

4th Sunday after Trinity

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

²⁷ 'All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.' (Matthew 11:25-30)

I often wonder whether we make God too complicated. In recent years I've had the privilege of working with people who have felt a call to ministry and have embarked on a training course. When they come to see me they tell me of their journey of faith, their local churches and their life of prayer. Then, inevitably, they tell me of the demands of their course, how hard they're finding it to study theology. Academic theology seems to be poles apart from knowing God.

That seems to have been a problem in Jesus's time too. The study of the Torah was time consuming and complicated. Yet the people of God were meant to live their lives understanding the laws of their faith and applying them in all situations. If ever you've managed to read through the whole of the Book of Leviticus, you'll know that this isn't a trivial task. So it's not surprising that rabbis were known to refer to the yoke of the Torah. The study of the Torah was compared to the device which shackled a working animal to an appliance so that it could take the strain of moving the object. So the Torah was seen as something which bound people to God but which demanded hard work to make progress.

Then Jesus came along and said that it shouldn't be like that at all. He had come to show the love of God. Coming to know God wasn't about being demanding and placing a strain on people. It was about being able to set aside cares and worries and to know that dilemmas and problems could be placed into the hands of someone who can cope with anything and everything. Jesus came to bring people to the God who'd take away the weight from their shoulders and let them rest.

That really is the bottom line with God. We can hand over everything and anything that feels too much for us, whether it's writing theological essays or coping with the Covid-19 crisis. I think many of us may be feeling weary these days. As someone said to me the other day, 'It's strange how tiring not being able to do things can be.' This gospel passage is the invitation we need at this time. It's an invitation to trust in God's love.

The words of verse 28 are among those known as 'the comfortable words' from their use in the Book of Common Prayer. As we try to cope with all life throws at us, especially at this time, we can take comfort in the teaching which Jesus gave. Let us answer his invitation and let God take the strain so that we can take our rest. Amen