**Morning Praise @ Home 1st October 2023**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Matthew 21: 12 – 16

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**Reflection from John**

Many years ago someone in our family took in a student – a catering student - for 12 months. She was very quiet and pleasant but her bedroom was always an untidy nightmare. The floor would be stacked high with dirty plates, paper rubbish, and dirty clothes. Occasionally her hosts would give her some plastic bags to tidy her room and for about three days the room looked better……………..then the old ways returned.

 Later in term two her Mum and Dad visited and when her Mum went into her daughter’s room, the Mum screamed, came out and said in embarrassment - *I am so sorry for the mess. We will clean it up straight away*. “Oh” said my family member “the room is actually better than it was – she has been working on it already for a couple of nights”.

Well, today’s Gospel reading in Matthew 21: 12-16 is about a major clean up by Jesus. This was not simply a decluttering it was Jesus asserting his authority and challenging the abuses that were taking place in the Temple.

He expected to see people praying for needs and people praising and thanking God for His provision. Instead, He saw a marketplace where people were profiting from animals to be sacrificed.

He saw greed and people being taken advantage of. In one account he made a whip from some ropes and chased the greedy salespeople from the Temple. Jesus turned those tables over, scattering coins over the floor. His anger and disapproval were right and just because His Temple was never meant for that.

Then Jesus paused when He saw the blind and the lame that had gathered. He went over and healed them. He often stopped on His purposeful journeys to help people. Jesus always thinks of people first. He didn’t come into the world to condemn it; He came to save the people within it. The leaders in the Temple saw these miracles but instead of thanking God, they complained and plotted against him.

When we recognise the authority of Jesus over our lives it’s important to ensure we allow ourselves to be decluttered and be transformed as he would wish.

That’s true for every individual Christian and every Christian Church. How easy it is for God’s People to develop over time ways of thinking and doing which no longer reflect God’s priorities.

In every generation Jesus comes and longs to tip over the tables which are not consistent with his Kingdom. He longs for us to be restored so that we can fulfil his ways more fittingly in our own generation.

Here are some questions to ask ourselves as we bring ourselves to the Lord to be decluttered and transformed.

**INVENTORY**

**What Needs to Go?**

Let’s be honest, some things should go straight to recycling. We’re talking broken, falling apart, cobweb-covered this and thats that there is now no room for.

Think of a tucked away box that hasn’t been opened in ages. That’s what our life which excludes God’s ways can be like. We harbour all this guilt and shame over past mistakes and hide them away in the untouched corners of our hearts, never to see the light of day.

What if we unpacked all that baggage and laid it before God? What if we actively turned away from our old ways and said, “Here you go, God. All the wasted, empty or broken pieces of my life are yours to transform now.”

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” —1 John 1:9

God is always ready to give us a new start. Take the first step by seeking his forgiveness and asking for His direction as you move forward in your new found freedom.

**Are there good things hidden away which can be restored and re-purposed?**

Our homes and our lives as well as our churches contain things which are good but perhaps neglected. How about restoring a daily time with God to pray or read the Bible? How about visiting that person we have not seen for a while?

**What can you give away?**

It can be daunting, but also gratifying, to pare down your possessions. So often, we hold onto things we haven’t used in years because *maybe* we’ll need them one day. Or we feel an attachment to something and can’t bear to release it to the donation pile.

So what part of your life in Christ can you give to others?

Jesus said: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” —Matthew 5:14-16

As followers of Jesus Christ, we aren’t supposed to keep Him all to ourselves. He commands us to share His Good News with others.

Think of someone you can talk to about Christ’s love for us. Ask a friend to become a prayer partner, or read the Bible to someone who’s unable to. Keep your eyes open for opportunities to mentor a new Christian. Look for ways to serve as Jesus would serve.

**What Needs Some Love?**

Don’t worry, you don’t have to let go of *everything*. Perhaps the pillows just need to be fluffed, the shelves dusted or the universal “junk drawer” reorganized.

Whether your Christian life needs a fresh coat of paint or total renovation of the heart, there’s no better time to jump in than now. Start with one thing at a time.

Wherever you begin, remember you’re not spring cleaning alone. God Himself can help you cut through the spiritual clutter in each area of your life. Give him room to transform you and see new light in your life with Christ. **Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Lord, for daily bread, and all who work to bring your harvest home, we bring our thanks today.

Forgive our ingratitude, we who have so much, yet waste what you have given.

For those whose harvest is poor, whose crops have withered, water tainted, children starved, help those who bring relief and bestow on us an unaccustomed generosity, that all might share from your garden and all might sing your praise.

Creator God, provider of all, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, forgive our moments of ingratitude, the spiritual blindness that prevents us from appreciating the wonder that is this world, the endless cycle of nature, of life and death and rebirth.
Forgive us for taking without giving, reaping without sowing. Open our eyes to see, our lips to praise, our hands to share. May our feet tread lightly on the path we tread and our footsteps be worthy of following, for they lead to you.

As a part of nature's wondrous cycle of new birth, growth, fruitfulness and death we rejoice in the creation of new life, for parenthood, the passing on of knowledge, for understanding and the wisdom of years.
We are grateful for those who have gone before passing on to us our spiritual heritage.

May our lives blossom as the apple tree in Spring, may we become fruitful in thought and deed and may the seed of love that falls to the ground linger beyond our time on this earth.

We bless you, Lord, and we bless each other, that the beauty of this world and the love that created it might be expressed though our lives and be a blessing to others, now and always.
Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**