

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Romans 7:15-25a; Psalm 45; Matthew 11:25-30

If we are honest with ourselves, the best description of the way we live our Christian lives, is this: We have loads of good intentions, enthusiasm, and excellent plans, but somehow, we never get around to carrying out those good intentions.

As we read our Bibles and hear God speaking to us at worship, we learn what God's love has done for us through Jesus. We hear how Jesus has made us his new people through the forgiveness of our sin, and how we have been adopted as his own dear children, and made members of his family. The Bible tells us that faith in Jesus is a very practical thing, and should affect our everyday lives. Christ in our lives should influence everything we say and do, and the attitudes and values that we have, as well as gives us a whole new perspective on how we can serve others, and work together with our fellow members in the church. But still, in spite of all of this, too often there is a gap between what we know we ought to do, and what we actually do, as followers of Jesus. Likewise, when we hear the Scriptures, and are encouraged to let our light shine, and to make a difference in the lives of the people around us, we happily say "Yea" and resolve to let our faith really shine.

All of us have things in our lives we want to change, some old habits and attitudes we want to get rid of. We want to be more considerate, more helpful and more co-operative, we want to be more open, to be less critical, to be more tolerant of others with different opinions, to be more patient. We want to let our

Christian faith show by being more understanding toward our husband or wife, and spending more quality time with our kids.

We really want to try our hardest to get along with that person who really gets under our skin. We want to worship more regularly, pray more often, be more helpful, and contribute to the congregation more regularly.

Maybe after hearing an inspiring sermon, or attending a Bible study, we make ourselves a promise that, from now on, things are going to be different. But, too often, all of our good intentions remain just good intentions. Somehow it's all much harder than we thought and it's much easier to fall back into our old pattern of doing things. The Apostle Paul struggled with this. He says that he knows what he should do but he keeps on doing what he knows he is not supposed to be doing. All of us can probably relate to that.

When life is getting too much to handle and we feel the weight of trouble, sickness, and worry falling heavily on our shoulders, Jesus says, "Come to me". It's like he wants to give us a good shake and bring us to our sense because he knows that we are not able to keep our heads above water in our sea of trouble. He reminds us that we don't have to carry all this alone. He is there to help us.

But do we take His invitation seriously? Most times that invitation becomes real only after we have sunk into depression and made ourselves sick with worry.

God tells us through the scriptures to let love rule our lives.

"Put on love" we are told, and yes, that's a good idea we say.

But no sooner have we stated our intention to do just this, than temptation comes our way, and we end up doing exactly the opposite. We have every good intention, but never get around to doing what we had originally intended.

We all know that sin is very real in our lives. We are tempted to make our religion something separate from our everyday world, and we leave our faith in Christ at home when we go to work, or we forget we are members of God's family when we are out on the sport's field, or having a great time with friends. We know what we ought to do, and we might have every good intention, but the circumstances influence us to do otherwise.

We can know all about Jesus and what our faith means for our everyday life, and one day we're "gonna" get around to making a few changes in our lives. One day we're gonna get around to caring for our needy neighbour. One day we're gonna do something about spending more time with the family. One day we're gonna do more for the church, be more regular in our church attendance. But the truth of the matter is that somehow we never get around to it. We have every good intention, but we never do anything about it. To put it bluntly, our faith is good in theory, but putting it into practice is quite another thing. It seems we can never change!

But, like St. Paul, we need not remain locked in this feeling of helplessness because Jesus is good news for everyone. We have a new hope. We don't need to be afraid of every inadequacy, every doubt, every threat of failure. We are forgiven.

In Christ there is a new beginning. In Christ we can break out of the old mould where we replace God's will with good intentions that never amount to anything. With Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit, our faith becomes an integral part of our lives. The living Christ becomes a powerful force in changing our attitudes towards other people, and how we see our role in the life of the church. The living Christ fills every part of our lives, and when burdens and troubles preoccupy our minds and lives, the Bible tells us that we have a God who loves and cares for us.

Faith is not simply knowing about Jesus and saying that one day we're gonna be more active in our Christianity. Faith is a very practical everyday thing. We learn to be caring and concerned about people.

Yet, often these things become good intentions that are never fulfilled, and we express our disappointment by saying, "I know what I ought to do, but I don't do it". However, we can rejoice with Paul that our Lord Jesus Christ forgives and renews us, and sends us out from here today to live our faith as we go about our daily lives.

AMEN.