

**Sunday 9 July 2023**  
**Holy Trinity – Holy Communion**  
**Trinity 5**

Genesis 24: 34-38, 42-49, 58-end

Romans 7: 15-25a

Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30

How many of us have started a new day with best of intentions only to find - yet again - that we snap at strangers in our path, grumble about a colleague, shout at the children or... well, you know what I mean.

Those ingrained habits and repeated sins we wish we could kick seem to delight in tripping us up, however hard we pray or try to change.

It doesn't help because there's always plenty to do. So much to do. No doubt we would all have done many things this last week, this last month, this last year. Lifetimes full of doing things, both good and bad!

With all this doing, perhaps there are things we should have done but haven't yet got to them. Or trying to forget and hoping that they will just go away! Maybe we are not capable of doing what we want to do because we're too young, too old, not confident enough, or too ill!

The way life is now the days seem to be more and more rushed. The more we do, the more we have left to do. It seems to be a trail of never-ending busyness. I often imagine that when God looks upon us, we must appear a bit like ants scurrying to and fro. Perhaps when God makes his presence known amongst us, we are just like ants, and we try to bite him and get him out of our busy way.

We have to ask ourselves, with all this busyness, where does it end? Are we so concerned with what we think is important that we are letting go of what is really important? And because we are so overactive, do we then treat God with frustration and contempt, treating him as just another task to fit into our busy schedules? Perhaps we blame God or others for what we think we have to do? Even our leisure time, our rest and recreation times, have all become so busy. So busy they no longer seem to be effective. The more we do the more we have left to do. We work for more leisure, rest and recreation and once we get to these days, they're gone, they fizzle into thin air.

What does all of our doing do? Where does all this busyness lead to? Does all this doing deceive us, or does it deliver from deception? Do the things we do bring glory to God, or are we just working and entertaining ourselves to death? Being so busy doing what we deem necessary, do we consider what all this might be doing to others around us? Then there are the things we keep hidden; the things we do that make us ashamed before others and before God. Even the best, most wholesome and righteous things we do are often tainted by our own self interest!

Saint Paul, a convert from Judaism to Christianity, the Apostle to the Gentiles, called by Christ on the road to Damascus, testifies powerfully to his struggle with what he does as he looks at his ego and the things that come out of it. Chapter 7 of his letter to the Romans, that we heard just now, expresses with unnerving accuracy our double-mindedness towards sin and righteousness.

Let's just quickly remind ourselves of what Paul said...

15 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?

That was Paul, but what about us? If we are honest with ourselves, when we look seriously at what we do, we know that we too are wretched, just like Saint Paul. We can hear Paul's frustration as he rants about his inability to do the right thing, even though he knows exactly what he should be doing. In fact it is human nature to beat ourselves up when we fail in doing the right thing. We might even think that we have to verbally churn out our disgust, as a way of trying to work off our guilt due to what we do or what we should have done. But the end result is that we cannot work off our guilt, no matter how much we beat ourselves up; it will only remain with us and make us implode.

Our society today is hell-bent on doing all sorts of things to appease its conscience, some deeds good, others not so good. But at the end of the day nothing removes the darkness from a conscience busied by the sinful nature. We can and should seek to do humane and kind things to each other and to the creation God has given us; but even so, doing them won't give us peace, hope, and joy that last. It's at this point in time we realise that it's not about being the doers and the shakers of the world, the wise and the learned, or the strong and the healthy. We have learnt of our wretchedness in God's word, and in our weakness we need to be delivered from our bodies of death. So, it is only right then that we should pay even more attention to our Gospel reading this morning where we heard how Jesus commends the ones who cannot do, but rather the ones who can simply believe, that's the little children.

I make no apology for reading it again...

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.'

The good thing for us who are burdened with doing, having to do, and not doing what we should have done, is that Jesus Christ has done it for us. Like Paul when we get to the frustrating realisation that our plight is just as wretched, there stands Jesus offering us the same gracious hand he revealed to the little children. The reality for us who live in today's world is this: regardless of how much we do or how little we do, none of it has any real meaning unless the burden of doing it, is placed on Christ, and we carry his yoke, resting and remaining in him, and hearing and believing his written word.

The difficult reality is that in this life we will always be pulled in two directions, but our ultimate destiny is for the two conflicting natures of flesh and spirit within us to be wholly aligned with our new life in Jesus Christ. The recreation and rest the world leads us to believe in doesn't give us satisfactory rest at all. We're tempted to work so hard gathering objects of entertainment around us, and once we do they don't give rest, but rather more noise and restlessness. However, the recreation and rest we and all humanity actually needs is re-creation and Sabbath rest in Jesus Christ and his forgiveness of sin.

Paul knew the answer to all this when he said... "Who will rescue us from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Back in the 14th century the anchorite Julian of Norwich knew this as well when she wrote "God, of your goodness, give me yourself... If I ask for anything less, I shall always be in want. Only in you do I have all".

This is the sure and certain promise of the kingdom that is not fully yet but still to come completely. And, on the way, the kingdom with us now, can be - no truly is - just as Jesus said it was, an easy yoke, and a light burden. Because this is really what we pray for all the time when we say... "Your kingdom come, your will be done".

Amen.