

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost 3rd July 2005

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Readings:

Genesis 24: 34-38, 42-49, 58-67

Psalms 45: 10-17 page 268

Romans 7: 14-25

Matthew 11: 15-30;

Come to me all you who are weary and carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.
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.
For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

The yoke was a means of helping a person carry a load — it made the task easier as it helped balance the load. As we used to say in our physics classes it gives a "mechanical advantage".

Paul in the letter to the Romans says:
"I do not understand my own actions...
For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."
(*pause*)

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do **not** want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. So I find it to be a law — that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand...

Confused?

Yes, I think the issue of sin and the problem of evil had Paul struggling to understand and it seems from what he says that "The harder he tried the more difficult — the more elusive goodness seemed to be. As he pondered, Paul had a very strong sense of sin (his imperfection/ distance from God) pervading his life and dragging him down and yet, when he arrives at his most desperate question "Who will deliver me?" his answer is "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

I think he had become aware all over again of that "mechanical advantage" of the yoke of Christ which helped him carry the load of his human-ness and gave rest to his soul from its anxious struggle!

It is something we need to come back to time and time again! This awareness of the wonder of God's grace mediated in the gentle humility of his servant Jesus — which brings rest to our souls!

We struggle in Australia with the issues of Industrial Relations — providing a framework which will give justice to workers as well as employers — and the system is necessary only because in the past *both* sides could be accused of taking advantage of the other!

We struggle in the world with great inequality — and we are reminded today with the struggles and

poverty of many of our brothers and sisters in Africa. The Live8 concert has its failings (it did not include African performers!) but it brings the issue to our attention.

These are huge issues and must be dealt with wisely and with firm, clear, resolute and patient action.

The whole anxiety of the struggle could overwhelm us, but we too can say "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord" — not as a cop out, or as a salve to our consciences but as a reminder that Christ shares the load and seeks to show us the way as well as to give us rest.

If we go back to the beginning of the gospel, we find Jesus saying "Let anyone with ears listen" but the people of Jesus' day are like bad tempered and argumentative children who are not satisfied with anything.

So Jesus is now saying that this generation (this race, this nation, this people, this contemporary society) is like disobedient, unresponsive children who will not listen to God's wisdom in any form.

[neither] the simple uncompromising message of John

OR

the more friendly and personable message of Jesus.

Piping and dancing was a wedding game and referred to Jesus' celebratory style (wedding stories)

Wailing and mourning was a funeral game[?] and referred to John's simple austerity.

Either way, the people do not listen and are unresponsive!

and so, Jesus warns that the unresponsive cities where he did his works of power are worse than even the notoriously bad places of ages past.

But Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds (or her children[Luke])

in other words — if they had received God's wisdom they would be responsive children.
[And those who do respond...]

And so, Jesus ponders out loud what causes some to respond and others not — he concludes that it is a kind of know it all spiritual arrogance among those who (think they are) wise and intelligent.

We have already seen that true wisdom is the gift of god and it is infants — open, simple, trusting, uncomplicated who are able to receive that wisdom in Jesus.

So it is only logical that Jesus offers the invitation:

Come to me.

Those who carry heavy burdens are most likely those who struggle with understanding humanity and their place before God. (unlike the quarrelsome and difficult children.)

Take **my** yoke, which will help you carry the load

Jesus offers to help carry the burden

of understanding who we are as human beings

of being able to respond to God

and rather than in the harsh and demanding way of the law
Jesus' way is humble and gentle

Jesus offers help with the burdens of humanity with understanding and accepting ourselves. **AND**
to make our relationship with God a joyful and restful experience.