**Sunday 11th September 2016 Message**

**How lovely is thy dwelling place – is it really?**

**Introduction**

The challenge I believe the Lord is placing before us this morning is “How much do you really value the dwelling place of the Lord?” We sing, and proclaim, so many wonderful scriptures about our desires to be in His Presence, I often wonder if we know what the words means that come out of our mouths. I certainly have to wonder that about myself on occasions, especially when He says “Do you really mean that?”

When David wrote the words “How lovely is thy dwelling place” in the Psalms he was writing of the beauty of the Lords dwelling presence above the ark of the covenant in David’s tabernacle. The tabernacle of Moses in all its splendour, had been replaced by a simpler dwelling but just as beautiful because of the Presence. Yet David longed for somewhere even more magnificent for God to dwell and envisioned an opulent Temple which his son Solomon was to build.

***Ps 84:1-2 How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. NIV***

Whether we consider the tabernacle of Moses, the tabernacle of David, or the Temple in the OT, they were places of dwelling which were loved, cared for, and adored.

**The Temple Slide**

The Temple which Solomon built as depicted here was a foreshadow of the temple to come. It was massive, took years to build, required an estimated todays value of $32 billion US dollars, some 80000 stonecutters, 70000 labourers and 18000 priests to be on service in. The walls were lined with gold, and it was the most admired dwelling place in the world in its day. The plans for the Temple were drawn in incredible detail by David ***1 Chron 22***, just as the plans for the Tabernacle were detailed by God and given to Moses. God always oversees the construction of the place He intends to dwell in. It is well worth reading the efforts and care put into the construction of the temple, here is just an extract.

***1 Kings 6:19-22 He prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the ark of the covenant of the Lord there. The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold, and he also overlaid the altar of cedar. Solomon covered the inside of the temple with pure gold, and he extended gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, which was overlaid with gold. So he overlaid the whole interior with gold. He also overlaid with gold the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary. NIV***

A dwelling which reflected as best it could the value the builders and worshippers placed on the inhabitant. Any less in their minds would be an insult to the Lord of Hosts, any neglect in care and servicing of the Temple would be contempt and disrespectful for the Almighty. God honoured their efforts as recorded in

***1 Kings 8:10-11 When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple. NIV***

Just imagine expecting the Queen to live in a palace which was ill maintained, with broken windows, no security, no cooks or servants. Well the level of respect she gets, and the President of the US gets, is far less than God has in the Temple.

If we really value the habitation of the Lord, we would give a lot more attention, time and resource, to preparing and maintaining a dwelling for the Almighty.

**You are the Temple Slide**

God has chosen by His Spirit to tabernacle, dwell, inhabit you as His temple today. He is Immanuel, God with Us, the very Presence of God spread throughout the world for all to see, in us and through us.

***1 Cor 6:19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? NIV***

**Slide** He designed us, humans, to be both His priests and carriers of His glory, His goodness and power in this world. Even in the womb He watched over your development and ordained the days of your life. **Slide**

***Ps 139:14-16 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. NIV***

Consider this and be in awe, though you are such a small speck in a massive universe, you are marked by majesty, designed in incredible detail, made in the image of God as a dwelling place for His presence. The plans for Moses Tabernacle and David’s Temple were miniscule in detail compared to the plans to make you. When your mum and dad came together to conceive you God started a process that involved one single cell from your mum and one single cell from your dad, meeting and beginning the most intelligent design process that made you a temple for Almighty God. Each cell carrying 23 chromozones, the one from your mum carrying half of her DNA and the one from your dad carrying half of his DNA.

As those single cells merged into one single cell and the chromozones joined they began to form a brand new DNA which is Gods description of who you are. That description in Gods own language, is 3billion characters long in one single cell, is Gods ordained plan of who you are. WOW.

Scientist say of your DNA was stretched out it would be six feet long, and if you could read each character one second at a time it would take you 96 years to read it. You are unique that DNA you have has never been written before in the history of humankind. Tell me you are not special, you are not fearfuly and wonderfuly made. You are a miracle.

Do you consider yourself, awesome, beautiful, wonderful? Do you behave even speak as if you are? Or do you say things like “I do not like who I am?”, I wish I was taller, shorter, thinner, had different colour eyes, a different shaped nose or chin. It is a massive problem today in society, that many people do not love themselves and take care of themselves. For some it has led to self harming, suicide, gender changes, cosmetic surgery and self mutilation. Some of it just to appear different, and perhaps in their minds be more acceptable to others.

In the church this is even more tragic, because God has created us to be carriers of His image, and His presence. Admittedly as a result of the curse of sin there is disformity, but never forget who you are in Christ. A wonderful, beautiful temple for Him to dwell in and reveal Himsef to the world around you.

If David was to be writing the equivalent of Psalm 84 today, he would say of himself, and you as a believer in Christ. “How lovely are you the dwelling place of the Lord Almighty, I long to be with you. Better is one day with God in you than a thousand elsewhere”

**Mirror exercise.** Try this exercise each morning, look in the mirror and verbally remind yourself I am wonderfuly made to be the dwelling place of God. I am love the presence of God in me and I ask for help this day to avoid damaging or neglecting this temple.

Throughout scripture and Israel’s history the physical temple experienced a number of destructions following abominable sacrifices being offered on the altar. Likewise, I believe the future abominations could relate to our personal sacrificing of ourselves to things that are unclean on the altar of our body.

