



**St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**Sunday, 19 June 2022 – Trinity 1**  
**Readings: Galatians 3: 23-end and St Luke 8: 26-39**  
**Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

**Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings ...**

On this Father's Day I imagine that my sermon illustration depicts an era that would have been familiar to our father's generation. I know that I have used Dad's Army as an illustration before but not this particular episode. Do you recall when the Walmington-on-Sea platoon were pitted against the East Gate Platoon? One of the tests of initiative was to fill barrels, set apart on higher ground, with feathers from a skip below. Mainwaring instructs his men to hurry carrying as many feathers as possible even stuffing their shirts and trousers but the process was slow and ineffectual. Eventually, Pike summons up his courage and says, "Captain Mainwaring, Captain Mainwaring, why don't we take the bins to the skip and then fill them up directly?" Mainwaring is about to say "You, stupid boy!" when he stops and thinks about what Pike has said then states, "Actually, that's not such a stupid idea!" Of course, then it's Mainwaring's idea but, having thought outside the box, they fill the bins in no time at all.

**Living outside the box**

That is exactly what St Paul in his letter to the Galatians is urging the early Christians to do, to think outside the box or, rather, the impersonal, rigid framework of the Judaic Law. The Law had squeezed out individual expression of faith risking over-zealous adherence leading to the extremism that he had once pursued. The Law should have provided edification, enlightenment and freedom to have a personal relationship with God. Instead, it was forcing a one-size-fits-all mentality on people and, as a result, the early Christians were imprisoned by their religion, rather than being freed by faith, as Christ had intended. To be free in matters of faith should have a domino effect. No longer should people be divided by legalistic restraints. There should be no distinction of slave or free; there should be no subservient partner in a marriage or, working relationship or, social position; male and female should be on an equal footing. Ethnic background should be irrelevant, whether Jew or Gentile, through Christ, all can worship God equally.

**Faith freedom or fear of faith?**

In the Gospel we saw how Jesus tried to instil this faith-freedom not only in his disciples but a broader spectrum of people. They had crossed the Sea of Galilee and arrived in the country of the Gerasenes. Immediately, as they step ashore, they are met by a man possessed by demons. The Law had made him an outcast from society but Jesus demonstrates that no one need be beyond healing and wholeness of body, mind and spirit.

He exorcises the demons and straightaway the man is in his right mind. The effect on the townspeople is poleaxing. Whereas they had coped with the demon possessed man by restraining him and banning him from society, on the outskirts of the town, the fear they feel when faced with a man who can dismiss demons, is beyond their comprehension. They cannot conceive of a divine power so liberating that instead of being drawn by their faith to God, they allow their fear to separate them. The only one who is now capable of being a living example to them, of freedom from fear by faith, is the man who had been the outcast. That is why Jesus instructs the man to remain in the town to minister to his own people.

### **Making faith personal**

I have always found that when learning new skills, if I can use my initiative, I am far more likely to apply that knowledge and use it effectively for life-long benefit. Jesus and Paul both urged the early Christians to trust faith and step out of the constraints of the Law and discover the wealth of freedom a personal relationship with God can give them. The question to ask ourselves is, 'Do we find our faith liberating or, constraining: and if so, why?

Amen.