

Trinity Sunday

11.06.2017
By Pádraig Ó Tuama

Introduction

Matthew's gospel has a very high respect for the value of being *called*. Unlike Mark's gospel, Matthew's shows the disciples as carrying authority, not because of their intrinsic virtue, but because of their intrinsic *vocation*. At the heart of Matthew's gospel is a dignifying call – a call which is extended to all humanity in the saving work of Jesus of Nazareth – to be friends of the forgiving friend.

This is a complicated and demanding call – not least for those who consider themselves virtuous. In Matthew's gospel, one of the final verbs used for Judas is the verb *metanoia* – to repent, to change direction. For Matthew, this call pursues all, even into the deathly valleys. His is the gospel of the eleventh hour, and the audacity of forgiveness is narrated most profoundly through the life of Judas.

This forgiveness is the gateway into the divine life of the Trinity celebrated this Sunday. It is a forgiveness offered to those who know they are in need of help and those who struggle to believe they are in need of help. It is a profound leveller – bringing the haughty and the needy both to a place of common humanity: that of bruised and healed living in the life of God.

Text

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Comment

It is worthwhile being short from time to time. The gospel this week demonstrates brevity. While Matthew's gospel is not known for its brevity (it is a long gospel, and in it, Jesus shares long sermons), it is clear and terse in its understanding of what it means to be a disciple.

For Matthew's Jesus, the disciples are commissioned to be "makers of disciples" not because of their virtue, but because of their vocation.

And this vocation is extended to all of humanity in this all-encompassing call.

In this way, as we approach this week's reading for Trinity Sunday, we are invited to participate in this divine dance of life between the Source, Word and Spirit, and this participation is made open to us through forgiveness. It may be worthwhile noting that the Irish word for forgiveness is *maithiúnas* – a verb that speaks of being *gooded*. For some, the experience of seeking forgiveness has been a burden indeed. For others the burden of needing forgiveness has impeded dignity. For all of us, though, the journey to be made good, to do the good, and to have the good in heart and mind towards each other is something that can be improved.

This forgiveness is a burden, to be sure. In the story of that most generous verb "repent", we hear that the misguided Judas was folded into the embrace of God. It was a stretch, it seems, even for Matthew, to show this generosity. In introducing Judas (Matt 10:4) we hear of him as the 'one who betrayed'. But at the end we hear of him in a new light.

Matthew's universal hope and delight is that in the visitation of God to humanity in the body, life, words, death and resurrection of Jesus, the gooding has happened, and we are forgiven into a life of delight and vocation that goes deeper than any dignity has hitherto dared to believe.

Response

The bold forgiveness of Jesus in Matthew means that we are called, whether or not we feel like we *should* be, or whether we are worthy of this call or not.

For a response this week, consider a pilgrimage of imagination: what would be made possible if you were able to believe that forgiveness (or, to use an Irish linguistic imagination, that *gooding*) were freely available to you?

In imagining forgiveness, it is always important to note that forgiveness never implies that the wrong done was justified. The audacious claims of the gospel are that the wrong done are wrapped up into something greater. This can good news for the paingivers, but painful news for the pained. How is it that we who know we've caused pain can be responsible with participating in forgiveness? And how is it that we who are pained by forgiveness can reflect on this pain?

Prayer

Jesus, our forgiving friend,

You gather us in, all of us.

In you, there is no outside,

even Judas is in the field of repentance.

And so, we turn to you,

you are always in the field of forgiving,

– whether we are or not –

and stand in the call of your forgiving friendship.

Over and over, we turn to you,

who seeks out and sees the goodness

underneath our complicity and complication.

We turn to you,

in need of your friendship and forgiveness,

because you are the friend who forgives

because of love.

Amen.

Season: Ordinary time

Themes: Forgiveness