

## Bennochy church 26th August 2018

Throughout history, people of power have built some impressive buildings. Pyramids, temples, palaces, castles and grand stately homes. Often built on prominent places, they are there for other people to see. They shouted, 'WOW'. Look at me! They are displays of status, prestige, sophistication, and in most cases of course, of power. Can you name some buildings built to impress? Coliseum in Rome, Taj Mahal in India - the tomb of an Indian emperors favourite wife, Palace of Versailles - home of the Kings of France. The Stewart kings of Scotland built their own palaces at Linlithgow and Falkland, to show they were sophisticated European kings, into art, music and architecture. The list goes on. What about the 'wee pad' in Pennsylvania Ave? Did you know that the Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest, Romania, has 1100 rooms. Started by Ceausescu as a symbol of his status and to show to the world the power of communist Romania. In reality it was all about him and his rule, rather than the needs of the country. These places, are more than just buildings.

One of the great achievements of king Solomon, and last week we looked at the beginning of his reign, was the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Up to this point, the Ark of Covenant, which was a fancy box that held the ten commandants, given by God to Moses at Mount Sinai, they had been housed in a tent. As a wandering nomadic people, that was OK, but now, things

had changed. They had established themselves as a nation, with a capital city in Jerusalem, so something more permanent and grand, was now required.

Here is the notion that God needs somewhere to live! That God, in some way can be contained within a space and restrained by walls constructed by human hands, and so to worship God, you come to a particular place. It is not as strange as it sounds, because we do it every Sunday. If you think about it, it is actually a ludicrous notion, that God who created the world, can be literally 'boxed' in one place. But that is what happened. so when the temple was finished, in a show of great pomp and ceremony, the Ark of covenant is carried, from Zion, another name for Jerusalem, carried by the priests, and placed in the most sacred place in the midst of the temple, known as the Holy of Holies.

They firmly believed, that God's presence was somehow in that place and it seemed to be something far more than symbolic. There is this dramatic description, that as the priests leave, a cloud shining with dazzling light fills the temple, and they identified that sign with the mysterious presence of God, similar to God's presence recorded at Mount Sinai, in cloud, thunder and lightning. And Solomon's prayer contained these words, *"Now I have built a majestic temple for you, a place for you to live forever"*. The line, the 'house' of King David and, the presence of God in the temple, the house, that bears his name,

are coming together, at the heart of the nation, for all time. That was the hope of Solomon.

It was more than a building. This was a statement. It said, to all the nations round about, here symbolises the very presence of God and the power of Israel. They were saying, quite clearly to the ancient world, we have defeated you. We are here, and we are here to stay. It was a statement, carved in stone, marble, wood and precious metals, encapsulating, their faith in the eternal promises of God.

There is an analogy to this story in more modern times, after the split in 1843, known as the Disruption, when many ministers and Elders left the established church, the Free Church of Scotland was formed. The new denomination needed to build new churches, and they literally engineered an impressive church building program, with buildings that made a statement to 19th century Scotland. These new Kirks were often bigger with higher steeples pointing to God, than the old buildings. One example is seen in the contrast between the Old Kirk and the former Free Kirk, St Brycedale, on Kirk Wynd. The new buildings were a statement about how this new denomination understood God. Let me ask, what statement does our building make, about the faith of the people who gather here to worship?

There is no doubt that we need places, spaces to meet. Without gathering there is no community. I know social media does

challenge that assumption. That is a generational thing. But we don't need to meet within these walls to find God. As we walk the streets of our communities, we meet God every day, and in every person, there is the face of Christ.

Solomon wise enough to know that, that no building, no matter how impressive it was, could actually contain God. He said, *"Not even all heaven is large enough to hold you."* (v27) But he recognised what he had built. A place central to the faith of his people, that spoke of God's protection and future promise.

Jesus, in looking at a future temple, again in Jerusalem, saw something more temporary. In fact, something soon to be destroyed in the revolt of AD 70. And here he begins to change the picture. He would now be the foundation of a new temple, this one however, built of living stones, and held together by the mortar, of faith, hope and spirit. There is a now new cornerstone. His name is Jesus. A new temple. Today, we call it the church.

In three days, Jesus would change the course of human history. And no matter how many times that temple was destroyed and rebuilt, from now on, the spirit of resurrection would blow, and where ever it touched the earth lightly, God was there. Amen.