

Sunday 9th July 2017

Trinity 4

Proper 9 **Green**



Come unto me

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 English Standard Version (ESV)

The Law and Sin

7¹⁵ For 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 with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

COMMENT: Does anyone not feel the depth of moral conflict Paul described in this passage? He didn't put it in modern psycho-babble such as we might use; but he did make perfectly plain how intense the conscious struggle of the will becomes when we face temptation and the testing of our fundamental values. Such conflict also happens unconsciously when we just want our own way. He made equally plain the only true resource for freedom from the guilt of our failure to

resist temptation – the grace of forgiveness of God, and the assistance to live the life we ought to live. We need to demystify Paul’s struggle and put it in terms of our own lives. Like the life-long struggle some face of alcohol, tobacco or drug addiction. Perhaps seemingly not as stark as those struggles, but just as ensnaring, for most of us it is the consumerism of our age - the vast amounts we spend on clothes, food and drink, in a world where people are starving - we are forever just one step away from failure. We need to walk with Christ in us every day, every moment. Only then can we learn what is truly of value, live with serenity and hope while also seeking to enjoy our lives as real human beings.

Matthew 11:16-30 English Standard Version (ESV)

John the Baptist

11 ¹⁶“But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, ¹⁷“‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’ ¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”^[a]

Come to Me, and I Will Give You Rest

²⁵ At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.^[b] 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 who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Footnotes: a. Some manuscripts *children* (compare Luke 7:35). b. or *for so it pleased you well*.

COMMENT: Jesus likely uttered these three remembered quotations at quite different times. The first saying not only described a children’s imitative game of biblical times, it also told of the frustration of teaching without visible response. The prayer in verses 25-27 has some similarity

to the prayer in John 17, revealing a common tradition which has been recalled within different Christian communities. The final call to find rest in Christ's service contained echoes of the final blessing in one of the books of the apocryphal; Ecclesiasticus 50:22-26 (also known as 'Sirach'). That non-canonical book was originally written in Hebrew written about 200 years BC and translated into Greek by Jesus ben Sirach's grandson in 132 BC. Hebrew fragments were found among the Qumran scrolls and in the fortress of Masada which endured the Romans-Jewish War of AD 69-70. In desperation the fortress held out much longer and fell to the Romans in AD 73 only after all surviving Jews had committed suicide. It was entirely possible that Jesus knew the work of Sirach with its aphorisms, moral maxims, proverbs, psalms of praise, theological and homiletic reflections. His own teaching had many of the same characteristics. Sirach wrote: "*And now bless the Lord of all things, the doer of great deeds everywhere, who has exalted our days from the womb and acted toward us in mercy. May he grant us cheerful hearts and bring us peace in our time, in Israel for ages on ages. May his mercy be faithfully with us, and may he redeem us in our time.*"

Psalm 145:8-14 *Exaltabo te, Deus* Grail Psalter

℟ Your Kingdom, Lord, is an everlasting Kingdom.

⁸ The Lord is kind and full of compassion,
slow to anger, abounding in love.

⁹ How good is the Lord to all,
compassionate to all his creatures. ℟

¹⁰ All your creatures shall thank you, O Lord,
and your friends shall repeat their blessing.

¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of your reign
and declare your might, O God, ℟

¹² to make known to men your mighty deeds
and the glorious splendour of your reign.

¹³ Yours is an everlasting kingdom;
your rule lasts from age to age. ℟

The Lord is faithful in all his words
and loving in all his deeds.

¹⁴ The Lord supports all who fall
and raises all who are bowed down. ℟

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.**

COMMENT: This excerpt from a psalm of praise for individual and congregational devotion celebrated the grace, love and power of God to save for all who put their trust in God. The whole of this majestic hymn, of which this is a brief excerpt, could be used to give it more of its full meaning. Although composite in nature and including material drawn from other psalms, the psalm exemplified pure praise. Like a number of other psalms too, it was composed in the form of an acrostic with each verse beginning with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. (See also Psalms 9-10; 25; 34; 37; 111-112; 119). That characteristic became most common in the late postexilic age, perhaps even the 3rd or early 2nd Century BC. An accident in transcription may have dropped the nun verse between verses 13 and 14. The hymn opened with an exultant accolade citing the poet's purpose to adore the LORD as the ruler of the universe. He then declared that he would meditate on the mighty acts of the LORD which others would also proclaim (verses 4-7). Divine compassion headed the list (verses 8-9). The psalmist then summoned others to bless the Lord (verses 10-13). In a final section, he celebrated Yahweh's justice and kindness. He concluded his praise with a doxology and summons all to join him once again.

Post Communion

Eternal God, comfort of the afflicted and healer of the broken, you have fed us at the table of life and hope: teach us the ways of gentleness and peace, that all the world may acknowledge the kingdom of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

God give you grace to follow his saints in faith and hope and love; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you, and remain with you always. **Amen.**