

# Trinity 9 (2013)

## Colossians 2

<sup>6</sup> So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.

<sup>9</sup> For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, <sup>10</sup> and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority. <sup>11</sup> In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, <sup>12</sup> having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

<sup>13</sup> When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup> having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup> And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. <sup>18</sup> Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you. Such a person also goes into great detail about what they have seen; they are puffed up with idle notions by their unspiritual mind. <sup>19</sup> They have lost connection with the head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

## Luke 11

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

<sup>2</sup> He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come. <sup>3</sup> Give us each day our daily bread.

<sup>4</sup> Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."

<sup>5</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; <sup>6</sup> a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' <sup>7</sup> And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' <sup>8</sup> I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

<sup>9</sup> "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>11</sup> "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?

<sup>12</sup> Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? <sup>13</sup> If you then, though you are

evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"  
Don was thurifer at our first church in Maidenhead  
We used to call him "smokin' Joe"

If you ever wondered where the phrase  
"Holy Smoke" comes from  
Don was the man to ask

He swung that thurible so high it nearly looped the loop  
And some Sundays - the choir - of which I was a member  
Could hardly sing a note for coughing  
as the smoke from Don's incense filled the chancel

when the time for the sermon came  
Don would take his place at the end of the choir stalls  
Often next to me

I'll always remember one Sunday morning  
as Fr Michael began his sermon by reminding us  
That we're all sinners  
Don muttered, not in a terribly discreet manner  
"You speak for yourself matey!"

I can't help wondering, how many people are like Don  
Suffering under the illusion that they are without sin

I've always understood what Fr Michael meant  
That compared with the glory and magnificence of God  
Were are all stained, defiled, impure and unworthy sinners

Alas - over the years I've met many people  
like dear old Don - who just don't get it

I think, this is what Paul meant when he wrote  
<sup>8</sup> See to it that no one takes you captive  
through hollow and deceptive philosophy,  
which depends on human tradition  
and the elemental spiritual forces of this world  
rather than on Christ.

The elemental spiritual forces would have us saying  
"Speak for yourself matey"  
or  
"I'm alright Jack, it's the rest of the world what's to blame!"

The elemental spiritual forces  
Would much rather have us believe  
That we are the *victims* of society  
Rather than the perpetrators of any crime against the Lord  
or against our fellow human beings

But listen folks  
Read my lips - and please don't shoot the messenger  
WE ARE ALL SINNERS!

If that offends you – then I'm sorry  
this next bit's going to offend you even more  
because if you're offended by being told you're a sinner  
then you simply haven't fully grasped  
the whole point of our Gospel

in fact – I'd go so far as to say  
that you're wasting your time being in church this morning  
as Paul puts it  
you're still captive of hollow and deceptive philosophy

like if you don't realise you're drowning  
you wouldn't appreciate the lifejacket being thrown at you

or the first step of recovery for an alcoholic  
realising and admitting that you have a drink problem.  
Until we understand – and are ready to accept and admit  
that we are all sinners before God  
we're just going through the motions here

and at this point it's tempting to say  
"It's not your fault"  
But I'm definitely not going *there* this morning!

We live in a blameless society  
The hollow and deceptive philosophy of our time  
shamelessly spread by no-win-no-fee lawyers  
Is that we are all victims

Like Kenneth Williams, we cry  
"oh infamy, infamy, they've all got it in for me!"

And most of us would never imagine  
That we could ever have possibly  
caused pain or injury to another person

well think again my friends – think again!

You may not even know it  
But I can almost guarantee  
That somewhere in your life  
You will have said or done something to someone  
Which had a major influence on the rest of their life

Let me give you an example

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
of the untimely death of Karen Carpenter

in my humble opinion  
one of the finest female vocalists  
in the history of pop music

The Carpenters enjoyed twelve top 10 singles  
3 at No. 1 and five at No. 2  
Sales of Carpenters' albums and singles to date  
total more than 100 million

yet despite all this fame and fortune  
Karen Carpenter spent half her life  
suffering from anorexia and self-loathing

until after years of fasting and feasting to extremes  
at the tender age of 33  
Karen's heart could take no more

The world was robbed of a brilliant talent  
and the Carpenter family of a beautiful sister & daughter

They say people who suffer from this disease  
Are usually filled with self-doubt and insecurity from day 1

But her brother Richard argues to this day  
That the one, single event that sparked it all off  
Was when a music critic,  
who thought he was being witty  
Introduced the act as  
"The highly talented Richard Carpenter  
And his chubby little sister"

One, simple, throw-away line, which destroyed a life

Or another example  
With equally devastating but even more instant effect

Last year, when The Princess of Cambridge  
was admitted into hospital with morning sickness  
a childish prank by two Australian DJs  
caused a nurse in that hospital to take her own life

what makes this worse –  
in the fallout following that tragedy  
would you believe  
one of the DJs is now suing the radio station  
for making her do such a terrible thing

we are all victims you see!