**Seven deadly sins**

The early church fathers in the 4th Century developed from scriptures what are called the seven deadly sins, they are sins referred to throughout the Word, but they are ones that specifically relate to self harm. The Apostle Paul would say they sins against the body, a phrase which he uses in relationship to sexual immorality. He does use that particular sin against the body to underline the importance of your body as the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

In the OT the sin of sexual immorality was often listed alongside rebellion, gluttony, and drunkenness. These were the prevalent sins in Sodom and the associated ones in the list of seven deadly sins, all have effect on the body, mind and emotions of those that do not love themselves enough to avoid damaging themselves by indulging in them.

**Slide** – Seven deadly sins

Sloth, Pride, Wrath, Envy, Greed, Lust and Gluttony – all of these will damage your health, and possibly shorten the length of your life. Lust and greed do not just relate to food and sexual appetites but are inclusive of lusting and being greedy for short term highs such as drugs, alcohol, and other addictive substances.

Laziness, sloth, is an interesting inclusion in the list, but let’s be honest to work which keeps the body healthy, is a killer both physically and mentally. We were not made for lazing around in the sun all day, even if we do live in St Ives, we were made for work, for tending Gods creation, for being creative like out Father in heaven.

**Gluttony**

I want you to think, without looking at my stomach (I need to deal with this one), of gluttony, as high in the list as sexual immorality in the NT and the OT, but often ignored in the church particularly in the Western World, because we love to eat.

***Deut 21:18-21 "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, 19 then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. 20 And they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21 Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear. NKJV***

Hallelujah, we do not stone gluttons today, I might not be here.

Yet scripture is plentiful on pointing to the sin of gluttony Proverbs 23:2, 23:21, 28:7

Saint Gregory around 600 AD explained what gluttony was with scripture backup, these are worth a study

1. Eating before the time of meals ***1 Samuel 14:29*** a battle had lost due to over indulgence
2. Seeking delicacies to gratify the taste buds ***Numbers 11:4-5*** the Israelites moaning about the provision of God because of the cucumbers in Egypt
3. Seeking after sauces and seasoning for the enjoyment of the palate ***1 Sam 4:18*** Eli died because he was too heavy, and his sons were killed because of sexual immorality in the Temple gates
4. Exceeding necessary amount of food ***Ezekiel 16:49*** sexual sin and fullness of food in Sodom
5. Taking food with too much eagerness ***Gen 25:30, Heb 12:16-17*** Esua sold his birthright for a bowl of stew.

Let me underline, gluttony is not a weight issue, it is a thought issue. The question is does food have control over you.

You can diet to look good, to get something out of it, but that is not the point. God wants you to have control over your eating habits and weight to maintain His dwelling in you.

We can sometimes be tempted to fast also to look good, be healthier, those may be side benefits but we should be fasting to give ourselves to God rather than get benefits for ourselves.

**Self Control**

Part of the fruit of the Spirit, is that of self-control ***Gal 5:22-23*** this is often found lacking in different areas of the believers lives, yet it should be an outcome of loving the temple of the Spirit, our bodies.

All of the sins against the body, the neglect, damaging and destruction of the Temple of the Spirit, come down to lack of self-control. **Slide**

***Col 3:5 So kill (deaden, deprive of power) the evil desire lurking in your members [those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you that is employed in sin]: sexual vice, impurity, sensual appetites, unholy desires, and all greed and covetousness, for that is idolatry (the deifying of self and other created things instead of God). AMP***

***Eph 5:3-4 But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints; NASB***

Too often we explain our lack of self-control away with excuses such as it is a sickness, a mental health issue, OCD, ADHD, addiction. Yet Jesus came with the same mandate as He left with us, to heal the sick and set prisoners free. If these are genuine sicknesses and bondages, only Jesus Christ can set you free right now. We are most effective in fufiling the ministry that Christ has given us when we have experienced the freedom He brings. You cannot pass on the glory of victory, until you have overcome, and you are overcomers in Christ. The question is do you love yourself enough to want to overcome in the area of self-control? I call upon the Spirit today to ignite in all of us a desire to practice self-control in areas that distract from the glorious fact that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

**Giving**

How often have you sung this song? **Slide**

Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring  
To so faithful a Friend, to so loving a King?

Simply this I will offer up my life in spirit and truth  
Pouring out the oil of love, as my worship to you  
In surrender I must give my every part  
Lord, receive this sacrifice of a broken heart

God wants more than your broken heart. Let us be real with ourselves He has given us everything, and He OWNS and wants EVERYTHING, willingly yielded to Him.

WHEN God asks of you today, to give up a particular area of your life, which may be damaging you as His temple, how are you going to respond? Are you going to say I would sooner give you an extra 10% of my income, or a another 30 minutes in prayer or Bible study, or how about God you have my TV.

You cannot negotiate with God and get a good deal. What He asks for is best to willingly yield too, you will be better off in the long run.

If God asks you to give up one of the seven deadly sins, your life will be healthier, more fruitful and longer.

We know that “The tithe is the Lords” and we should not rob God of it if we want the windows of heaven to open.

Do we not know, in the words of the apostle Paul, **Slide**

***1 Cor 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? NKJV***

That is why He asks us to give up on things that will damage the temple, you, including

***1 Cor 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. NIV***

But not exclusive to other areas where you are lacking self-control. There are choices which you have been given the right and power to make, that is a God given gift, nothing is enforced upon you, but He woes you to choose life in all its abundance, because He loves you.

***Rom 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. NKJV***

Please note we give Him our bodies so that He can sanctify us

***1 Thess 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. NKJV***

**Concluding Comments Slide**

As priests of the Lord, desiring and longing for the beauty of His dwelling, willingly yield to His desires for you to gain control over the things that damage you. If you have a deep desire for the burning presence of God in your life, remember He lights the fire on the altar of your heart, but you as priest have the duty of keeping it burning.