

## Come To Me, Says Our God

Texts: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49,59-67

Romans 7:15-25 (Series A, 3rd Sunday after Pentecost) Ps 45:10-17

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Prayer:

***I know that good does not live in me – that is, in my human nature. For even though the desire to do good is in me, I am not able to do it. ... What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death? Thanks be to our God, who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ! Romans 7:18, 24,25***

### Putting out the Garbage

I would like you to picture a couple living in a well to do neighbourhood. There is nothing unusual about them and their behaviour apart from one thing - they hoard their garbage. The garbage truck comes past their place once every two weeks, but it never collects anything in front of their house.

They could quite easily fill up two rubbish bins with their bi-weekly's rubbish and put it out by the curb on Thursday mornings, but they never bothered to do so. They just stored all of their rubbish in their house.

It was all done rather systematically. Empty bottles and jars, some of them broken, empty cans, were thrown out into the garage. As for the newspapers, magazines they were piled up to the ceiling, a constant fire hazard. The old scraps of food and leftovers were put away in cupboards, where they rotted and stank.

The rooms of the house were cluttered with containers and plastic bags and boxes, so that there was little room for anything else. The furniture, what you could see of it was all dusty, the walls grassy, the curtains however were new and fresh looking but were constantly closed.

There was a terrible smell – and unpleasant. But what was so amazing was that from *the outside* you would never have guessed that this couple hoarded all their rubbish. They kept the outside of the house *painted and clean*.

The wife would spend hours out in the garden and kept it neat and tidy with flowers growing in the garden beds, the bushes were trimmed. The couple always neatly dressed and people talked about what nice neighbours they were. The neighbours often commented to each other how nice it is to have them as neighbours.

People never suspected that the inside was a sharp contrast to the outside. It's hard to say why this couple let this happen. But it seems they were too proud to admit to anyone that they produced garbage.

They believed that if they exposed their garbage to where everyone could see it, people might think badly of them and refuse to associate with them. And the longer they left the garbage in the house, the bigger the pile of rubbish grew, and the more they thought they had to keep up their *no-rubbish image*, the harder it became.

The more garbage they were stuck with, the more they became fearful that people would think badly of them. So, they never put it out. And people never guessed what they had inside. The only obstacle was that they could never invite anyone home.

And so, in spite of keeping up appearances they lived lonely lives. You might have concluded that this story is a little bit far fetched. It is hard to imagine that anyone would choose to live like that. And yet it does happen in real life.

Not only does it happen we do hear of people hoarding up garbage in their homes and living amongst the cockroaches and flies. It also happens that people pile it garbage in their *hearts* like a hidden treasure.

In fact, I would be so bold as to claim that we all store up garbage inside where no one else can see it. Some of us hoard the broken bottles and sharp tins of *anger* and *bitterness*, *ill feeling* and *resentment* deep in our minds where they cut deeply and hurt not only other people but also ourselves.

Others stowed away *hatred, envy, rivalry* and *bundles of greed and jealousy* in the ceilings of their souls where they readily catch fire and set the whole person on fire with all kinds of ill feeling toward other people.

Some of us lock away *our fears* and *our shame*, and *our guilt* over some weakness that we too readily give into, in the cupboards of our minds where they rot away and spread their foul infection of *hopelessness* and *despair*.

Still others, we clutter up our lives with *illusions, pretences* and make believe about ourselves. We hide the truth from our *own* eyes. We don't like the idea that everything is a mess on the inside.

We don't like it when we are shown that we have only been pretending that everything is all right when in reality we need a big clean up job. We don't like when the garbage in our lives is brought out into the open. We are like the couple in our opening story. We have all kinds of garbage hidden away inside.

Folks we are not alone in this: The Apostle Paul talks about the strong power that sin has in our hearts and lives, in his letter to the Romans. He doesn't beat about the bush or cover up the fact that sin is a very powerful force in him. As we listen to what Paul is saying, see if his experience is anything like yours.

