

Trinity 8 (2013)

Colossians 1

New International Version (NIV)

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of ^[a] your evil behaviour. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— ²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

²⁴ Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— ²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸ He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

Luke 10

New International Version (NIV)

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. ^[f] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

When it comes to earning a living,
we certainly are a mixed bunch

Some won't work, because unemployment benefit
First designed to be a safety net
has become an alternative lifestyle
and having grown accustomed to a certain standard of living
they don't think they can afford to work!
(something wrong with the system there I think)

some people can't work, because of illness or injury
or because they look after a sick relative
or they can't afford childcare

I was watching a TV programme the other day
Where a young man refused any kind of menial work
Because he had a degree,
and considered himself above it all
I'll come back to that young man in a minute

some people on the other hand - just can't stop working
they have two or three jobs on the go
and even when they get home
they can't just sit and do nothing
they'll always find one thing or another to keep them busy

Martha - in our gospel story this morning
is one such workaholic
busying herself
Whilst her sister Mary considered it more important
Just to "be" with the Lord

I've often likened Jesus to Oddball
In that film we all know and love - Kelley's Heroes
you must have seen it by now
It's been on TV every Christmas since Noah was a lad

In one scene, Oddball, played by Donald Sutherland
Is sunbathing on top of his psychedelic Sherman tank
When sergeant Telly Savalas asks him (not very politely)
what he thinks he's doing up there

Oddball raises his face to the sun with a grin
(somewhere between serenity and insanity) and says
"I'm taking a few rays man, a little cheese, a sip of wine..."

Jesus was often criticised for taking wine with His disciples
When "more important" things needed to be done

Of course He always got around to it - eventually

But He always knew what should take priority
As I've said on many occasions – God's timing is perfect

We often expect Him to answer our prayers instantly
"Lord give me patience and give to me NOW!"
Lesson one this morning – you can't rush God

Another Oddball moment
Is when Jesus urges His disciples to
"Consider the birds of the air, they do not reap or sow
And yet God gives them everything they need"

Jesus was – I think – a bit of a Hippy at heart!
"Like – chill man – dad's got it all in hand – no worries"

I suspect the poet W. H. Davies, was of a similar mind
When he asked
*WHAT is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?*

Yes God wants us to care – especially for other people
But He didn't make this planet so beautiful
for us just to rush by and ignore it

the beauty of nature is our filling station
as essential as the air we breathe,

and there's one other essential requirement
the human soul needs
something Martha just didn't understand
and that is to make time, every day, to "be" with God

to "be" is the operative word
(or should that be non-operative?)
we are human beings – not human doings!

I love the story, of a man called Simon
who was seeking God's will for his future
so he went off into a forest to walk and pray

After a while he sat down on a log
by the shore of a beautiful lake
And he prayed,
"Lord, what do you want me to do?"

Should I read my bible more?
Should I do some charity work?
Should I build an ark?

To his surprise, the Lord answered instantly
"Simon, I'd just like you to spend more time
Sitting on this log with me!"

I promised to come back to that young man on TV
Who had a degree
and felt the idea of any kind of menial work demeaning

The plan was for him to spend a week
with a community nurse

On day one they visited a dear lady
who was bedridden with MS
They had to lift her onto the toilet, wash her
and put her back into bed

Perhaps quite a few viewers – like me
were not at all surprised
When the lad failed to turn up the following day

But the nurse wasn't going to give up on him that easily
she went round to his home to give him a piece of her mind

When he heard how the MS lady cried
when he didn't turn up
How she'd stayed up the night before
thinking of things she could say to encourage him
he was clearly ashamed – and went back to work

that lad is now training to be a nurse

there's no doubt,
that God's will is for us to care for one another
because it when we truly give of ourselves,
we ourselves are blessed
it's in our DNA, part of God's blueprint
which is why He made it a commandment
to love one another

but there's one other commandment that comes first
"LOVE GOD – and love one another"

Colin Urquart describes us as coffee pots
We can't continuously pour out God's love
Unless we stop occasionally
Open our lids - and be refilled

In fairness to Martha
she may well have been under an Old Testament
God-fearing mindset

Ingrained by stories of a vengeful and jealous ogre
Who would smite every living being in the household
At the sight of the slightest speck of dust

As Luke puts it
She was distracted by all the preparations

And she failed to see
Who was standing before her very eyes
The true face of God

Not demanding she wait on Him hand and foot
But *longing* for her just to BE with Him

It's easy to be critical of the people in the bible
who met Jesus yet failed to recognise Him for who He was

But then they didn't have the benefit of hindsight
They didn't see the agony of Good Friday
The empty tomb of Easter
The glorious return of the Ascension
And the mighty power of Pentecost

But we do

We know the full story – that's why we're here today

(that's why we are welcoming
another new member into His family)

To BE with Him