

Thoughts for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity 2020

Gospel Reading: Matthew ch 11 vv 16 – 19, 25 to end

I am sure, that like most people, you have experienced one of those scenarios that in brief, might be summed up as “damned if you do, and damned if you don’t”. It seems impossible to do or say the right thing. And that appears to be what is happening to Jesus in today’s Gospel reading.

Once again, we see Jesus picking up everyday scenes and using them to explain his message to those who are around him. Today, he perhaps looks at a group of children playing “in the market place”, a place where their parents could perhaps keep an eye on them whilst shopping for food, or catching up on the gossip. One group of children are whining to another group, we played music for you but you don’t want to dance. Then we pretended to wail like people do at funerals, but you didn’t want to play at that either. What on earth do you want to do? And for Jesus himself, he has been compared to John the Baptist. Yet the people grumbled because John lived on a very frugal diet and did not make a fuss about it and they called him mad. Jesus, on the other hand, is seen to enjoy dinner with his friends from time to time, and they grumble about that too, calling him a glutton and a drunkard who eats with the dregs of society.

Jesus points out however, that wisdom will get the last laugh.

And Jesus breaks into a prayer of thanks to his Father, for keeping the Good News for those who need it, the ordinary every day folk whom he meets on his travels, not those who consider themselves wiser than everyone else. And in verse 28, we have that great call to everyone who is tired and worn out carrying the world on their shoulders, to come to Jesus. He will give them rest, and not only that, he will not overburden them but will give their souls the rest that only he can give.

I can never hear these words, Come unto me... without hearing them in my head, sung to the music of Handel in The Messiah, probably by one of the great contraltos of the past. But I think that is because these are verses that resonate on so many levels with all kinds of people in all kinds of places and situations.

We can all feel overcome by situations, like lockdown, for example. At first, it seemed perhaps, like an adventure, but after a bit it becomes a chore, and finally we are really fed up and don’t know how to cope anymore. But Jesus has the answer. Come to him and he will give us the rest our souls crave. If we take up his yoke, that is, the work he wants us to do, we will

find that we can handle life more easily. And for once, Jesus speaks about himself as being gentle and humble in heart, not just to tell us how good he is, but to encourage us to be like him too. We need to think about Jesus's message to the "people of this generation", that is, those to whom he was speaking directly, over 2000 years ago. "Don't behave like children, never satisfied with what you have, but always wanting something different. Come to me to find out what you can have; the peace that comes from true rest in me."

Whilst we are being told that lockdown is easing, it will not make a huge difference to some of us. If you feel like that, then remember these words of Jesus and come to him for you will truly find the rest you seek, and with that rest, the energy to continue to follow him and do the work he still has for you to do.

Amen