He says: *"I am mortal, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do: for don't do what I would like to do, but instead I do what I hate. ... I know that good does not live in me – that is, in my human nature. For even though the desire to do good is in me, I am not able to do it. I don't do the good I want to do; instead, I do the evil that I don't want to do (Romans 7:14,18,19).*

Those are very strong words. Paul was an apostle of the Jesus. He knew everything there was to know about Jesus. He was baptized, was given a divine call to go and preach to every corner of the world, and tell the Good News of Jesus. In spite of every set back and trials Paul stayed faithful to his mission, and yet we hear him say here: *"I am mortal, sold as a slave to sin"* (Rom 7:14).

What Paul experienced is ours as well. Even though we regard ourselves as faithful Christians we are still addicted to sin, and by addiction I mean, there is nothing we can do to clean out the garbage of sin by ourselves.

Even though he knows what is right and desires to do right, he finds he is so drawn to sin that he can't help himself. This slavery hampers even destroys our relationship with other people.

It makes us feel guilty and ashamed of the garbage that we have stowed away in every nook and cranny of our hearts. We stow our garbage away inside and clutter up our souls, to the point when there is little room for anything else.

In fact, as long as the garbage stays there, it infects everything good that we do - it ruins our good deeds, destroys our good relationships. Just as garbage fouled up the home of that couple, the garbage of sin fouls up our lives.

Paul knew the power that there was no way that he could empty out all the garbage out of his life. He was a "slave under sin". Paul concludes: ... *What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death?* (Rom 7:24).

And even though he is a child of God, he still finds that his life is cluttered with all kinds garbage that doesn't belong to the Christian way of life. As he says, *"When I want to do good, evil is right there with me"* (7.21).

We might have every intention to live the new life in Christ and to avoid every kind of sin and evil. No sooner have we made this fine resolution, then comes reality, sin staring at us face to face. You know what I mean.

An argument flares up, angry words are spoken, we say things that hurt, we act as if Christ were of no consequence in our lives. We know what is the right thing, but there we go. To use Paul's words: *"I don't understand what I'm doing...When I want to do good, evil is right there with me."*

- Who will rescue me... who will rescue me from the guilt that the wrong doing in my life brings?
- Who will rescue me from hurt that comes from sin? Even those I love the most are hurt by my sin.
- Who will rescue me from myself?

Instead, Paul answers the question of who will rescue him by saying, *"Thanks be to God who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ!"* Paul doesn't see the fact that his life is filled with garbage as hopeless situation.

Paul focuses his attention on the victory that Christ has won for him. Listen to what he says: *"Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! .... there is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus..."*

It is only Jesus who can clean the garbage out of our lives. It is only Jesus who isn't put off by the horrible smells and the filth of sin. Jesus is not put off by what you and I may consider an *"unforgivable sin"*, he isn't put off by lives so out of control and out of tune with God's will. Jesus isn't put off by our failures.

And Paul knew that, and he wants us to come to that same realization and shout with relief – *"Thanks be to God – who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ!"* Jesus invites, Jesus brings out the best in us: "Come to Me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you" – (Matthew 11:28).

We love Him not only for his glory and his excellence and his presence, but also because he brings out in each every one of us the very best. He makes our lives radiate and sparkle-and we begin to become the beautiful persons God created us to be.

This is what it means to belong to him; to love him; to trust him with our heavy burdens; garbage and all, to rely on him for peace of soul, and to seek from him the refreshment of body and spirit we so desperately need and want.

Jesus invites us to put your heavy burden on His back and, simultaneously, He calls us to accept a new yoke and a new burden. Jesus' yoke fits. It is molded to human nature, and it is lined with love. Jesus' yoke is also shared. We never have to carry it alone. There is a wedding prayer which says,

***"Now our joys are doubled, because the happiness of one is the happiness of the other. Now our burdens are halved, since when we share them we divide the load."***

That is the message Jesus wants us to deliver in all our human relationships this morning. To deliver it credibly, we must be willing to put ourselves under the yoke of others-just as Jesus has placed himself under my yoke and yours. He will give us rest and peace.

I love this, St. Augustine said it beautifully: *"The thought of You stirs him so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises You, because You made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in You."*

By his death on the cross he cleans out all the garbage in our lives and gives us a clean new start, not just once or twice, but everyday. He invites us to the table of grace with Love. "Come to Me, all you who are weary and find life burdensome, and I will refresh you"

**"Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!"**

**Amen.**