

Readings, Collect and Reflection for Sunday 5 July 2020
The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Psalm 145.8-15

- 8 The Lord is gracious and merciful, ◆
long-suffering and of great goodness. [R]
- 9 The Lord is loving to everyone ◆
and his mercy is over all his creatures.
- 10 All your works praise you, O Lord, ◆
and your faithful servants bless you.
- 11 They tell of the glory of your kingdom ◆
and speak of your mighty power,
- 12 To make known to all peoples your mighty acts ◆
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
- 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; ◆
your dominion endures throughout all ages. [R]
- 14 The Lord is sure in all his words ◆
and faithful in all his deeds.
- 15 The Lord upholds all those who fall ◆
and lifts up all those who are bowed down.

*King of the universe,
you show the bright glory of your reign
in acts of mercy and enduring love;
raise the spirits of the downcast
and restore those who have fallen away,
that we may sing for ever of your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

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Collect

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler and guide
we may so pass through things temporal
that we lose not our hold on things eternal;
grant this, heavenly Father,
for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Romans 7.15-25

5 I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. 17 But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, 23 but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.

Matthew 11.16-19 + 25-30

16 "But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 17 "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.' 18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon"; 19 the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

25 At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Reflection – from Mary-Lou

Some years ago, I was able to sing in a small church choir led by our wonderful organist, who was a really good musician, a composer and keyboard teacher.

We were not a good choir! Enthusiasm very definitely outweighed our expertise. We loved the singing, the fun and the friendship! We were encouraged and practised to within an inch of our lives, week by week, but still just sometimes, impatience would out, and a little wince would pass over our dear conductor's face when we failed - yet again - to get it right! I think at the start of this Sunday's reading, Jesus is wincing.

Actually it's worse than that, he's completely exasperated at the response both he and his cousin John the Baptist have received from the religious authorities to their ministry. John comes, fasting and never touching alcohol, following a very strict lifestyle because of his religious vows, and they reject him, saying he's driven by a demon. And then Jesus himself comes, eating, drinking, inviting people to parties and enjoying life, and almost like sulky teenagers, they don't want that either and say they're scandalised! They have such fixed ideas about God, they cannot see God at work right in front of them.

Thank goodness, Father, says Jesus, Thank goodness for the ones you have revealed the truth to! Thank you for the humble, un-learned ones, the simple people who the

world thinks are insignificant - they are open to you and to me. They get it! They are open to the new light being revealed to them. And that is your gift, Father.

Then Jesus speaks those precious words – Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Over the centuries, generations of religious teachers had weighed God’s people down, with an impossible load of sheer hard work and constant duties to try and fulfil the holy Law - but with Jesus, it’s different! Jesus offers them a new way – a way to leave the burden with him and embrace his way, his yoke. His way still brings demands on us, but they come from his heart of mercy and love and so are easy to bear. This is our Master, who is gentle and humble in heart, he isn’t a stern Headteacher waiting to haul us over the carpet. He looks on us with love, and when we receive the gift of faith the Father offers us, with our hearts and hands open to receive, we hear Christ’s invitation – to come to him, and find rest for our souls.

So whatever burdens you are carrying right now, and no matter whether you have heard them a hundred times before or just for the first time, hear this again: Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Then rest in the love and mercy of Christ, give thanks for the gift of faith you have received and trust in Him - you will find rest for your soul.

- *You might find it helpful to know that in vs 16-17, Jesus is giving us a picture of children at play in the market-place. They’re playing at weddings and funerals! Playing the flute and dancing didn’t attract people to join in, nor did others respond to them wailing as happened at Palestinian funerals of the time, and now!*