

## Messy Church, Messy World

### The story of King Hezekiah from 2 Chronicles 29 and 30.

Here's some background as we meet Hezekiah:

- Stand out king in the Old Testament.
- Israel had 3 Kings (Saul, David and Solomon) before it got divided.
- The northern tribes (aka Israel) never had a single good king. All did evil in God's sight.
- The southern tribes (aka Judah) had mainly bad kings and only 4 good kings, one of which was Hezekiah.
- That meant any good King like Hezekiah always inherited a mess of idolatry and sin.
- By the time of his 29-year reign, the northern kingdom (Israel) had fallen. Judah was fragile. This old covenant, this old way of relating to God was fading fast. Its temporary nature, its fragility, was on display.
- But Hezekiah doesn't accept the status quo - he engages with the mess and leads his people out of it. Sound like anyone? He points to Jesus. Whose Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom. Whose throne will last forever and ever. He is the mediator of a better covenant – the one that we enjoy!

**King Jesus is building his church today, and it's messy!**

**The story of Hezekiah shows us how Jesus works with us in our mess to bring about his purpose:**

#### 1. Purification/Preparation.

**2 Chronicles 29:3–7.** *In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the Lord and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side and said: "Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the Lord, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary. Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the Lord our God and forsook him. They turned their faces away from the Lord's dwelling place and turned their backs on him. They also shut the doors of the portico and put out the lamps. They did not burn incense or present any burnt offerings at the sanctuary to the God of Israel.*

Here was the situation: the temple - the dwelling place for God - the doors were shut and the lights were off.

Hezekiah embarks on a clear-out. Idolatry is removed, first love for God is restored.

**Ephesians 5:25** *Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain wrinkle or other blemish, holy and blameless*

Hezekiah takes 8 days.... Wholeheartedness isn't a lifetime goal - it must characterise us every day!

Jesus has been using this last year to purify his church. To prune his church to make it more fruitful. To prepare his church for the season ahead.

But there is a season ahead. No one likes perpetual preparation.

**What is the thing God has taught you over this year and a half? About Him, yourself, his church, and others?**

## **2. Invitation**

**2 Chronicles 30: 1–5** *Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel. The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month. They had not been able to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem. The plan seemed right both to the king and to the whole assembly. They decided to send a proclamation throughout Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, calling the people to come to Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel. It had not been celebrated in large numbers according to what was written.*

It's a month later than planned, because nobody showed up. In fact, the key leaders didn't show up! And they also decide to invite all of Israel too!

This messy church Jesus is building is a church with blurred edges, where invites go out even though there's plenty of mess within. God doesn't want us to wait until we feel "church is back"- he wants us to share his invitation far and wide.

**Who is God calling us to reach out to at this time?**

## **3. Participation**

**2 Chronicles 30: 18–20** *Although most of the many people who came from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover, contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the Lord, who is good, pardon everyone who sets their heart on seeking God—the Lord, the God of their ancestors—even if they are not clean according to the rules of the sanctuary." And the Lord heard Hezekiah and healed the people.*

It's sounding messy. It sounds stressy! Their Passover is messy and late, and not to the required standard. But the King prays that God sees the heart, not the sin. We have a King who prays that same prayer over us.

Don't let the mess of your life, your family disqualify you from participation in the family of God. Jesus has made a way. Don't let the mess of life stop you participating in inviting others in.

Recommended book: "[Extraordinary Hospitality \(for ordinary people\)](#)" by Caroline Lacey "How can we show genuine generous welcome without becoming exhausted overburdened...need to start by rejecting a worldly view of hospitality. Our goal is not to show off our homes or our cooking skills (or lack of them), but our saviour!"

The Greek word used for "fellowship" in the New Testament means participation or partnership (e.g. like a fishing business partnership).

**Have we become increased spectators or participators over lockdown? What defines spectating versus participating?**

#### **4. Celebration**

**2 Chronicles 30:21** *The Israelites who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great rejoicing, while the Levites and priests praised the Lord every day with resounding instruments dedicated to the Lord.*

There's music. There's dancing. There's singing. It characterised the people of God. Moses' song in Exodus 15 was a direct response to revelation of God after the first Passover when God powerfully delivered Israel through the Red Sea.

As we return to corporate sung worship, it's not because we're music lovers or opera stars! It's because God's character and works causes us to sing and celebrate. It feels wrong not to, when we're thinking about him.

**What most excites you about God's character and works?**

#### **5. Restoration**

**2 Chronicles 30:21** *Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites, who showed good understanding of the service of the Lord. For the seven days they ate their assigned portion and offered fellowship offerings and praised the Lord, the God of their ancestors.*

Hezekiah gathers the leaders- the Levites. They're exhausted after a Passover week of service. He speaks encouragingly (tenderly/ kindly) to them.

The King wants to speak his word of encouragement over you today if you've been serving hard- at home or work or church. He wants to say "well done- come and enter your rest". Holidays (a chance to be with others and with Jesus, free from responsibility) are a vital rhythm in our lives.

**How does it feel to know that the King delights in your wellbeing as much as your work? Does your life reflect that?**

## 6. Priorities for Prayer as we move into a week of prayer

- **Shepherd** the church through a season of change (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, 1 Peter 5:1-4)
- **Rebuild** vibrant kids, youth and student teams (Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Psalm 145:4-7, Matthew 19:14)
- **Invite** people who have joined us during lockdowns become fully part of the church family (Acts 2:42-47, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
- **Help** new and existing ministry leaders to grow in their gifts and leadership (2 Timothy 2:2, Matthew 28:20)
- **Identify** and meet needs in our local and global community (Deuteronomy 10:17-19, Psalm 113:5-8, Proverbs 19:17, Acts 11:27-30, Galatians 2:10)
- **Make space** for the Holy Spirit at every opportunity in all our gatherings (Psalm 23:2-3, Psalm 103:1-5, 1 Corinthians 12:9, 14:3)

More information on the Week of Prayer can be found on the website: <https://www.kingschurchedinburgh.org/whats-on/prayer/>