

Celebrations

- *If Jayne can do a fanfare, get her to do it, unannounced, straight after the opening prayer - make sure the Remembrance / silence thing is clear and distinct*
- Fanfare - one sign of a celebration
 - can you think of occasions when we celebrate?
- We believe God, who made the whole universe, is actually here with us now!
 - and that is definitely something to truly celebrate!
 - in many other ways this may be a perfectly ordinary day...
 - but God is here!
- How many different things about God can we think of that we can celebrate?
 - eg his care, love, goodness, holiness...
- Today we'll be seeing how Solomon celebrated in a big way when God came to be with his people in a special way, in the special place Solomon had built - the Temple

Introduction

- Most of us will have heard of the Castle of Mey on the north coast of Scotland
 - it was, while she was alive, a favourite home of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother
 - if you went to the village near the castle you would meet an old man at the village garage - he would tell you how the Queen Mum would come to her castle every summer. While she was there, she always visited the garage to say "Hello" to Tom...
 - she also paid visits to several elderly folk living in small cottages nearby
 - all the villagers looked forward to the Queen Mum's coming - they loved her and would tell visitors about her visits to them
 - the Queen Mother **honoured** those people by gladly going into their homes - homes that were opened to her as a mark of honour to her

God's glory in the Temple

- When the ark of the covenant was brought in, a cloud filled the Temple (vs.9-11)
 - as it had earlier filled the tabernacle in the desert (Exodus 40:34)
 - this was the **visible symbol** of God's presence
 - the temple was where God lived amongst his people (v.13)
 - the Lord lives in heaven, but he makes his presence known to his people on earth
 - though awesome and majestic, God is not remote - but near
 - John tells us that Jesus came to live among ordinary people - he **tabernacled** among us (John 1:14)
- A place for God's glory

Prayers in the Temple

- Solomon praises God because he has kept his promise (vs.14-21)
 - continuing this theme in the dedication prayer, eg v.23
 - he knows God is too great for this building to contain him
 - the temple was, then, a place of prayer - and Solomon asks God to hear prayer and forgive the people (v.30)
 - note Solomon's repeated request for forgiveness - vs. 32, 34, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49, 50!!
 - like Solomon and the people, we need God's forgiveness and intervention
 - it is not that the place **where** we worship is important, but that those who love God should worship him **together**
 - so there has to be a meeting place, whether it is a school hall, or a church building, or someone's front room, or even in the woods!
- A place for meeting God

Celebration in the Temple

- Solomon and the people unite in celebration
 - God is faithful (v.56)
 - they want to worship God - and he is pleased to make his presence known
 - just as we should follow Solomon and the people's example of prayer...
 - so too should we follow their example of exuberant celebration of God and his presence with us!
 - there is no biblical mandate for church services to be dull affairs - **and that vitality starts in our hearts**
- A place for celebration

Application

- He is near
- He hears our prayer
- We have reason to celebrate!