

You shall not Murder;

Get in touch with your feelings -

May the Force be with you -

And have a nice day.

A Sermon for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity 2014

Collect:

OGOD, who hast prepared for those who love thee such good things as pass man's understanding; Pour into our hearts such love toward thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen.

The Epistle is written in the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans beginning at the 3rd verse.

Romans 6: 3-11

³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.

⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin.

⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Here ended the Epistle

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as written in the 6th Chapter of St Luke beginning at the 36th verse ...

Glory to you O Lord

Matthew 5: 20-26

²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

²¹You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, “You shall not murder”; and “whoever murders shall be liable to judgement.”

²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, “You fool”, you will be liable to the hell of fire.

²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you,

²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

²⁵Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison.

²⁶Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

This is the gospel of our Lord

Their ancestry goes back almost 4,000 years to the Biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Their forefathers were gathered from the twelve tribes of Israel

In all that time
they have be enslaved - persecuted and vilified

And of all the many things that might be said of them
and as diverse the Jewish nation might be

it is their faith and sense of **community**
and togetherness and devotedness
that binds them together
and sets them apart from just about every other group of
people I can think of
[Mackem's and Geordies apart]

And when I hear the things Jesus talked about in this morning's Gospel,
I am reminded that;

To be human is to live in **community**,
[and as Jesus often implied]
community-living demands of us -
that we live by a certain set of ground rules

Move;

Communal living was of course a big deal in the 60's and 70's

that [and flower power] were all part-and-parcel of making the world
a more peaceable [harmonious - better place] to live

In the event
that ideal seems to have run its course
although its legacy lives on in unexpected ways;

"May the Force be with you."

"If it feels good, do it."

"Have a nice day."

superficial – emotional psychobabble to some
but harmless - sincere - well-meaning to others:

"Make love – not war"

"Get in touch with your feelings."

Shift;

Now I wonder what Jesus might have said to all that

If I were a betting man I imagine something like;

“Get in touch with your feelings”

might *[in some ways]* have actually struck a chord with him

Indeed to

“Get in touch with your feelings”

is *[in some ways]* at the crux of what Matthew is telling us this morning *[I suggest]*

Think of it like this;

Is not reflexive impulse hard-wired *[or pre-programmed]*
into our basic psyche?

that most of us spontaneously succumb to emotions
that we neither acknowledge or understand?

and should it not be
that we should aspire *[particularly as mature Christians]*
to understand *[to know]*
what it is we are feeling
prior to jumping in with both feet *[as is my wont]*

Jesus calls us into the hard emotional task of growing up,
He calls us to recognise what we really feel
and He calls us to act *[to respond]* accordingly.

And I say all this with consummate authority because

[because] it happens my other name is **the Revd Bungle**

I know what it is to mess-up *[I've paid the price on so many occasions]*

I know what it is to be out of touch with the truth

I know what it is to bash-on
to suppress my feelings and soldier on in spite of them
I do it time and time again

And the price we pay for being out of touch with our feelings
is to behave in ways that
isolate and estrange us from others

When Jesus delivered His **Sermon on the Mount**

he alluded to the fact that
our predisposition is so often towards
venting our spleen without second thought

In polite society it happens that's a bit of a **no-no**
so in its place
we express anger
through different kinds of behaviours and attitudes:

.... we become distant,
.... sarcastic,
.... irritated,
..... or sceptical

actions *[and responses]* that by any other definition point toward - **Anger**

Jesus tells us in no uncertain manor;

*“[that] if anyone is angry with their brother
they will be subject to judgment....”*

He condemns anger
just as he condemns murder

.... not that he's suggesting anger is the same thing as murder.
[.... that would be ridiculous]
but in his teaching
both anger and murder are equally unacceptable.

Now I imagine there are very few times in life *[if at all]*
that we have become so angry with someone
that we have harboured murderous intent.

Anger maybe,
but murder almost never.

In our world
the desire for murder rarely *[if ever]* arises.

