

A child of this generation...



In our reading today, Jesus speaks of John the Baptist, and how the people rejected his message, and have now rejected Jesus' own – he asks them what exactly it is that they are looking for?

The ministries and personalities of John and Jesus could scarcely be more different :

John the bug-eating wilderness prophet
and Jesus, who is known to love a good meal with all kinds of company.

John who wears scratchy shirts on purpose,
and Jesus who can occasionally be persuaded to invoke the power
of the Divine Creator to keep the wine flowing at a poor man's
wedding reception.

These days we talk about different learning styles, different personality types, and even of different spiritual styles of learning and finding. Surely, between John and Jesus; between the voice repentance and baptism in the wilderness, and the one whose gentle love speaks through touch and story there is something for everyone.

And yet... John's voice is reduced to tentative questioning from a prison cell, and The Word of God whispers from the cross....

The one thing they have in common is rejection.

It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; says Jesus in our gospel today - we wailed and you did not mourn¹"

To John they play the flute and say *come on, John, lay off the hellfire and dance to our tune*. Then along comes the Lord of the Dance himself, to gather them all up into the dance... but they want him to be a bit more... exclusive. To watch who he hangs out with, and make sure they are *worthy* – part of the *right club*.

In these times ... as the planet seems to heat up politically, environmentally and emotionally - it sometimes feels the last thing people want to hear is the voice of repentance, of change; or a voice where all are included in the gifts and the celebrations, the justice and equality.

God's ways can be too little and too much – too conservative and too liberal. John insists we make decisions and repent, and Jesus seems not to grasp that an all-inclusive all-hoping faith is simply not realistic. I mean bringing justice across the whole world would upset the balance of Capitalist society as we know it 😊

.... And perhaps, too, we are afraid of rejection. Follow God's way of love, or call for compassion and justice, and this dangerous world may throw it in our face. Best to be safe. To sit gently in a middle place.

We seek moderation... a comfortable place where both the powerful challenge and the huge joyous gifts of God can be set aside as 'unrealistic and impossible'.

But then perhaps we find ourselves seeking mediocrity ... and become, like the children in the marketplace in our reading, dissatisfied, burnt-out, confused, and unhappy.

To what shall I compare this generation? he says. What generation? This one. Always this one. The one in which we find ourselves. The Living Word speaks to us now.

This text is not just about us and God – it is, as most of the scriptures are, about us as a community - we are like *children ... calling to each other* says the Lord... Jesus calls us to hear the crying out in the marketplace of *this generation* - to reflect on our generation's reasons for weeping and dancing ... and to respond with God's Love.

There is a soul-sick weariness in this our generation, so often - chasing the pace; struggling to discern our way through the complications and fears of our world. We

¹ Matthew 11: 16 - 17

might feel like there is a heavy burden on our shoulders. Burdens of what we carry, and our sense that we need to work harder, to hold more, to be more, to somehow be little gods in our own worlds and responsible for our own salvation - and indeed, in an opposite way, of the sense of things beyond our control – that what we do has little power for change, we may as well just go with the flow. The world says ‘dance to our tune’ and we don’t know whether to sit and wail, or to dance to the flute. And perhaps in a way both seem empty.

Perhaps it is not that we don’t hear, but that we don’t know how to respond.

Come to me, says Jesus, *all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.*

“Do you renounce evil, do you turn away from sin, do you trust in Christ as Saviour?” asks our baptism liturgy. Today – every day - Love offers himself to us in the marketplace. Amongst all the competing voices of our world, we have a chance to hear the Invitation of Truth itself.

And as we respond, we receive his promise – “you are my beloved child, claimed, washed. My life is your life” – and it’s from his grace, his love, his life... that all these truths and choices flow.

It’s when we try to work things out for ourselves that the world gets so complicated, and so noisy, all those voices at once.

Jesus says *Father, you have revealed these things to infants...* to us, new-borns in his love.

There is a greater Voice in our world; a stronger Dance. The one who meets us at the Cross, and at the empty tomb, who names us in the garden, and over the barbecue on the beach... and says ‘feed my sheep’.

John points the way to him... *“repent!” – turn round, for there is the Lamb of God, who comes to save the world. Follow him!*

And Jesus says... *Take my yoke upon you.*

Well, thanks Lord, we might say the last thing we need is another burden!

But no... this is not the Lord loading more burdens on us, it is him offering that we hitch our burdens to his yoke... to pull them together, with each other, and with him.

You’ll see the picture on this homily - one tiny girl, who doesn’t realise that the person bowed under the weight of the cross is a statue, or the Lord... who just... wants to help.

We are invited ... to re-discover our child instinct... to share the yoke... and change the world one tiny response after another. One tiny kindness, one tiny justice...

Love is often rejected. And the many voices of the world compete for our attention, and can seem overwhelming. We can be left empty, distracted, dis-satisfied. John the Baptist and Jesus will both tell you that.

But we have the deeper truth of the cross of Good Friday, and the Cross of Easter Day. The yoke of God is the Cross – pain shared, and a world redeemed.

Return to your stronghold, says the Lord, through the Prophet Jeremiah today, *O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double*

He invites us to reject mediocrity – to stand firm, in the stronghold of his love, and our baptism –in a world that is heating up emotionally, environmentally, and politically – for repentance – a change of direction – and a dance of peace, justice and fullness of life where no one is excluded.

To not settle for less than embracing the full life-changing transformation of the Gospel.

So I ask you all... to answer, together, in the grace of God, and within *and for* this generation, to the questions I shall ask you

... I do...

“Do you renounce evil?

do you turn away from sin?

do you trust in Christ as Saviour?”

For in him- together - our yoke is easy, and our burden is light

