

Bible Readings

1 Kings 8:54-66

⁵⁴ When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the LORD, he rose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven. ⁵⁵ He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying:

⁵⁶ "Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses. ⁵⁷ May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. ⁵⁸ May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to him and keep the commands, decrees and laws he gave our ancestors. ⁵⁹ And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God, day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need, ⁶⁰ so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other. ⁶¹ And may your hearts be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time."

The Dedication of the Temple

⁶² Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. ⁶³ Solomon offered a sacrifice of fellowship offerings to the LORD: twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So, the king and all the Israelites dedicated the temple of the LORD.

⁶⁴ On that same day the king consecrated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple of the LORD, and there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings, because the bronze altar that stood before the LORD was too small to hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the fat of the fellowship offerings.

⁶⁵ So Solomon observed the festival at that time, and all Israel with him—a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. They celebrated it before the LORD our God for seven days and seven days more, fourteen days in all. ⁶⁶ On the following day he sent the people away. They blessed the king and then went home,

joyful and glad in heart for all the good things the LORD had done for his servant David and his people Israel.

Hebrews 4:1-13

A Sabbath-Rest for the People of God

4 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. **2** For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. **3** Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

“So, I declared on oath in my anger,
 ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. **4** For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “On the seventh day God rested from all his works.” **5** And again in the passage above he says, “They shall never enter my rest.”

6 Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, **7** God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted:

“Today, if you hear his voice,
 do not harden your hearts.”

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. **9** There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; **10** for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. **11** Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. **13** Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Sermon: The Dedication of the Temple

G'Day Church Family

We're **continuing** our **series** on the OT book of **1 Kings**.

It would be great to have your **bible opened at 1 Kings 8** – starting at verse 54. You may have received a sermon **outline** - if you'd like to **take notes**.

Let me **ask God** to grant us **understanding** this morning

Let's pray...

Context

- In the **last few weeks**, we've seen how **Solomon has built a House for the Lord's Name** – a **Temple**

[PowerPoint 1-Temple]



- The **Temple** has been **furnished**
- The **most important item** in the Temple is the **Ark of the Covenant**
- The **glory** and presence of **God** enter the **Temple**
- The **Temple** is **operational**
- The **Temple** is the focal point for the worship of the Lord – it's where the people bring their **offerings, sacrifices** and **prayers** to God
- It's now time to **dedicate** the **temple** for the work of the Lord

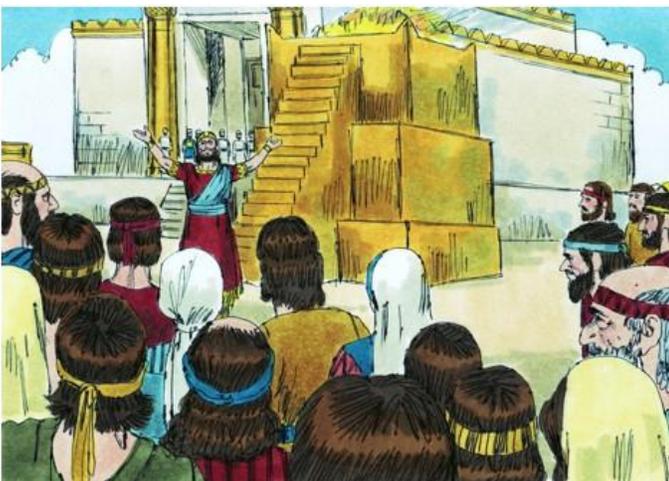
Intro (Dedication)

- So, we'd better **define** what **dedication** means

[PowerPoint 2-Dedication]

- **Dictionary:** *to devote (time or effort) to a particular task or purpose.*
- For example, Fred Hollows “*dedicated his whole life to helping to restore people’s eyesight*”
- **In religious terms dedication means:**
 - to **devote our time and efforts** to the **worship of God**
 - In the case of the Temple (or even a church) dedication means to **set apart a place or building for the worship of God.**
 - In the case of the **dedication of a child in a church service** – it means to **set apart the child as part of God’s family** and for the parents to **promise to put their time and effort in to raising the child to follow God and His Son**
- But what will it look like if a building such as ours – is dedicated to worshipping God?
- Well in 1 Kings 8 from verse 54 onwards - when King Solomon turns from the altar where he’s been praying

[PowerPoint 3-Benediction]



- And he blesses the people – **He paints a picture of what dedication to God looks like**
- This **blessing** from Solomon is **like a benediction** (which literally means **speak well of**)

