John chapter 6, we see many people who follow Jesus, some of whom maybe in this crowd walked away because they found his teachings were too difficult.

It was too hard to live the Christian faith and so they walked away. Jesus knew the status of their heart, that they were attracted to the miracles and not to him.

He knew that their faith was superficial and that they would leave at the slightest difficulty. That's why in verses 24 to 26, it says that Jesus didn't entrust himself to these people because he knew their hearts and he knew what the future would hold for them.

Brothers and sisters, these same responses happen today, don't they? Which response will you have?

Will you be a faithful disciple who sees what the word of God says about Jesus, who looks at the death and resurrection of Jesus and responds to the king in lasting faith until the day that you die and go to be in glory or the day Jesus returns?

[28 : 29] Will you have lasting faith that despite all the difficulties that come your way, you will strive by the power of the spirit, by the power of God to stand firm and humbly submit to all of the teachings of Jesus?

Or will you respond like the crowd? Will you have no faith or a superficial faith that's attracted to God's stuff rather than God himself? The glory of the king Jesus is revealed as he burns with zeal for the glory of God and judges the false religiosity of the people.

Do as I say, not as I do. This defines hypocrisy with words but a few. We hate hypocrisy. We get riled up when we see someone who makes the rules, who should be leading as an example, doing the exact opposite of what they say others should be doing.

When Jesus, God's king arrives in the temple, he isn't what people were expecting but he is exactly what everyone needs. Jesus is the revolutionary king who comes in all his glory to judge with authority.

He hates hypocrisy. He has all authority and being confronted with him then and today requires a response. Let us pray together.

[30 : 06] Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning and we recognize that none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes and sometimes we are hypocrites.

We say one thing and do another. Father, we ask for your forgiveness. And we pray that you would help us never to focus on your stuff rather than you.

Help us to burn with zeal for your honor, for your glory. And help us to praise your name above every other name. And help us be a light to those around us.

That they may see the beauty of the gospel and respond with faith in Christ. Help us stand firm in our faith until the day when you call us home to glory or you return.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.