

A Humble & Weeping Church
James 4:6 tells us that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Luke 19:28-48

God opposes the pride we have vested in denominational Christianity, which means people place more emphasis in being Congregationalists or Presbyterians, Methodists or Baptists, Anglicans or Catholics, rather than being Christians.

I have a deep unshakeable longing in my heart to be part of a Church that reflects the heart of God as revealed in Jesus. You see, the kind of Church Jesus is building wouldn't be what you or I would build, we would be much more triumphant and sure, confident and trucking no rivals. But our Jesus didn't work like that and still doesn't: He is the Humble King whose humility shines through and He is the one who Weeps for the city, community and world around Him that is not recognising how God is seeking to love them back into relationship. Humble & weeping won't win Oscars, be paraded in Church conferences, or produce dynamic growing congregations but it is the kind of Church Jesus is building and we need to embrace its values and insights.

So give me an example David: well it's interesting you ask that! Question: was Jesus on that first Palm Sunday Playing to the Gallery or Seeking the Fathers Approval?

Which was it with Jesus? I believe that it was most certainly the Fathers approval that mattered to Jesus: Christ-like humility demands that we stop looking to others for their approval and only to God. Jesus' subsequent despair and weeping are the evidence for this: If Only! (v42) is the cry of his heart. For as John reflects: God did not send His son into the world to judge the world but to be its Saviour. So which is it with us? The approval of others or the Fathers approval? We sing the Matt Redman lament, which says: "My heart will choose to say – Blessed be your Name". So in these holy days affirm, "not my will but yours be done": a choice to love God, neighbour and the world. A Humble & Weeping Church seeks only the Fathers approval.

But you say: was it not, as it's been called, The Triumphal Entry or was it a Carefully orchestrated plan to one and only purpose: the restoring of Father God's relationship with His Children? Humility demands we tread God's path whatever the cost. Jesus sends two disciples (2 by 2); the colt is found (unridden and in the right place), the owner is happy to release it (The Lord needs it). Timing is good: pre Passover. He comes down from the mountain (humble King) and up into the City. It was a carefully orchestrated plan. There is and never will be room for the triumphal in the Church until the Lord returns. Psalm 118:26 is the selected greeting of the crowd. Treading the path to Calvary is the lot of all sincere believers and through it we become clay in the hands of Father fashioned for His purposes and the service of others. A Humble & Weeping Church seeks only the Fathers Will.

The Humble King also came with Peace rather than a sword: no white charger just an offer of peace. When the Risen Christ came and stood among the disciples on that first Easter Sunday evening it was Peace he spoke into their lives: Shalom and twice!! How crucial for the Humble Church to exude the peace of Christ, the Shalom of God. As Christians we can be against war but anti-war is not enough. Anti war marches achieve little and often lead to bitterness, division and even more violence, which can't be right. We must seek to be different as Jesus' church: to actually help people whose lives are being touched by war and conflict. It's hard to work for peace when attacking others. Peacemakers not peace lovers will be called children of God: Jesus says! A Humble & Weeping Church exudes the Shalom of God and offers a different way to a watching world.

The response of the ordinary people was clear: Exuberant Worship rather than a stony outburst! Religion and religious control always hit back: emotionalism, over the top (fancy laying down you best coat for the smelly donkey to ride over). "Teacher rebuke your disciples: (but Jesus said) I tell you the truth, if they keep quiet even the very stones would shout out!" Romans 8:22-23 (the whole creation groaning) echo's Jesus' affirmation. Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord. It almost full

circle from the Nativity & Shepherds where the Angels sung the welcome. Peace in heaven and Glory in the Highest (or was it High street?). Yes Lord! So humble one: where is your passion for Christ? Where is your worshipping lifestyle and its overflow? What has your heart chosen? A humble and weeping Church chooses to fashion its life at the throne of grace: on bended knee I worship.

So if Jesus the Humble King weeps over the City: should we as His Church today do any the less? He knew the leaders would reject Him and he knew the City was under God's judgement. Ultimately the Humble & Weeping Church is reading a different script to take of the world but as with Jesus so with us that doesn't stop us trying to awake the spiritual eyes of the City and community we love and serve.

Jerusalem is a story of a City with a lost destiny (Make no mistake Churches can loose their destiny too). Can we be any the less vigilant in ensuring we don't miss Gods destiny for St Andrews and the wider Body of Christ in this city and region? What had gone wrong with God's people and particularly those leading them? They had become forgetful (not keeping their minds on the purpose of the Temple), blind (unable to recognise Jesus in their midst), unbelieving (without faith in the promises of God concerning the His People or the City), corrupt (trusting in the use of the temple for their own selfish purposes). Lets listen to what the Spirit may be saying to the Church in the UK, our denominations and St Andrews today in similar circumstances: forgetful, blind, unbelieving, corrupt. Its time for a Holy Spirit reality check as I call it!

So what were the Spiritual blessings the Leaders and hence the people were about to lose?

Peace with God, each other, of conscience amidst the circumstances of life: Solomon's Shalom! We need that peace/shalom written strong through our life as St Andrews.

Understanding Visitation of God (Jesus) yet they did not recognise Him! God is on the move today by His Holy

Spirit and we need to open our eyes to see that and respond to Him.

Protection of the next Generation: 40 years after His Death the Temple would be destroyed and enemies would come. Let me repeat what I said last week about our response to God today effecting succeeding generations.

Prayer Place The Temple was symbolic of the way to God through blood sacrifice for sins: the courtyards were for prayer. Prayer must be at the heart of St Andrews if we are to grow and impact our community and city.

Teaching Place How Jesus used it in those last few days: people listening and the leaders trying to kill Him! Discipleship is crucial for every person who owns the name of Christ otherwise we become the sad successors of the Pharisees: religious rule keepers!

So Humility demands and being a Humble & Weeping Church means:

1. We seek only the Fathers Approval.
2. We humble ourselves to His Plan for our lives and His Church.
3. We seek above all the way of the Peacemaker.
4. We put the focus 100% on Jesus and give Him our best.
5. We weep for His Church but believe for its ultimate destiny. We weep for our City, conceive in the Spirit its true spiritual identity, and work towards it in unity as the Bride of Christ.
6. We seek for Him to cleanse and renew our lives (as Temples of the Holy Spirit) and our congregations.

A Humble and weeping Church will make even the hardest of hearts sit up and think and that's the kind of Church Jesus is Building and that's the kind of Church St Andrews needs to be.

Pastor David
April 1st 2012.