Solomon's Benediction (1 Kings 8:54-61)

- Solomon **starts** his benediction **by reminding the people** in verse 56 **what God has done for them**
- He has **given rest** to His people Israel just as He promised
- **But rest from what?**
 - Rest **from** their **enemies** – all the wars that had occurred in David's time have stopped
 - Rest **from** **wandering** – the Israelites are now settled permanently in their own land
 - Rest **from** **temporary dwellings** – they have permanent homes – even God has a permanent home instead of the mobile temple they were carrying around
- Solomon also **expects** that **God will never leave His people nor forsake them** in v57
- On **what basis** can Solomon say this?
- **On the basis** that **God** has **previously promised** - He wouldn't forsake them (back in Deut 4:31 and 31:6)

Application

- For us – **we can rely on God's promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us – even** in **whatever** we're **going through** at the moment [like **COVID**]– or whether we're **grieving** the loss of a loved one – whether we are **sick or facing surgery** – whether we're having **family struggles** or **relationship problems** or **financial challenges** – or **trouble at work** – at **School** – at **Uni**

- **We can be assured** that God is with us – and He won't leave our side – He will carry us through – as Isaiah 41:10 says- *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*
- But Solomon also realizes in v58 that **God wants His people's hearts to be turned towards Him** and to **walk in obedience** to Him – **following His commands and rules for living** a life that pleases God

Application

- For us – God requires us to have dedicated or devoted hearts towards Him and to walk in obedience to Him
- What might having a **devoted heart towards God** look like for us in 2021?
 - It looks like **making God and His Son, Jesus - number one priority in our lives** – it means - *loving the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength*
 - The idea of devotion – means you can't be half devoted – you are either devoted or not (like a woman can't be half pregnant)
 - *There's a story of a woman who rushed up to the famous violinist Fritz Kreisler after a concert and said "I'd give my life to play as beautifully as you do." Kreisler replied, "I did give my life." – that's what true devotion or dedication is – giving our life to God.*
 - Being devoted to God – also looks like **obedience** – it means not worshipping other gods, not worshipping other people and not worshipping other things
 - It looks like **giving our lives to God** because He gave us everything – including His Son – dying on a cruel cross – for our sins to be forgiven
 - It looks like **setting apart our lives** for service to God

- As Solomon continues to talk to the people – in v59 – He hopes - *That his prayers will always be close to God and that God would uphold the cause of Solomon and the cause of Israel, according to what they need each day*

Application:

- Isn't that our hope too – that **our prayers would be close to God all the time** – that **He would hear our prayers** and uphold our causes each day – as we pray in the **Lord's Prayer** – *give us this day our daily bread – forgive us our trespasses – lead us not into temptation – delivers us from evil*
- Then Solomon **moves further afield** in v60 – his desire is that **all peoples of the Earth may know the Lord God of Israel as their God** – and **know that there is no other true God**
- Application – shouldn't that be our desire that - everyone in **Toukley** – everyone on the **Central Coast** – everyone in **Australia** – and **Overseas** – would know the Lord God – and that the **only way to God the Father** - is to **have faith in His Son**, Jesus (John 14:6)
- Solomon concludes his benediction (blessing) over the people – by saying his desire - in v61 – is for them to have hearts fully committed to the Lord by letting God's decrees and commands – **dictate how they live their lives** –
- In v61, the phrase translated “*hearts fully committed*” is literally “**let your hearts be shalom** – **at peace, whole, complete, full – with God**”.

Application

- But we might want to pause for a moment – and think of that image: of a heart completely at peace with God, simply walking in God's limits, simply doing what God says to do - and not doing what He says we shouldn't do

- To have hearts that are fully committed to God - means to be **reading and meditating on God's Word** – and **applying it** to our lives. It means **asking ourselves** – is what I am about to say or do – **lining up with God's Word?** – and will it bring glory to God? – would He be pleased with it? – if the answer is No – then we don't say it or do it

The Festival of Dedication for the Temple (1 Kings 8:62-66)

