

Good morning everyone. I think we would all probably agree we are living in the last days - calamitous events all around us, wars and rumour of wars. Matthew 24 is unravelling before our very eyes.

It would stand to reason then, that God, in preparation for His coming would be 'cleansing the temple' making His church more Holy.

By church I mean - **us His people, you and me**, so expect a testing to come your way. I don't mean standing for your faith. I mean a testing that pin points areas where there maybe wrong attitudes and ways in our lives.

I have said it before when these things come up (and they will if you're open to the Holy Spirit) there are only 3 ways of dealing with them you can; **1) Suppress them** (that is bury or deny them) **2) Express them** (give vent to them with all the consequences of that) or **3) Confess them** (bring them into the open and ask God for forgiveness and healing). **The latter is Gods desire.**

In fact talking about the return of Jesus & the climax of these events Peter says: *"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.*

That should always be our attitude to any end time scenario; if you're unsure what you should do while you are waiting for His coming then here it is; it should motivate us to live more holy & godly lives.

So as I say in pursuit of that holiness, God gently points the finger at us, our attitudes and our ways. I think he is doing exactly that in our days. Amongst us here at CBC even, in many ways it is encouraging, although it can be a painful process.

"No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields a harvest of righteousness and peace to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore strengthen your limp hands and weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.... (Heb 12:11-13)

Have you noticed the 'clause in the statement' here, 'a harvest of righteousness and peace' is only applicable to **'those that have been trained by it'** we need not be trained by it! God's lesson can pass us by - it depends if we allow the spirit to do so.

"So I would like each of us to look at our own hearts this morning and do as the psalmist says *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"* Psalm 139:23-24

One of the ways I believe God does this pruning, this sifting, is to humble us - the Spirit of Christ is one of humility. Pride is our biggest enemy, it stalks us and tempts us at every turn, it's our life time adversary, and we have to be on guard constantly regarding the danger of pride.

But Jesus tells us the attitude we should have; and it's perfectly expressed in the story in Mark 10:35-45. When James and John came to Jesus asking him to do something for them. I will read you the story

"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory." "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?" "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you.

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the

Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Powerful words from the Creator of the universe, the Lord of all. He ‘*did not come to be served, but to serve*’ a high bar indeed for us to follow, but in essence that’s what church is all about, it gives us the opportunity to put this servant life and attitude, into practise in our own lives. How many of us really get this right?

I was interested to read this week about Kate Forbes who is a Scottish politician. She is also a Bible believing Christian. Last year she joined the race to replace Nicola Sturgeon as leader of the Scottish National Party.

She faced immense criticism from the press and some of her fellow politicians as she disagrees with gay marriage, sex outside of marriage and even women ministers, however Kate held firm to her Christian beliefs and in the end God honoured her steadfast faith as many politicians and the general public respected her for it - she ended up coming a close 2nd to Humza Yousaf.

But take note of her courage and wisdom as she spoke to the press. I quote the Daily Telegraph.

“To be straight, I believe in the person of Jesus Christ,” she told an astonished Nick Robinson from the BBC. “I believe that he died for me, he saved me. And that my calling is to serve and to love him and to serve and love my neighbours with all my heart and soul and mind and strength.”

When LBC’s Iain Dale asked her whether he’s a sinner in the eyes of her church because he has a husband, she didn’t hold back.

“You’re as much of a sinner as I consider myself to be a sinner,” she said. “I am taught to believe that you are of greater value than I am and I am to serve you and every citizen of Scotland - and in that fashion, when it comes to legal rights, I will defend absolutely your right to live and love without harassment and fear.”

She made another interesting point: that they’re both minorities and should back each other. “I would defend to the hilt your rights in the hope that you’d also defend other minorities’ rights, including people of faith”.

Do you see how she turned the tables; she completely disarmed the cruel media, by taking the lower seat, by putting others above herself - by not criticising or judging them, by taking the role of a servant.

Here is the key folks to church life; we are here to serve one another and that attitude brings unity - there has to be unity for a church to survive. Jesus said 'kingdom divided against itself shall fall' (Matthew 12:25)

Any church that does not have unity will eventually fall or as the church of Ephesus, unless there is repentance 'He will come and remove their lampstand' (Ephesians 2:5)

A church is not a social club or political gatherings it is a holy place where we honour and bless one another, if that's not what are we doing then why are we here?

I came across this scripture the other day when Paul was rebuking the Corinthian church for disunity in their midst.

"In the following directives I have no praise for you, **for your meetings do more harm than good**". 1 Corinthians 11:17

"Your meetings do more harm than good". When it gets to that, it's time to pack up because it's not glorifying to God.

Just want to mention 2 things that run contrary to this servant heart and unity within a church - firstly;

An independent spirit a church is a body we all have our part to play each part interacts with the other how ridiculous and grotesque would it be if an arm or an eye separates itself from the body.

Yet sometimes this is what you get in a church - how does it manifest itself?

An independent spirit has little respect for any sort of authority or leadership they are rebels at heart. They don't understand that the attitude they have for those God has put above them in the Lord is in indicator of their level of submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

An independent spirit rarely wants any help, they are too proud to ask for it. They would rather do things their way yet they fail to realise that deprives others of their act of kindness and that God humbles us by accepting and needing the help and counsel of others.

They are loose cannons, they fire from the hip not really realising or caring to much about those they hurt in the crossfire.

The Second thing that is a barrier to this servant heart attitude is a **critical spirit**

A critical spirit never can accept people as they are - they always want to change you. It is a spirit that is always judging you because you never quite meet their expectations; it fails to recognise the truth of Ephesians 4:29 *“Let every word that proceeds from your mouth be one for building each other up”*

It's a spirit that grumbles and gossips because things are not to their satisfaction or their liking.

The Greek word for our English word grumbling means a “secret displeasure, **not openly stated**” I think that is a perfect description, you see grumbling always operates in the shadows. Behind closed doors and you usually find grumbling (like gossip) never includes those that should be included like the one their grumbling about or the pastor or leadership in a church.

But what they don't realise is; the truth of what Moses said “your mumbling is not against us but against the Lord” Exodus 16:8

Be very careful if you are a grumbler! Or prone to gossip, God hates these sins - What is a grumbler? A grumbler always sees the glass half empty rather than half full. They see the lack rather than the gain. They always see what they haven't got rather than what they have got.

Why can't we just accept people where they are and just love them for who they are?

I told you the story of my brother, a lot in my family have things against him probably justifiably so, because he has acted in strange ways in the past, but God spoke to me a couple of years ago clearly – ‘don't judge him just be a friend to him’ in many ways that should be our attitude to one another, don't judge - just be a friend to each other. How can we build up rather than tear down.

In conclusion I am not singling anyone out, in fact if I try to do that it always comes back to me. because I am reminded by the scriptures of

regarding my own heart and ‘ that we need to first pick the plank out of our own eye before we take the spec at of someone else’s’

I cannot change anyone; I have enough trouble dealing with things in my own life. I hope that God has a future for this church but it depends on each one of us whether we can unite and follow the example of Jesus.

I will close with this from Philippians chapter 2.

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”

Amen

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