

Sermon – Trinity Sunday – 30 May 2021 (Church Centre)

John 3:1-17 Trinity Sunday



I had just finished mowing the lawn when one of the kids announced there was a bee in the lounge. ‘Where’s mum?’ I asked. ‘She says it’s a job for dad’. So I tried to guide it out using paper, but the bee seemed

intent on circumnavigating the lounge. I opened the window to encourage it exit naturally. Even the dog had a go of evicting our visitor, to no avail. I suppose I was a monster and the bee only knew the parameters of his world, whereas mine was so much bigger. It had no idea I was on its side and trying to help it; it just went on with its ‘flight’ strategy. I did manage it in the end and all I did is: [lean forward and blow slightly]... and the bee found itself in another world, all threat from the monster vanished! *‘The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit’* (John 3:8). This verse is from today’s Bible reading for Trinity Sunday, where we turn our thoughts to the three persons of the Holy Trinity: Father, Son & Holy Spirit. We’ve just had Pentecost, which marks the arrival of the Spirit, and our APCM, where we have been reflecting on where the Holy Spirit is directing us, just like that little bee was directed by single gentle breath. When I

think of the size of the bee compared to our world, I am reminded of how small we are in a cosmos created by God with many galaxies, black holes, light years and planets. So much left for us to understand that I think it is wise for us to be humble about our place in the universe. We can but marvel at this universe which God the Father spoke into being, was brought into fruition through the creative power of the Holy Spirit, and redeemed by God the Son in Jesus Christ. But our relative size in all of it is smaller than a bee is to any of us. There must be many ‘bee’ moments where God gently directs us and we are set on our way. Nicodemus, who features in today’s reading, is also someone who has a ‘bee’ moment: when Jesus shows him a glimpse of the bigger picture. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a Jewish religious leader and a member of the ruling council. The Pharisees tried to regulate the life and worship of the Jews by scholarly debate and rule-making. Nothing wrong with rules, but the Pharisees took it to the next level. For example, one of the Ten Commandments given by God was to honour the Sabbath Day and keep it Holy (Exodus 20:8). The teachings of the Pharisees added 39 instructions on how to do this perfectly, giving the rule-makers power to say who was right and wrong and therefore control over people. In a moment of comedy Jesus tells them that their endless rules were like *‘straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel’* because they might get the letter of their law right, but completely miss the spirit. The Pharisees felt Jesus was undermining their authority. Nicodemus is a Pharisee for whom Jesus’ words sparked a sense of deeper enquiry, but he has a dilemma. The members of his order would not be happy with him fraternising with the

opposition. So he seeks Jesus under the cover of darkness. He likes things to be black and white, with clear rules, but God is asking him move forward into new territory; to find a renewing of heart and mind - less by rules, more by revelation, as St Paul wrote to the Galatians, *'If you are led by the Spirit, you are not governed by legalism. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.'* (Gal 5:18, 22, 25). We do not hear anymore about Nicodemus until Jesus is brought to the Jewish council where the Pharisees want to condemn Jesus to death without a trial, and Nicodemus protests. After Jesus is crucified, it is Nicodemus who embalms Jesus' body ready for burial. There is no other mention of Nicodemus but these actions would suggest that the breath of God's Holy Spirit did indeed touch Nicodemus and he was spiritually re-born. So what Nicodemus have to do with us? God is asking us to keep in step with the leading of his Holy Spirit, and in a 'bee moment' to realise our place in God's plan. As we heard at our APCM on Tuesday, we feel the Spirit is leading us to put the love of Christ into the **HEART** of our community. It is a time for us to begin **reachHing** out more to our community to understand and engage them, to be bold and courageous as we do so. We have two major new housing estates that we want to reach out and offer welcome packs to residents, and give them a warm welcome to our church community. We have strong ecumenical links, working with the Quakers, the Lynch Chapel, the Catholics and most recently the Methodists in Churchill. We want to take **wElcoming** further, recognising that we have 5 schools in our benefice and to that

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end want to support them through collective worship, but also make sure our buildings look inviting to young families and we also want to have people who are willing to help minister in our schools, helping the young hear about the good news of Jesus. We want to be **cAring**, thinking especially of our 5 care homes, with whom we can start to re-engage as restrictions ease. We want to care for all folk in our community, **seRving** them in practical ways like meeting their needs through **coffee mornings**, home communions, community cafes, Café Church, Messy Church and Family Communions - our caring actions speaking of Christ's love. We remember Christ's command to make disciples, by giving Bible based **Teaching**, nurturing people through our regular services, study courses and home groups. But we need people to help make this vision a reality. That's where **you** come in. We are three churches, but one faith community – to each of you God has given you gifts for use in his service, whether that's an upfront or behind the scenes role. Now is our 'bee moment', as we realise our place in God's plan: to put the love of Christ into the **HEART** of our community. Amen.

Our Vision for the next 5 years:

reachHing
wElcoming
cAring
seRving
Teaching



Putting the love of Christ in the heart of our community.