

Matthew 9:35-10:8; Exodus 19:2-8a; Romans 5:1-8
1st Sunday after Trinity, 18th June 2017
8 & 10 am (3rd Sunday All-Age)

Help us, O God, to hear your Word with attention and understanding; and so write its message on our hearts that its power may be manifest in our lives, for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Exodus, we hear of Moses and his group of escaped slaves in the awesome desert of Sinai. The utterly arid terrain, waterless sand and massive, towering rocks, devoid of any trace of earth or vegetation, themselves speak of the majesty of God. Here, Israel is being formed, into a reverential people, a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation.

How is this relevant for us today? You could argue that much of life, is similarly, a rather arid situation, bombarded as we are with rampant commercialism via the media or online, whose billionaire magnate owners often have their own agendas to promote, and where the well-being of ordinary folk is not a particularly high priority.

We see widening division and restlessness in society, with many believing that, for instance, the recent horrendous Grenfell Tower fire is just another example of how the voice of the under-privileged is ignored. What with tragedy like this, and a spate of horrendous terrorist attacks, even HMQ has spoken of a 'sombre national mood'.

You could even argue that, in some respects and especially for city people, it's harder for us today to encounter the majesty of God, and to be transformed by it. All around and

almost everywhere we look, we see the works of human beings, designed, engineered and created to cater for what is believed to be are our prime physical & material needs, with little, if any, regard for how we are thinking or feeling.

We have only to look at national figures for our young people today to see significant rates of anxiety, depression and stress-related behavioural problems; but adults are no different, with tens of millions of work days lost owing to the same factors, and at enormous cost to society (sources: Nuffield Trust, hse.gov.uk., etc.).

So, despite all our human achievement, are we a happy people? It seems not, and our neighbours both near and far don't seem very happy either. The need therefore for us to find answers to fundamental questions about what it is that improves well-being are more important today than ever.

But we already know that people who regularly attend religious services enjoy a boost in feelings of peace and contentment, as well as lower mortality rates. Part of this may be because of increased social networking and being with like-minded people, but research shows that regular and frequent religious attendance brings about greater resilience, lower stress levels, and increased tranquillity.

Why is this? Well, as Christians we just have to listen to St. Paul for instance, '[since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ](#)'. In acknowledging the debt of grace we have to God thru' Christ, we can in prayer place all our worries & concerns at

his feet and ask for his help and support – a stress-buster if ever there was one! It's only if we can't or won't do this, thinking that we must always sort everything out ourselves, that we can come unstuck, and fail even to see what good can arise from troubles.

St. Paul again, 'suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.'

Fathers care for their children, don't you Dads. St. Joseph even cared for someone else's child. Jesus no doubt felt some of the paternal instinct of God the Father, in the same way as a good shepherd cares for his flock. He was struck by the impoverishment of the people in 1st c. Palestine and had feelings of compassion for them in their harassment and helplessness, just as we should have pity on all those who labour on without any spiritual guidance, direction or healing in life today.

Matthew's gospel is particularly orientated to a community of Christians drawn from Judaism, hence the instruction to keep clear of Gentiles, but this flies in the face of so much elsewhere in the gospels (Mark 7.25-30) and even later in Matthew (15:21-28), where we know Christ had vital encounters with Samaritans (Luke 10:29-37) and Syro-Phoenicians (John 4.9), not to mention the gentile centurion who confessed Jesus as the Son of God at his crucifixion (Mark 15:39).

So, far from any feelings of exclusion, complacency or self-righteousness, the fact that we have received so much from God without payment, should drive and inspire us to give even more than we think we can, to whoever is in need and however we can. God, the Holy Trinity, living as a mutually interdependent loving three-in-one, is our exemplar for an eternal, unlimited, mutual and unreasonably generous hospitality.

'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few', there are more people alive in the world today than ever before. We are part of those people, they are our neighbours, we are inextricably involved with them, whether we like it or not. It is our Christian duty to give of ourselves with joy, even to our enemies and beyond even the limits of reason if necessary, to help transform lives and shape our community, by loving God first and our neighbours as ourselves, all of whom God has made.

We know we are known and loved by God because Christ came to tell us. This knowledge, that brings meaning to our lives, that we are God's creation, chosen, named, loved, forgiven, invited into an ever-closer relationship with the one who made us, and urged towards the finest fruition we can manage, can bring us, even in this day and age, the fullest kind of peace to be imagined.

Matthew 9:35-10:8

The Harvest Is Great, the Labourers Few - 35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. 36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; 38 therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

The Twelve Apostles - 10 Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. 2 These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

The Mission of the Twelve - 5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6 but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." 8 Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.'

Exodus 19:2-8a

2 They had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. 3 Then Moses went up to God; the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites: 4 You

have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. 5 Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, 6 but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.'

7 So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the Lord had commanded him. 8 The people all answered as one: 'Everything that the Lord has spoken we will do.' Moses reported the words of the people to the Lord.

Romans 5:1-8

Results of Justification

5 Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. 8 But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.