

A Proper 9 am

9<sup>th</sup> July 17

Place: St Mary's  
25a

Zech9.9-12, Rm7.15-

Theme: The power to save Matt 11.16-19. 25-30

- ◆ I meet a lot of people who tell me that they are Christians, but they don't need to come to church. When I ask them what they think it means to be a Christian they tell me that they do the right thing and love their neighbour. God seldom, if ever, comes into it. What they seem to be saying is that they don't need to come to church to be good, they can manage it on their own. By implication they also seem to be saying that they can manage fine without God, they don't need saving.
- ◆ I want to talk this morning about the power to save and what we need saving from. What are your strengths? Are you physically strong, or emotionally or morally strong? Are you wealthy in terms of the resources you have at your disposal; whether money, intellect, social position, influence, friendships or family? Whatever our strengths are: material, social, spiritual or intellectual they cannot save us. Salvation comes from God alone and not from any power we have. That is why Zechariah in our first reading talks about God's messiah bringing peace to the world riding on a donkey. Peace is never going to come through war; by

2

the exercise of worldly power of any kind. The war horse, the usually mount of a king is a symbol of military and worldly power. The donkey by contrast is a humble creature, a tractor rather than a tank.

- ◆ God's power to save is quite different to any power we have access to and so it is not something that we can control or claim for ourselves, we cannot manipulate it to support our own agenda.
- ◆ Those people who tell me that they do not need God and do not need to come to church are not only blind to God, but they are also blind to what is going on in the world.
- ◆ None of us live lives that are blameless. We live in a world where profit is more important the people, where our desire for power and speed is destroying our environment. Global warming, which everyone who uses fossil fuels contributes to – and who of us does not do that – even if we cycle when we can – is making large areas of the earth uninhabitable and taking the very ground from under the feet of communities living on the lowest lying land. Everywhere in the world the vulnerable are exploited and abused. Do you check that every garment you buy was not produced by children, slaves or bonded labourers?
- ◆ Even if we try to live lives that do no harm to others it is impossible. We are part of a world

that is broken by sin and we cannot escape it. That is what Paul is talking about in his letter to the Roman's. He tried to live a truly righteous life before he met Christ. He loved God and zealously strove to keep the law; so zealously that he got involved in arresting and murdering Christians because he thought that was what God wanted. He knows what it means to try and achieve salvation through your own strength. He discovered that it could not be done and only caused greater suffering and death.

- ◆ Our Gospel reading begins with one of Jesus's more opaque sayings. What does he mean when he says we are 'like children sitting in the market place who cry 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.'? I think he means that we all want to set the agenda, we all want not just our lives but the world to revolve around our whims and fancies, but our desires are as inconstant and as inconsistent as children in a playground; best friends one moment and worst enemies the next.
- ◆ Jesus comes to call us from following what the prayer book calls 'the devices and desires of our own hearts' and instead to follow him. God's salvation comes to free us from the tyranny of our own desires and offer us true freedom and true joy.
- ◆ We cannot lead good lives on our own. We cannot save the world, even if our eyes are

sufficiently open to see its desperate need for salvation, because the power we have at our disposal cannot save. No matter what our strengths and resources are we cannot escape death and grief, or protect anyone else from them.

- ◆ Answering Christ's call to come and follow him means that we can let go of trying to be good, of trying to save the world and trust instead in the power of the crucified and risen Jesus who has overcome death and sin. We can live lives that are about loving God and loving our neighbour in the strength of God's holy spirit, knowing that we are forgiven when we fail and that we can always try again. We can trust ourselves and the world to God's goodness and power. We can live trying to respond to God's call, freed from the tyranny of our own desires, discovering the glorious liberty of the Children of God, freed from sin, learning to love, hope and trust. Freed from the burden of trying to save ourselves and the world and instead trusting in God's goodness and love for us all and His power to save.