But anger is another thing
and this is the challenge Jesus puts before us;

He asks if we are we carrying bitterness and resentment

He asks if we remain angry or

.... [or]

have we learnt to forgive

Move;

This week brings with it news of events of tragic proportions

.... events that they seem almost impossible to forgive

We've witnessed the repatriation of those who

fell to the fighting fields from Flight MH17

.... and we feel the pain of those who mourn

[and we share their anger that this could happen to innocent families and friends and children]

We share the grief of those blameless Palestinians caught up in the conflict in Gaza

.... and we sympathise *[perhaps]* with those who tweeted the question;

".... if I lived in Gaza would I fire a rocket? – probably yes"

How can we forgive *[we might ask ourselves]*?

Yet remarkably

it seems that people in those situations
often demonstrate a profound ability to forgive

.... although it's in our disposition
to choose to ignore the meeting this week
between the parents of one young murdered Jew
and those of a murdered Palestinian ...

Too often –
many of us foster our resentments
and never learn to forgive

.... and we are not alone in that

I've mentioned to you before
that one of the saddest parts of my ministry
[and one I was totally unprepared for]
is where I hear stories of unresolved of anger and bitterness
going all the way to the grave
.... it happens *[would you believe]* all too often

.... and it could be so different if we play by the ground rules
Jesus set before us

Anger and bitterness breaks our fellowship with one another;
.... and anger and bitterness breaks our fellowship with God.

We cannot consider ourselves as people of God
if we are also people of anger.

Jesus emphasises this point by giving an absurd exaggeration as an example:

.... if you're making your offering of a goat,
.... a lamb,
.... a pigeon,
at the Temple altar in Jerusalem

and you realize that you have unresolved enmity with someone
else at home,
leave your animal to wander around the Temple courtyard
and go home—
perhaps to Galilee, [*far in the north*]

be reconciled to the other person,
and then come back and make your offering,

Reconciliation with our neighbour
must take priority over our worship
[I think from time-to-time we all need reminded of that]

leave your gift at the altar
and make peace with your brother first.

Jews at significant times in their lives
would journey to Jerusalem to sacrifice at the altar.

It would have been one of the highlights of their life to complete this religious duty.

But Jesus says something else has greater priority.

.... we must examine our lives and rid ourselves of anger

.... this duty takes precedence over our worship of God.

But there's another way of understanding this teaching.

This teaching about purging ourselves of anger
is just one side of the coin

on the other is Jesus commandment

".... that we should love one another."

These are to be the qualities of ***the people of God,***

.... these are His ground rules ...

.... **not** to be people who foster anger and resentment
.... but rather people who exemplify love

love for one another
and love for the world.

Of course, it's easy to love when we're loved in return.

But Jesus calls us to the harder task of loving
when there is no guarantee of a positive response

.... He asks us to go beyond that *[by a mile]*....

His command is to love our enemies.

Application:

So these are the stark choices we are presented with today
and it simply boils down to this;

it's a choice between anger and love

.... it's so tempting to show anger and bitterness

.... it's so much harder to love and be faithful in love.

Yet this is the character of His new creation

.... this is how Jesus sees his role in putting this world right again.

So which camp *[which commune]*
would you see yourselves being part of; –

.... the one of anger?

.... or the one of *[unconditional]* love?

Put like *[you would imagine]* it's a no-brainer

But if we want to be members of this community of love
then we must take on those qualities
and as we do that
we prepare for the day

when God's restored community will be fulfilled.

As I just said [*As I just said;*]

*Jesus calls us into the hard emotional work of growing up,
knowing what we really feel,
and acting accordingly.*

We are not alone in this process.

We have each other as companions on this lifelong journey.

It won't be easy

but it will mean

it will mean

we are who God means us to be.

So forget about being angry and as mad as hell – simple **LOVE.....**

“ Love one another as I have loved you” [he said]

Get in touch with your feelings -

.... May the Force be with you -

.... And have a nice day.

Amen