



St Marylebone
Parish Church

BCP Holy Communion 8.30am, 6th Sunday after Trinity

St Matthew the Jewish scholar, St Paul the first great theologian of the Church; both on **top** form.

In Matthew's account Jesus is unpacking the Jewish law, breaking the bonds of what has become religious convention and social acceptability, and returning like a javelin to the **heart** of the Law.

Don't do 'this' rather mean, lukewarm version of holiness couched in social approval... fix your eyes and your lives on the Kingdom of Heaven.

The 'new life' of which St Paul writes. Not a 'slightly cuddlier version of what basically everyone considers to be right living', a 'Jesus gloss on a mainstream existence'...The Kingdom of Heaven, nothing less will do.

And, as ever, Jesus reserves his strongest words and most shocking imagery for the religious authorities to shake them down from their ivory towers.

Likewise, St Paul puts forward a radical invitation in today's Epistle: the Christian truth of who we are and what life is for.

Social acceptability be damned (literally) this is a revolution of love and life. Not just fine words, but changing every day of our lives.

And it all flows from our Baptism; who we are, because of our baptism.

'Know ye not', says the Apostle, that when you were baptized, you died with Christ. Buried, under the water. So that when you emerged from the font, you are risen with Christ, changed.

We have already faced death, so when we meet it again we do not need to be afraid, because of our baptism death is already behind us. We have already begun the ‘newness of life’ that is the promise of heaven.

That’s what St Paul is saying. We are not beaten and crucified. We did not walk out of the tomb three days later – but all that Christ did has been given to us in baptism. In baptism, our lives become a thread in the universal life of Christ – his victory ours, his death ours, his endless life ours.

By water and the Holy Spirit we are made incorporate (in the body) part of Jesus. In this Sacrament (the Holy Eucharist), we see that we are ‘very members’ in the Body of Christ.

So we are **already dead** to sin, even as it clings so closely in our selfishness and fear and lukewarmness, those are just barnacles on the hull (Hebrews 12.1). We, in Jesus, are already dead to anything and everything that could separate us from God or each other, we just need to start **living** like it.

Our true nature is now the heavenly ‘us’.

The real ‘me’.... isn’t on Instagram,
it isn’t in others’ judgment of me,
it isn’t the ‘me’ I spend most of my life pretending to be,
it isn’t in the internal chatter that bubbles up when I close my eyes to pray.

It certainly isn’t in social mores and niceties.

All **that**, I’m dead to already.

What lies ahead is our *true* selves - hid with Christ in God (Col. 3.3).

Very few people remember their baptism, but it is the most important thing that God ever does for us, to us.

We just need, day by day, Eucharist by Eucharist, prayer by prayer, act of love or mercy or faith, by act of love and mercy and faith, to begin to live it.