

## Sermon: Trinity 4, Sunday 5 July 2020

**H**ow can I describe this generation? I'm interested in Jesus' answer to this question. What did he make of his contemporaries reaction to John and himself?

**H**e answers it by using a picture, saying they are like children who when business is being transacted in the marketplace, gather to play games. But when that happens everything is inconsistent. Some children begin to play the flute for merriment, playing at weddings. But others take no notice. So they turn instead to lament and moan a dirge as their elders do at funerals. But again this is not taken up.

**T**hat is how the Pharisees behave. They are inconsistent, never satisfied. They used to be full of enthusiasm for John the Baptist. But then they find fault with his austerity and call to repentance. By complete contrast, they point the finger at Jesus, saying that he is a glutton and a drinker, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners.

**J**esus was condemned by the sheer perversity of human nature. A fault was found in everything. John came from living in the desert, fasting, isolated from the society of men. They said of him the man is mad to cut himself off from society and human pleasures. Jesus came mixing with all kinds of people, sharing in their joys and sorrows and their times of celebration. They said of him he is a socialite, he is a party-goer. He is the friend of outsiders, with whom no decent person would have anything to do.

**I**f people are determined to make no response they will remain stubborn no matter what invitation is offered to them. The Jews might criticise John for his lonely isolation but John had moved people's hearts to God. The Jews might criticise Jesus for mixing too much in ordinary life, but in him people were finding new life, new goodness, and a power to live with new access to God.

**I**n the end such unfair criticism and intolerance will get nowhere."God's wisdom is proved right by its results." In the end God's wisdom will be victorious. Truly these people need to appreciate the outcome of Jesus' ministry. In the midst of this criticism and conflict Jesus goes on to express his gratitude for the serene trust he has in his Father. And then he lifts up his eyes to heaven and says, "I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and wise and revealing them to the simple."

**W**hat a simple and direct message he gave."No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him". All knowledge of everything is entrusted to the Father and the Son, a completely shared and open relationship in which each knows and trusts the other. And we are privileged that this is revealed to us, this loving, sharing and participating relationship.

**J**esus then goes on to issue a tender invitation:" Come to me all who are weary and whose load is heavy and I will give you rest." Jesus gives what is needed for those weary and burdened. All are urged to come to Jesus especially those who are oppressed by the heavy load of rules and regulations placed upon their shoulders by the Pharisees and scribes. It is like entering a new dimension of living.

**G**od's world has entered your world. God's love has broken down the barriers. There is a height and a depth opening up. No longer the pool of fear and despair which threatens to overwhelm. Participation always involves an element of risk. It takes time and effort to create trust. One of the greatest joys is to discover the talents of others and see them flourish in a way that no one was expecting.

**T**hroughout the Gospel Jesus continually shares food and fellowship with those he meets. Eating together, at better times than these, is at the centre of our Christian lives. The table becomes the sign of our unity and the hospitality we offer to one another. All are welcome, saint and sinner alike."You will find rest for your souls."

**D**o we really believe this; really experience this? So often, as Carter says, we receive a different message from religion - the message, we are unacceptable, sinful, outsiders, shameful, condemned. But that is not the message of the Gospel; "For I am gentle and humble hearted and you will find rest for your souls." You are my beloved. You may feel dirty but I will wash you. You may feel unworthy but I will lift you up. You may be ashamed but I will clothe you. You may be hungry and thirsty but I will give you living water and the

bread of life to eat. Jesus promises rest for our souls and the Holy Spirit dwells within us. We mean everything to God.

**I** want to end with a prayer of Mallie Lightbourn. 'Lord God in a world where many are hungry, we thank you for the food we share. In a world where many are lonely we thank you for our fellowship. In a world where so many live in fear and mistrust we thank you for the example of unity and peace. In a world where many do not know the love of God we thank you for that love which is ours today and which we share. In the Holy Name of our God we pray.'

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