

A burden light

9 7 17

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
increase and multiply on us your mercy:
that with you as our ruler and guide
we may pass through things temporal
that we lose not our hold on things eternal.

Our text this morning may be found in Matthew's gospel, chapter 11 and verse 28

**'Come unto me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens
and I will give you rest.'**

I can't remember how young I was when first I heard 'Desert Island Discs' with its creator and first presenter, Roy Plumley but I do remember as a boy at my East London Grammar School thinking what pieces of music I'd chose if I had the chance. And one I thought of then was the opening bars of Mozart's 40th symphony which first opened my ears to the delights of classical music.

Sadly, I can't invite you onto Radio 4 to talk about the music you love but I can invite you to take part in a new series for our church magazine: verses from the Bible which you love, verses that really speak to your heart, verses that give you comfort and encouragement to live the good life, the life that Christ is calling us to live so that we can truly be the people that he fully intends us to be.

And, of course, there is no prize for guessing that today's text from Matthew's gospel would be one of mine: 'Come unto me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest.'

So why would I choose it? Simply because it speaks to me of exactly where I am – of a life which has all the potential for exhaustion, for being weary, tired out, well knackered if you like the slang phrase in English to translate what the French might describe as 'complètement crevé' ou peut-être 'amorphe.'

So why is life so tiring? Well, for a start none of us are as young as we once were. The world news can make us uneasy with disasters, acts of terror, populist politicians redefining truth and all the uncertainty of BREXIT with the pound sterling devaluing.

But why is the verse of comfort, comforting? Because Jesus can see how tired we as people can be and calls us to come to him for rest. Well, context is everything and the situation here in Matthew which Jesus is addressing is the incredible demands placed on God-fearing Jews to keep all 613 commandments. You probably know the 10 Commandments off-by-heart that were given to God's Chosen People by Moses after a God-encounter on Mount Sinai. Well, in fact, the Torah has 613 positive and negative commandments and, for a righteous Jew, compliance with all of them in their many interpretations and applications was no mean feat. And so Jesus calls his fellow Jews to come and love God and be loved by God by following a rule of life that is fitting, that fits them like a well-made yoke would fit an ox. At the time of Jesus, the oxen pulling the ploughs that cut

the furrows in the fields and rendered the land ready for sowing had a wooden yoke that was made to fit each ox individually. Each yoke was bespoke, tailor-made and did not rub or chaff the animal's neck but fitted neatly. And that is the image that Jesus offers us – an appropriate, light-fitting rule of life by which we can live our lives.

And what is that rule ? Simply, the rule of love, of respect for God, respect for self, respect for neighbour and stranger alike. Simply, the key to what Jesus is offering us, '**rest for our souls**', is based on a notion of what is fitting for us, the idea God loves us and that we can love him by how we love others.

So my challenge to you is to share with me and others who read St Barts, our monthly church magazine, what verse or verses from the Bible have made a deep impression on your life. Be right then write !

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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G: Sermons 36 : A burden light