Now at this point – I want to pause  
To ask you please, to be totally honest with yourself

And ask the question  
might I ever – knowing or unknowing  
Said or done anything,  
that may have had a permanent influence on someone's life

if you find your ego saying  
"ah yes but they hurt me first"  
or  
"ah yes but someone had to tell them"  
tell your ego to shut up!

I mean it  
This sermon – this whole exercise – is vital  
Vital to this church, vital to you  
This is – quite literally - a matter of life or death

So I repeat the question  
Have you – knowing or unknowing  
Said or done anything,  
that may have had a permanent influence on someone's life

most of us – I dare say ALL of us  
have had it done to us at some time or another  
"You're a waste of space boy!"  
"Eales – you will never achieve anything worthwhile"

Forget them – let them go  
It's time we all grew up – and stopped being victims

and start thinking instead about The One  
who deliberately made Himself a victim  
so that you and I – the real villains – could be forgiven

I know - a little bit of ego is still whinging in there  
"yeah but what about me? They hurt me!"

Well?  
Did you manage to remember a time  
when you offended anyone?  
Of course you didn't

And the chances of that person  
remembering the exact moment when they hurt you  
are just as remote

so why do we hold on to that pain?  
Why do we let it poison us?

Joyce Meyer says  
If someone gave you a burning hot plate  
Would you hold on to it – or drop it?

Let's turn now to this morning's gospel reading  
Because the answer is right here in the middle of it

When Jesus taught us how to pray  
He gave us three lines  
Oh yes – I can count – three lines

"give us our daily bread"  
"Forgive us our sins *as we forgive*"  
"lead us not into temptation"

Three lines – the rest is filling  
You have the address in the beginning  
"our Father in heaven"  
Then a little bit of praise  
"hallowed be your name"

And some more praise at the end  
"for the kingdom, the power and glory are Yours" etc

In the middle – three lines  
"give us our daily bread"  
"Forgive us our sins as we forgive"  
"lead us not into temptation"

So what is the central line in the Lord's Prayer?  
What lies slap-bang in the middle?  
What is at the centre of everything He has taught us?  
FORGIVENESS

THIS is the essence of the Gospel  
This is why we call this Good News

Our God  
Our very own creator  
Has seen with His own eyes what tears us apart

He has seen first hand the dis-ease that ruins us  
He has personally experienced the cancer that rots inside us  
It's called un-forgiveness

And He has gone to hell and back to wipe the slate clean

In the book of life  
Your criminal record has a great big stamp right across it  
Saying "forgiven"  
Pardoned, deleted, struck from the records  
All debts paid in full

PAUSE

So why do you all look so miserable?

SMILE

I'm forgiven!

I was going to hell

I was condemned to damnation

I was a lost cause

Then Jesus went to the cross

And took all the punishment for me

Now I'm going to heaven!

We're all going to heaven – PRAISE THE LORD!!!

SMILE AGAIN!

Now seriously,

If someone ruined your life many years ago

And you just cannot forgive them

PLEASE – come and see me

If it's too embarrassing or painful

to come up after the service

please phone me or drop me a line

but hear this – read my lips again

GOD DOES NOT WANT YOU

TO REMAIN IN PAIN ONE MINUTE LONGER

If you're one of those people who says

"I'll forgive but I can never forget"

The job's only half done

If you come to church every Sunday

Sing hymns, say prayers and go home sad again

Then I'm not doing my job right

Jesus said

"I have come that you may have life – in abundance!"

It is not God's will for us to be miserable

And the simple answer to anyone bearing a grudge

Or harbouring contempt

or pain

or resentment of any kind is this

WE'RE ALL SINNERS

The problem is

we only remember when we're on the receiving end

but as W.D.Campbell so eloquently put it

when asked to summarise the message of the gospel

**"We're all bastards, but God loves us anyway."**

When I put my hand on my heart  
And I'm totally honest with myself  
I can count numerous occasions  
when my careless tongue has caused someone pain

that's why Jesus went to Calvary  
to pardon me

and He has a message for you all this morning  
"Freely have you received – freely give"

Not wonga (ooh sorry – mustn't say that word)  
I'm not after your money this morning

Jesus is talking about your forgiveness  
You've received it from Him  
It's about time you passed it on

"Forgive us our sins *as we forgive* those who sin against us"

And the moment you do that  
The moment you truly let go  
Is the moment you will know that peace  
Which **hollow and deceptive philosophy** cannot give

Another quote from Joyce Meyer  
"To stubbornly not forgive someone  
Is like taking poison and hoping they die"

It's you it's killing – not them  
They forgot years ago  
Probably seconds after they said it  
and they've got on with their lives

stop dragging the baggage  
dump it at the foot of the cross  
and start living – today

may we pray...