

# The 4th Sunday after Trinity

Sunday 5th July 2020



## *The Collect for 4th Sunday after Trinity*

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.

## *Romans 7:15-25*

<sup>15</sup>I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup>But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup>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. <sup>19</sup>For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. <sup>20</sup>Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

<sup>21</sup> So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup>For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, <sup>23</sup>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. <sup>24</sup>Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? <sup>25</sup>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-end***

But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,

<sup>17</sup> “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.”

<sup>18</sup>For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon”; <sup>19</sup>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.’

<sup>25</sup> 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; <sup>26</sup>yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>27</sup>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. 29Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

***Reflection from Revd Helen:***



Do you sometimes find yourself scratching your head after reading a passage from the Bible, and puzzling over what on earth it might be saying? If so, you are not alone! Much ink has been spilled over today's epistle reading from Paul's letter to the Romans. Romans is Paul's proclamation of the Gospel, at the heart of which is the gift of grace. In the chapter in Romans immediately before today's reading, Paul acknowledges that in the super-abounding of free grace there is the temptation to go on sinning, but he counters this with the assurance that the Christian life is a new life. This leads into a discussion of the believer's relationship with God's law under grace, and of the battle with sin.

There have been centuries of scholarly debate as to whether today's passage is autobiographical, and whether it describes Paul's Christian, or pre-Christian state. Whatever view we take, the fact remains that as Christians we long to live in the fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit, yet so often we find ourselves failing. We can find ourselves making unwise decisions or becoming trapped in bad habits. We long to turn from these but in our human weakness we struggle to do so. Before we know it, we find that we have begun to stray from God's path, despite our best intentions. If we were to compare the 'before' and 'after' of becoming a Christian, it is clearly not the case that 'before', I sinned, and 'after', I was sinless. The

difference is that as Christians though, we regard sin differently. It bothers us and causes us inner conflict because we want to live lives that honour Christ, and in sinning we let Him down, as well as letting ourselves down. But the reality is that we do battle with sin, and like Paul, we may cry out for help - *'Who will rescue me from this body of death?'* (verse 24). Thankfully, we, like Paul, have the answer - *'Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!'* (verse 25). On our own, we are slaves to sin, but we have the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit to help us to live the kind of life we are called to as Christians.

Nicky Gumbel, pioneer of the Alpha course, paraphrases our situation rather well, I think, when he says:

"As I look at myself as a Christian in terms of belonging to Christ, I am not free to sin. As I look at myself as a Christian in the world, I realise I am not free from sin either. But as I look at myself as a Christian empowered by the Holy Spirit, I realise I am free to overcome sin."

A paraphrase of John Newton puts it even more succinctly:

"I am not what I want to be.

I am not what I ought to be.

I am not what I one day will be.

But by the grace of God, I am not what I once was".

I say 'Amen' to that!

May we be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit today as we cry to God for help, healing and restoration. *'Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!'* Amen.

***With greetings to you all from  
The Rector and Revd Helen***

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