

## Sermon: 2021/01/17 (2nd Sunday after the Epiphany, Year B) - 1 Samuel 3:1-20; Psalm 139:1-5,12-17; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51\_BTR

[Invite children to the front]

### Kids' Talk: God Calls Us to Call

[Bucket]

Imagine you're walking by a house, *and it's on fire*. Oh oh!

Fortunately, near by is a river.

And you've a bucket.

So, do you run back and forth yourself, trying to "fight" the fire alone?

Or, do you get some friends, and make a "chain," passing the bucket between you, one from the other.

*That's a much* better method: [act this scenario out with the kids and the bucket].

And a good analogy for why God calls on us to share our love for Jesus and His Church:

The world, you see, is like the house of fire - *in trouble*; a mess.

And what it needs is God.

(He's the river.)

And so God made Himself known long ago to special people like, we see - in our Old Testament reading this morning, Samuel.

And Samuel shared God with the people of Israel. [Pass the bucket again.]

Who shared it with Jesus,

who shared it with Philip,

who shared it with Nathanael,

who shared it with many others,

who shared it with us!

I remember - *and am very grateful* - to the people who shared their love for God with me: there was "Pete" and "Andreas."

My mum and dad...

And we mustn't break the "chain."

Let's pray:

Lord God, ..., in Jesus' name, amen.

### 'All Things Are Lawful For Me': Jesus and the Wright Brothers

'All things are lawful for me', Paul told the Corinthian Christians (in his first letter).  
'All things'.

Well, you don't need to be a first century historian or an expert about the ancient Mediterranean context to know that that (claim) - strictly speaking - doesn't seem likely - Not. At. All.

Murder?

Stealing?

Sexual assault?

It seems pretty safe to assume that if he had committed any of these crimes, which everywhere and at every time have been regarded as reprehensible by civilised societies, that Paul would have found that he *wasn't* immune from prosecution.

That he was *not* like the dreadful dictator of some stricken Global South state: too powerful to be policed;

too vicious and vile that no one would bring charges for fear of being "disappeared."

Nor was he so rich as to be able to "buy off" judges or whatever.

No, Paul couldn't have meant these things, so...what *did* he mean?

Paul was talking about *the Law; Torah*:

the Mosaic ordinances and statutes that the people of Israel had strived to abide by since God descended onto the (mountain) peak at Sinai, in a terrifying cloud of smoke and bright flame, and handed His people the Stone Tablets.

Yet Paul, a Pharisee, so a life-long devotee of the Law, told his audience (in middle Greece) that he was free from having to keep *that*.

*All* that accumulated wisdom;

*all* those prohibitions and proclamations...

Cherished for more than a thousand years.

Taught in innumerable synagogues, to countless generations of circumcised boys.

Committed to "heart," recited and memorised by millions of Jews in the hope that, if they could just *only* perform the right sacrifices with enough frequency, and attend enough of the right festivals, and avoid the the wrong sorts of people, and abstain from the wrong sorts of foods... then maybe, just maybe, God might bless them, and preserve them, perhaps, for new life in a righteous kingdom ruled by the "Messiah."

And the truth was that they had applied themselves to a system which was *exhausting*.

Like walking a tight-rope over a deep chasm:

don't fall "this" way or don't topple "that"...

And at least *twice* in His (earthly) ministry, Jesus acknowledged The Law was a 'heavy burden': [Mt. 11:28 & 23:4].

One that *many* people - His ancestors, relatives and friends - had failed to carry...

*But not any longer me(!)*, crowed Paul.

So, how come?

How could he honestly say: 'All things are lawful for me'?

After all, the 'things' he was referring to, as I indicated a moment ago, were God-given 'things'.

Quite literally.

And *nowhere* in the Old Testament did it say anything about them being "optional"; merely a suggestion.

And indeed, "jump forward" three (short) chapters in today's epistle and you'll find Paul admitting that 'I am *not* free from God's law': [1 Cor. 9:21].

Which indicated, in fact, that Paul *actually* considered it still binding.

But something *had* obviously changed in his regard for The Law; in His understanding - something *big*.

Like an earthquake had occurred in a familiar landscape:

the recognisable landmarks are all still there in front of you, but now they stand at awkward angles and great ruptures criss-cross the ground, making footing unsure.

What was this "earthquake"?

The Cross.

The Law hadn't - *hasn't* - been rescinded, (as I noted Paul later acknowledges).

God hadn't *and hasn't* withdrawn it, "torn" it up.

Put it through the heavenly shredder.

But now Jesus had fulfilled it.

He had fulfilled it *perfectly*.

And He was the first and only one to do so.

It was His *greatest* miracle.

And now others - you and me, those Corinthian Christians - might "build" on Jesus' singular achievement - that foundation - by putting their truth in that fact: *this* is what we mean (in the Church) when we say "*have faith*."

We're saved not by keeping the Law but by becoming - as the Apostle puts it today - '*members*' in Christ - (chapter six), verse fifteen.

You know, it was like humanity's efforts of learning to fly.

Many attempted it for many years.

Many designed and trialed strange and bizarre machines.

I'm sure you'll have seen black and white footage of these contraptions - falling from cliff-tops; flopping ungainly into the water below.

Or bouncing and skipping across a field, and then the wheels spinning off into the crowd, or the "pilot" turning his ankle and collapsing in agony as the "plane" - and I use the term only for the sake of politeness - crumbles on top of him.

Or men in flat-caps peddling furiously and getting nowhere.

Inventions with cumbersome, mechanical, flapping wings that sat as if glued to the ground, merely fanning a pleasant breeze at bemused onlookers.

And then the Wright brothers came along, with an instinct for how to correctly balance the various relevant physical forces and...

*Boom!*

We were off.

Spitfire, Concorde, space shuttle, etcetera, etcetera.

Well, what the Wright brothers were to flight, Jesus was to The Law.

He understood *exactly* what it would take.

Only He had the right "design."

And the rest of us, then, can now get on and off airplanes without giving the science any thought whatsoever.

We take it for granted.

Because underlying every airplane is basically the *same* model, built along the *same* principles.

It's not as if Lockheed or Boeing must repeat the long, frustrating process of "misfires" over and over again, for every plane that rolls off the "production-line."

There's no need for them to look back at Leonardo da Vinci's speculative sketches.

And there's no *need* for us to adopt the lifestyle and customs of Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and so forth.

*And yet*, a paradigm is established in those texts - they point us to something of *supreme* importance, which is an expectation that we will seek to 'glorify God' for what He has done.

I'm referring here to the closing remarks of today's epistle.

Paul, in this passage, was speaking in particular of sex and how we use our bodies.

Bodies that, if you're a *confessing* Christian, have been saved for an eternal existence with Jesus.

And the principle the Apostle preaches is that *though* you and I don't *require* the Law to be saved, *salvation*, ultimately, does depend on our response to the gift we've been given:

by our "fruit," the Savior taught, He would know who *really* appreciated His sacrifice.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, amen.