- Having finished his benediction – what would we expect next?
- At **Church** – we'd **expect** to have **morning tea** and a time of **fellowship**
- In Solomon's dedication service, the **benediction** is **followed by** - **massive animal sacrifices** [20,000 cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats]
- The sacrifices were - a) for forgiveness of the people's sins; and b) to **make peace with God**; c) to **set apart (dedicate) the temple of the Lord** for worship, for prayer, for sacrifices and for offering - and by doing so - the **people** were saying they were **committed to worshipping God at this place**; and d) **thanking God** for all His blessings.
- These **sacrifices are supposed to sound** - devoted and enthusiastic and impressive, rather than gruesome.
- Because there were so many sacrifices – the **courtyard in front of the temple** had to be **used** for the sacrifices – so **Solomon** has to **consecrate** the temple courtyard for the use of making sacrifices

[PowerPoint 4-Consecrate]

- **Consecrate** – means **setting apart something or somebody for holy use** - for **God's use** – rather than for ordinary use

Application

- As Christians – we are **set apart for holy use too** – the Apostle **Peter** - calls us to be *holy because God is holy* (1 Peter 1:14-15) and he says we are a *holy nation and God's*

special possession with the holy purpose of telling people about Jesus - who calls people out of the darkness of their sins - and into his glorious light

- Now the **dedication** is **finished** – the **party begins** – it’s a **bit longer** than our morning tea – because the **dedication** has been timed to **coincide** with **the Jewish festival** of the **Feast of the Tabernacles** [explain]– and it’s **seven** days long
- And it’s **such a monumental occasion** – that they **celebrate** for **another seven** days
- Then in v66 – the **people went home joyful and glad in their hearts** – it’s a **major feel-good experience** – enjoying God’s promises and fellowshiping with God’s people

Application

- Isn’t that how **we should feel as we leave church each week** – **joyful and glad** in our hearts?

A Sabbath Rest for God’s People (Hebrews 4:1-13)

- I just want to go back to **one thing** that Solomon praised God for in v56 –

[PowerPoint 5-Rest]



- From v56 – Solomon says: *Praise be to the Lord who has given rest to His people just as He promised*

- You see - about **500 years before Solomon** - God promised the people of Israel who He brought out of slavery in Egypt that they would *have rest from their enemies in the Promised Land*. The **generation that left** Egypt did not experience that rest - because of their lack of faith and their disobedience to God. Solomon's generation did receive that rest and the **dedication of the Temple** was finally the **fulfilment of that rest**.
- According to our NT reading from Hebrews 4 and v1 – *that promise of rest also applies to us today – as Christians*
- The rest we have today means:
 - **peace** with God;
 - **rest** from the slavery and bondage of sin and death because Jesus has died for our sins and rose to defeat death;
 - it means **freedom** to worship and serve God;
 - It means **freedom** from the burden of God's rules which we fail to completely obey – knowing Jesus can keep all those rules
 - We are meant to have a Sabbath Day Rest – a day set aside for God – but it's **often limited to an hour or so on Sunday?**
- But the **writer** of Hebrews **says** - we have another rest – in the **future**
- He says **we can have** that same seventh day - Sabbath day rest - that God experienced when **He rested after six days of creating** the Earth and everything in it (v9)
- This **promised future rest we have** - means - we don't have to **work to be saved for Heaven** - by being "good" (v10) – **Jesus has done that for us** – He's the only one that can truly be good all the time –so **He has paid for our future rest in Heaven** -
- However, we don't have rest from obeying God or serving God.

- The **rest we have now** is a taste of the eternal rest to come - when we die believing in Jesus' death and resurrection.
- **That eternal rest in Heaven will mean:** no more trials, no more suffering and no more pain.
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- Even though we enter that rest now - by our faith in Jesus – we **need to continue working out our faith** – that requires obedient faith and **faith accompanied by good works** - and **serving our Lord Jesus**.
- To help us to be obedient - we have the **powerful weapon of God's Word** at our disposal.
- **God's Word:** is like a surgeon's scalpel – it does open heart surgery on us and changes us, refines us, corrects us, empowers us, enlightens us and guides us.
- **God's Word:** teaches us the difference between right and wrong; between good and evil.
- **God's Word:** is informing, reforming and transforming us each day.
- Examples:
 - *When we read God's Word – and we have a light globe moment!*
 - *Or when we read the Bible to someone who is really sick and not responding – then suddenly they start whispering the words with us...*
- And finally, as we live in obedient faith - we have the **sobering truth** in V13 - **Nothing can be hidden from God** – He sees everything we think, say and do. We can't get away with anything – and we are accountable to God.

