

SERMON: 2018/03/07 (Wednesday in the 3rd Week of Lent, Year B) - Matthew 5:17-19_BTR

I'd like to pose you a question:

Why do Christians go to Church on Sunday? [Pause.]

Now, there's a number of ways in which you might interpret my meaning:

Firstly, you might wonder if what I intend to ask is, "Why do Christians go to Church on *that* day of the week as opposed to any other?"

Why not, for example, on Saturday - as the Jews do?"

They're our spiritual forebears after all - the foundation on which - *from* which - Christ has wooed His "bride" and offers the world a glimpse of the Kingdom that is to come.

So, why not imitate them? (as the Adventists do).

And that's an interesting inquiry.

Particularly on *this* day, March 7th, when, in 321 AD, the (Roman) "Caesar," Constantine *the first*, decreed that the *dies Solis Invicti* - that is, the *seventh* day, would be set aside for those of His subjects who believed Jesus is the Messiah to attend worship (of Him).

This was an extraordinary act of religious supersessionism, for that was the day when, traditionally, citizens of the empire would make sacrifice to that golden celestial orb on which, as an agrarian society, their livelihoods inextricably depended.

But this *bold*, new policy stopped all that.

It implied, without a shadow of a doubt, that it is not Apollo we should thank for sunshine, but the one true God who placed all the planetary bodies in the sky and fixed their courses. [Gen. 1:14-18]

And yet, perhaps my question as to why Christians go to Church on Sunday concerns the fact of their going at all.

And of course, fewer and fewer do.

We are facing a crisis!

And it is time to wake up to this fact:

Our young people are deserting us, and once their habit (of attending a place like this) is broken, statistically, most 'never return'. [n.1]

But why should they?

It's all grace isn't it?

[Pause.]

Yes.

It certainly is.

Including the Almighty's provision of "*The Law*" on Mount Sinai (and 'perfected' by the example of Christ [Heb. 12:2]), which isn't supposed to increase the burden of this life, but (rather) to *lift(!)* the people of God out of the complicated webs that we spin for ourselves:

Sinfulness - persistent selfishness - is its own curse, and it encumbers us with shameful debts that we cannot *fully* resolve.

The penalty, however, has been paid - by Christ on the cross.

I know that you know that.

And by baptism we die with Him.

And then emerge, *phoenix*-like, "children of God."

That's what we are.

That's what the Bible calls us. [e.g. Jn. 1:12]

"Children of God."

"*Infants* of God."

Babies.

(This applies to even the most mature among us today.)

So, how will they learn to walk (through the 'narrow' door of righteousness [Lk. 13:24; see also Mt. 7:14], beyond which lies that peaceful, eternal shore [Rev. 15:2])?

Not without the Church and her Scripture, and not without the guidance and fellowship that she offers.

And *we*, we're withholding this - either by apathy or obstinance, fearfulness *or just poor theology* - from the generations coming after us.

From the generations (that *we* produced) who have been under-represented here at this Meditation series.

We are, in other words, by our practices and attitudes, those very men and women that Jesus condemns for placing 'stumbling blocks' before "little ones." [See: Mt. 18:6]

You and me.

But the "*Good News*" - *the "Good News"(!)* - is, that - whilst we draw breath - we've still time to repent.

(And isn't that what the ecclesial season is all about? Repentance. A "fresh" start?)

That God waits for us all, as the prodigal son's father waited; arms outstretched (ready to embrace); a grin on His face; excitement in His eyes.

Run to Him! *Run to Him*, brothers and sisters this Lent.

Let's pray: ... Amen.

Footnotes:

1. See: Stetzer, Ed (1st of December 2014), 'The Real Reasons Young Adults Drop Out of Church', *Christianity Today*, available at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/december/real-reasons-young-adults-drop-out-of-church.html> (accessed March 7, 2018).