

## Trinity 1 (Proper 4)

A sermon preached at Meadow Court Farm<sup>1</sup> in the parish of St Andrew Guernsey by the Rector, the Very Reverend Tim Barker, on 3 June 2018

*Readings: 2 Corinthians 4 verses 5-12 and Mark 2 verse 23 – 3 verse 6*

What does it mean to be holy?

Jesus' observance of the Sabbath had already been called into question. He had healed a man in a synagogue. This, with his eating with tax collectors, had led to hostility.

In the Old Testament, debate between plucking grain and intentional harvesting. This came up again when the disciples were observed absent-mindedly plucking grain. Jesus argues that human need is more important than legalistic observance.

Then – in the eyes of his opponents – adding insult to injury, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand. There is palpable tension in the air. Whilst the man was not in imminent danger of death, his life was impaired. He could not flourish and enjoy the Sabbath rest. Failing to do good, when the opportunity was right there in front of him, is, for Jesus, the equivalent of doing a significant wrong.

Jesus does not touch the man. He could not be accused of doing any work – at least in the minds of his opponents for whom the letter of the law was more important than the underlying moral and ethical principle. As the man stretched out his arm, he found that he had been healed.

The Pharisees could not argue. But they were angry. So angry that they had missed the point of the purpose of the law – and they could not see the wonder of God's gracious activity right in front of them.

St Paul picks up the theme in his second letter to the Corinthians. God's purpose is to let light shine in darkness. This has been a continuing theme since the creation of the world. If you have heard Haydn's oratorio, *Creation*, the climax is the great shout, 'And there was Light!'

God 'has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the fact of Jesus Christ.'

If we put up the shutters and resist God's light shining in our hearts, we cannot see that the glory of God is revealed, uniquely and wonderfully, in Jesus – just as the Pharisees could not see the glory of God shining in the wonderful words of mercy and grace that Jesus undertook immediately in front of them. There are, in the words of the proverb, none so blind as those who cannot see.

The Pharisees thought that they were holy. But they were so bogged down in detail that they could not see the big picture – in this case, the overwhelming glory of God.

We are flawed human beings, as Paul explains. But even we are able to help people to take down those shutters, and to help them to see the glorious light of the glory of God. And that is part of the purpose of today's activities. Enjoy!

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<sup>1</sup> The day of the parish summer fair