Challenge

- A challenge then- for us - to **think about...**

[PowerPoint 6a-Challenge Heading]

- Imagine the Israelite people after Solomon's time– the ones who have been kicked out of Israel - for disobeying God - and imagine them reading this story of the dedication of the Temple built by Solomon
- And they're thinking - what if we had done what Solomon charged us to do way back then – what if we'd had hearts that were perfectly at peace with God, walking in God's ways and content to keep within God's limits and obeying all God's words?
- What disasters would have been averted?
- What good things would have been done and how joyful and glad in our hearts we would have been?
- **Then they say - *"What if we were to be live in faithful obedience to God now, when we have a second chance?"***

Application

- And for us

[PowerPoint 6b-Challenge]

- What if we were to have hearts that were perfectly at peace with God, walking in God's ways and content to keep within God's limits and obeying all God's words?
- What would our lives be like now?
- What would Toukley Presbyterian Church be like now?
- What would our nation be like now?

Conclusion (What God has joined together...)

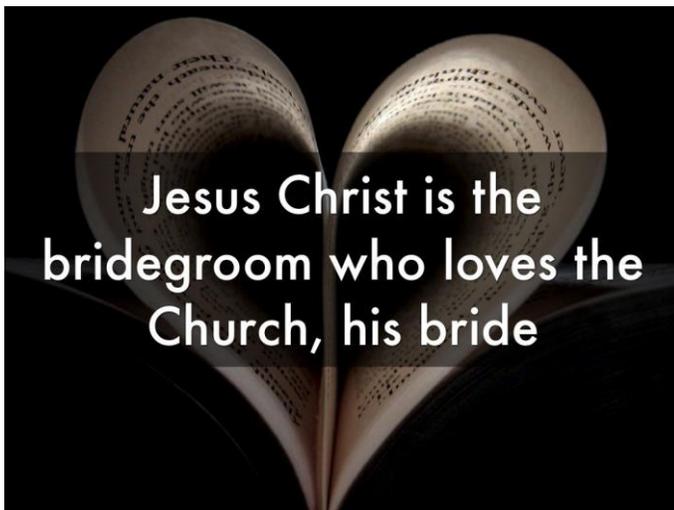
- One final thought – to finish up

[PowerPoint 7-Marriage – God & Israel]



- In the **Old Testament** - **God's relationship with His people** – is **pictured as a marriage**.
- This marriage is **always faithful on God's part** but **often unfaithful (adultery) on the part of the people**.
- The **Temple** [like a wedding ring] is a **symbol of that marriage** - between God and His people – the Temple shows God and His people are joined together in marriage
- When Jesus was asked about divorce in Matthew 19 and whether people could divorce for any and every reason
- In His **answer** – Jesus goes back to **God's definition of marriage** from the time of creation; where **marriage was between a man and a woman and a life-long commitment, separated only by the death of one party**.
- Then in Matthew 19:6 Jesus says – '**therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate**'
- So, applying this to the Temple - what God has joined together [The Temple of His presence and worship of Him - and the people], let no one separate.

[PowerPoint 8-Jesus and Church marriage]



- When we get to the **New Testament** – we have a picture of marriage – where **Jesus is the bridegroom** and **His church is the bride**. This **marriage** is again meant to be a faithful marriage.
- **Jesus set up the church** as the **vehicle** to **spread** the Good News of the **Gospel** - Jesus even died for His church as a sacrificial husband – and **He wants His bride, the Church** (and us as individuals in the Church) to be a **faithful wife**.
- So again, Matt 19:6 applies – **what God has joined together** – **Jesus and His Church** – **let no one separate**.

[PowerPoint 9-Matthew 19:6]



- This morning – we’ve returned to our Temple – our church building
- Our church is like a wedding ring – showing people - **we’re married to Jesus**
- We’re still married to Jesus

- And as **we've returned to our church building** this morning – **after 4 months**
- What a great day - to rededicate our church - for the work of the Lord
- And what a great day - to rededicate ourselves - to the work of the Lord.
- Let's pray

Father God,

Thank You that You always keep Your promises

We see that in the building and dedication of the Temple in Solomon's Day

And we see that in You keeping Your promise to send Jesus

Thank You that You promise never to leave us nor forsake us

Thank You that the Temple and the Church are symbols of your marriage relationship with Your people

Help us to recommit to You this morning and dedicate our lives to serving You, serving Your Son Jesus – and serving Your Church as the means for more and more people to come to faith in Jesus.

Father help our hearts to be completely dedicated to You and help us to walk in faithful obedience to You – in Jesus' name, we pray.