

Nov 16/25 Leader's Guide

2 Chronicles 6-7 "Repentance that Shapes the Cityscape"

This week we explored Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple — a moment meant to anchor the nation in God's faithfulness, presence, and the transforming power of repentance. Solomon prays that God's people would continually turn toward this place and remember who God is and who they are. In Jesus, the true temple, we find the fulfillment of this hope and the call to become a people shaped by repentance for the healing of the world.

1. Consider Toronto's tallest and most prominent buildings. What does this tell us about what we worship as a culture?

Read 2 Chronicles 6:12-21,36-40; 7:1,12-14

2. Solomon begins with remembering God's faithfulness — "You made a promise, and today You have fulfilled it." Why do you think Solomon starts here? What does remembering past faithfulness do for people facing seasons where God *seems* absent?

Many of us face circumstances where it appears that God is not faithful. This is not a unique experience. The psalms, the prayerbook of the church, has many expressions of such agony.

"Where are you God"

"Why have you turned your face from me"

"Why is it that the wicked prosper"

But often these psalms end with the phrase, but I will remember. I will remember when you did prove faithful, when you did make good on your promises. I will remember, and that remembrance will hold me steadfast, will keep me moving forward.

Prompt if needed: Where have you seen God prove faithful in the past?

3. Solomon is overwhelmed by the truth that the God whom “heaven and earth cannot contain” chooses to dwell with His people. How does this challenge or reshape the way we think about God’s nearness — especially in moments of pain, betrayal, or fear?

I shared in the sermon a story of a man whose wife had left him, his business was in disarray and he found himself a single Dad. He was yearning to hear God’s voice and so he began to read scripture. He was getting bogged down in Exodus. Page after page, instruction after instruction directing the establishment of the tabernacle, the precursor for the temple. He was angry that he wasn’t hearing from God wondering of the usefulness of such tedious instruction. We talked about it and I shared – you are being told page after page – instruction after instruction – that God is with you – with you in the pain – with you in the betrayal – with you in the worry – for he is a God who will never leave you nor forsake you.

The temple represents this reality. A constant reminder that God is with us!

Perhaps invite people to consider where they most desire to know that God is with them? It may be necessary to differentiate between “feeling” God’s presence and naming the reality of his presence and allowing our feelings to be shaped by that reality.

4. Solomon prays: “When Your people sin... may they turn toward this place and repent.” Why is repentance so central to Solomon’s prayer? And why do you think repentance is often *not* the first thing we turn to when confronted with our sin or its consequences?

More often than not we respond to our sin with denial – what me? – blame – I wouldn’t have done that if you hadn’t – justification – what I was really trying to do there was. At our very best we will respond with remorse and resolution. I can’t believe I did that, I’ll do better next time.

Such a response is borne of thinking too highly of ourselves. So we are constantly being surprised by how lustful, hateful, angry we can

become – I can't believe I did that. Then we believe we have the power to change ourselves – I'll do better next time.

Because we don't see the true dimensions of our sin when we see it in others in pride we think – I'm made of different stuff from you – you don't deserve relationship with me if you do things like that. We are lenient with our own sin but harsh and resentful of others.

Due to the reality that we think a resolution will change us when we see the impact of sin in the world we believe humanity can redeem itself and so we offer solutions. We need a new leader, new government, new policy. Yes, those solutions will bring some change to certain problems but they also tend to exacerbate others.

Repentance is the only way to change. I did that, I am like that, Lord Jesus you're my only hope!

5. Tim Keller defined repentance as "continually tapping into the joy of our union with Christ in order to weaken our need to do anything that is contrary to God's heart." Discuss.

This is the incredible dynamic the gospel sets up for our personal growth. The more we see our sin the more amazing electrifying and precious God's love and grace becomes to us. On the other hand the more we are bowled over by God's love and grace the more we are able to drop our denials and self-defenses and admit the true magnitude and dimensions of our sin.

Read John 2:13-22

6. In the gospel Jesus aligns himself with the temple. In what ways does Jesus reveal God's faithfulness, presence, and that the only way to deliverance is by way of repentance?

Jesus embodies the promise that a King of the line of David will reign over the earth bring life and flourishing. He is faithful!

Jesus embodies the promise that he is a God who is with his people. For Jesus is Emmanuel – God with us.

By his death and resurrection he embodies the truth that the only way to deliverance is repentance for he dies to remove our sins from us and rises again to give us new life.

7. In Jesus, oriented to him as the true temple, the teaching of scripture is that we, the body of Christ, become the temple. As the presence the Spirit fills us we are to take our place on the city scape and bear witness to the reality that the only way to healing is by way of repentance. Reflect on the historical reality of this truth during the Wesleyan revival.

Here is an unedited portion of the sermon where this question is reflected upon.

This dynamic — a people awakened to repentance and God healing a land — is not just a biblical principle - its an historical reality - in 19th century England we find a nation mired in alcoholism by way of the gin craze - blood sports and gambling favored leisure - disparity between rich and poor astronomical - grievous injustice defined the gap - debtors prisons - women and children working in factories and mines - deplorable conditions - every day - 16 hrs a day - without literacy or education there was no hope for advancement - in an economy built on the horrors of the slave trade - stories were told of young people out for a night of entertainment - drinking - gambling - who would wake up on a slave ship - and were told - you owe us for last night - welcome to the way you'll pay us back...

The church began to awaken to repentance - they turned from their own participation in the sin that gripped their nation - upwards of a million were drawn to orient their lives to Jesus - and through the leadership of an Anglican minister - John Wesley they set up structured small groups of accountability to keep the lifestyle of repentance alive - the church took its place on the cityscape - bearing witness to the reality that the only way to deliverance was repentance - and the Lord began to heal a nation.

Churches set up public schools to educate the poor - Enoch Turner schoolhouse just to the south of us - the first public school in the city of Toronto was the later fruit of this movement.

The revival formed and shaped the sensibilities of men like William Wilberforce and Lord Shaftsbury - one working through government to bring an end to the slave trade - the other transforming the rights of workers across a nation

The work of Shaftsbury is memorialized in a statue in the heart of London's Piccadilly Circus - designed by the famous sculptor - sir Alfred Gilbert - he conceived of an idea to play on the name Shaftesbury - burying the shaft - the statue depicts the Greek God eros - a cupid - bow in hand - aimed at the ground - seeking to bury the shaft of Christian love into the heart of the British empire

But revival didn't just impact the seats of power - it reached to the margins - Mary Fletcher - the first woman licensed by Wesley to preach - opened an orphanage - organized relief for poor women and widows, trained a generation of female leaders. In a culture that silenced women - in Jesus - they were given voice

Across the ocean, the same revival currents reached an enslaved teenage boy - Richard Allen - the heart of the revival message was that all people were equal before God - Jesus captured Richards heart and he later founded the African Methodist episcopal church - created schools - mutual aid societies - abolitionists' networks.

A church oriented to Jesus - the true temple - takes its place on the cityscape - bearing witness to the reality that the only way to deliverance is repentance - and the Lord brought healing to the land.

8. God confirms to Solomon in a dream the heartbeat of his prayer. If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land. What might it look like for us – personally and as a church – to take our place on the “cityscape” of our culture as a people of repentance? Where do you long to see God's healing?

This is a moment to reflect on the Spirit's invitation to us in our day. Prayerfully dream together following the Spirit's lead and close in

prayer with a yearning for the Spirit to invite us deeper into the life of repentance.