

Truth be told, probably all of us could identify with the sentiments of St. Paul in the reading from Romans this morning. He says that he doesn't understand his own actions, that he finds himself doing the very thing that he hates, and the good that he wants to do, he cannot do. Sound familiar?

Think about your own life for a moment. What is it in your life that you just can't seem to get under control? Is it your temper? Is it your ability to follow through when you say that you will do something? Is it your inability to think of others and their needs? Are you eating too much or drinking more than is good for you and your family? Just take a moment to think about what your besetting sin is. What would life look like if you got whatever it is under control?

Well, the bad news is that you may never be able to get it under control, by yourself, that is. After struggling with his shortcomings, and making little or no progress, St. Paul cried out, "Wretched person that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" This brings us to the Good News. He answers his question by writing, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

"Christ not only died for us. He rose again to live in us". And that Beloved is our hope in being delivered from these besetting sins, these parts of our lives that, though we struggle with them, they often get worse instead of better. Christ came to live in us and through us and to displace whatever it is that is sucking the joy out of our lives.

He came to give us new life, an abundant life, a life characterized by compassion and love and joy to displace the old one of selfishness and

despair. God is in the transformation business, not the refurbishment business where our lives are concerned. That is why the butterfly is such a great symbol of new life in Christ. Forget about crawling around like a caterpillar, Beloved! You are a beautiful butterfly now! You have been remade in the image of Christ. You have been transformed, made new. You are no longer who you were. Be who you are now, in this Christ!

In our Gospel reading, Jesus is puzzling over the fact that so many are missing the boat spiritually. He said that they were like children sitting in the market places and calling to one another, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed and you did not mourn." In other words, when the children were saying, let's play wedding, the other children ignored them and when they said, "let's play funeral", again they were ignored. The other children would not respond. They refused to play.

Likewise, Jesus said, John came sort of playing funeral, with the bad news that people were trapped in their sins and needed to repent. Many refused to respond.

By contrast, "Jesus came playing wedding, eating and drinking, and invited the people to dance with God." Again many refused to respond.

It's like Jesus is saying, "What in the world do we have to do to get your attention?"

Jesus is saying clearly, "Y'all just don't get it, do you? I have come to fill that big God-shaped hole inside of you, and you don't believe that there is a hole, and if you believe that there is a hole, you are refusing to let your Creator fill it with the only thing that is going to fill it, and

that is the Holy Spirit Who is the member of the Godhead Who is coming to indwell you, IF and only IF you will say yes to God, that you want to be healed, made whole, transformed into the image and likeness of Jesus.

It may be that the only way to come to Jesus as an adult is in our brokenness and with our brokenness, that is, offering our brokenness to God. Children are different, Jesus says. They are open to the Kingdom in a way that we as adults need to be.

I suppose that if you didn't recognize a need for a bulldozer or a truck, you wouldn't be in the market for either of them. And if you don't recognize your brokenness, you won't be in the market for a Savior. It's sad, but I guess it's true.

Of course, our American Culture works against us, too. We are taught that we are supposed to be in control of everything, and that we are supposed to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and MAKE our lives work. When you have been taught that all of your life, it's pretty hard to think about turning your life over to a Savior to come and rescue you. So, some people are just going to grit it out to the very end. How tragic!

Episcopal priest Barbara Brown Taylor reminds us that God is all around us all of the time. She writes,

"People encounter God under shady oak trees, on riverbanks, at the tops of mountains, and in long stretches of barren wilderness. God shows up in whirlwinds, starry skies, burning bushes, and perfect strangers. When people want to know more about God, the Son of God tells them to pay attention to the lilies of the field and the birds of the

air, to women kneading bread and workers lining up for their pay. Whoever wrote this stuff believed that people could learn as much about the ways of God from paying attention to the world as they could from paying attention to scripture. What is true is what happens even if what happens is not always right. People can learn as much about the ways of God from business deals gone bad or sparrows falling to the ground as they can from reciting the books of the Bible in order. They can learn as much from a love affair or a wildflower as they can from knowing the Ten Commandments by heart.” –Barbara Brown Taylor in *An Altar in the World* (N.Y.: Harper Collins, 2009)

Those of us who have walked with Jesus for a while have noticed that life is still hard as the dickens with Him in our lives as our Lord. What must life be like without Him, if it’s this hard with Him?

We hear the point of today’s Gospel as Jesus says, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

There was a young missionary family who had only been in Africa for a few months when they were involved in a terrible car crash. The only survivor of this family of a husband, wife and three children was the husband.

After a time of grief, the husband stayed in Africa and continued his work. When someone asked him how he could possibly continue his work in the face of such tremendous personal loss, he said, “I’ll tell you how I do that. You see, I only shoulder the burdens long enough to take them to Jesus and I leave them at His feet. For I know that I as a human

being am not very strong and was not designed carry the heavy burdens that life dumps on my shoulders. So, I only shoulder them long enough to leave them at the feet of Jesus.

At some point, this young man had learned and embraced the secret, hadn't he? He had embraced the secret that we sing about in that children's song, Jesus Loves Me, particularly the line "I am weak but He is strong."

He had learned at some point what it meant to be yoked with the Savior and had learned from this Savior that though this young man had no control over the events of this world, even in death His young family was safe and sound in the Savior. Indeed, this young missionary had learned to come to Jesus with His burdens, and as promised, this young man had found rest for His soul.

Beloved, may we find the grace from God to keep on coming to Jesus with our burdens, knowing that in so doing, we too will find rest for our souls.