

## **Our work must serve the mission**

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*1 Samuel 1: 4-20; Song of Hannah (APBA p. 429); Hebrews 10: 11-14 (15-18) 19-25; Mark 13: 1-11*

This is transcribed from notes.

Last night the Wallabies won against the All Blacks with a strong defensive effort. But a strong defence is useless if a team cannot also put points on the board with attacking moves.

So often I think we as the church lapse into the purely defensive mode. — just holding our line, paying our way, looking after what we have, keeping a happy comfortable congregation. But genuine forward planning must include plans for growth and development — creative, expansive, forward moving attacking play. Proposals aired over the last few months to improve and add to our buildings are a part of our desire to move forward. But of course building are not the whole answer — only part. Because buildings must serve the needs of the people of St Philip's and assist us in living and proclaiming our faith.

In the gospel today, Jesus points out that even the great and glorious Temple in Jerusalem — a huge building built by Herod the Great — would face destruction.

[\*stones: were huge — over twenty feet square six metres... The Passover, year by year, expresses hope of its restoration.]

He was talking about the destruction of the temple as a change point in history because it would mark the demise of the whole Jewish system of worship, priesthood and sacrifice. Jesus was talking about it here with Peter, James, John and Andrew because he had in mind the replacement of the Temple system with his own offering. The "SYSTEM" was not as important as one's "SELF OFFERING".

The building was not as important as one's devotion, faithfulness and obedience to God.

The buildings of the people of God must serve the mission of the people of God. It must never be that our mission is to serve the buildings where preserving the past takes precedence — in such cases churches can become like museums to a bygone era.

I personally like a church building to be clean and bright, welcoming and people friendly — and I think we have a place we are happy to come to. And I am grateful for Leighton, for flower arrangers and cleaners, for those who clean brass, (Mira), and linen (Rhonda, Joyce and Nancy), gardens, (Clive) and all who work to make this place and worship beautiful.

We hope by developing our buildings over the next few years we may also be more effective in our mission. Our buildings must serve the Mission.

I think Jesus lamented over the temple because it was so grand, so beautiful, but it no longer served the mission God had for the people.

At Parish Council on Tuesday we looked at items on our agenda such as repairs to the rectory,  
the lease of the Hall to the kindergarten  
and no less than 27 topics in relation to risk management.

I started to wonder if we would find any sense of mission in it all.

I wasn't totally disheartened because all of the topics challenged us to do things better and especially to be aware of each other and to care for each other as well as caring for our property.

Our mission must be enabled by our property. When it is not, we need to be willing to let it go. The primary business of the Church is NOT Real Estate!

After telling the disciples "Not one stone will be left here upon another, all will be thrown down" the disciples look at the Temple and ask "When will this be? What will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?"

Jesus first warns them not to be led astray  
i.e. to keep their minds on the job, to stay focussed, to be single minded

even though there will be  
wars and rumours of war  
nation will rise against nation  
earthquakes famines etc  
these are the *beginning* of the birth pangs.  
and indeed the traumas were in their infancy but grew to a point where in 70AD Romans destroyed the Temple.

Personally, they will be arrested, beaten and arraigned before ruling authorities.  
and, said Jesus, "The good news must first be proclaimed to all nations."

I like to think that first means *priority* so that in the midst of all the troubles the PRIORITY is the good news or gospel. and the proclamation will be aided by God's Holy Spirit if the followers of Jesus are only game enough.

But now the question: What is the GOOD NEWS?

The good news for the disciples was that the confusing and often corrupt sacrificial system of the temple was to be replaced with a new way of relationship with God.

The good news for us is that we too are free to respond to the God of love and grace.

The good news is proclaimed when we challenge government to tell the truth about asylum seekers.

The good news is proclaimed when a Christian stands by a Muslim or a Jew because they experience persecution.

The good news is proclaimed when neighbours work together to help a fellow neighbour.

The good news is proclaimed when we say No to war as the way of solving the situation in Iraq.

The good news is proclaimed when an estranged couple are restored in relationship.

The fact is that the gospel is about God's healing in so many situations. Our church, buildings and resources, must serve the mission to be single minded in the proclaiming of God's Good News. The Good News is not just a steady as she goes holding the line approach, but must be expansive, creative, free and positive, especially in troubled times.