

### Trinity 1 14<sup>th</sup> June 2020 – Questions

14 <sup>th</sup> June Trinity 1	9.30 Holy Communion What we should have had	Exodus 19 vv 1-8 p76 Romans 5 vv 1-8 p1132 Matthew 9 v35 – 10 v23 p974	SoF 607 Who Is on the Lord's Side? Psalm 100 620 Ye Servants of God 330 Let Us Break Bread 64 Colours of Day
14 <sup>th</sup> June Trinity 1	11.00 Holy Communion What we should have had	Exodus 19 vv 1-8 p76 Romans 5 vv 1-8 p1132 Matthew 9 v35 – 10 v23 p974	SoF 13 All People That on 44 Blessed Assurance 197 I Am a New Creation 238 In Heavenly Love 525 The Church's One 544 There Is a Redeemer
14 <sup>th</sup> June Trinity 1	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall What we should have had	Joshua 5 v13 – 6 v20 p219 James 5 vv 1-20 p1216	I should have chosen one of the set psalms – 73 or 74

You can question God. You can ask Him anything. There are plenty of questions in the Bible. Sometimes you receive answers. Sometimes the answers are partial. Sometimes, we don't get answers at all. There are two reasons for that. One is that God is so far beyond our human understanding. His reasoning is infinitely greater than ours. The other is that God is God. He is not answerable to us. We are answerable to Him. His ways are essentially inscrutable. Anyway, here are some questions, some with answers.

Why did God choose the Israelites to be His chosen people? No answer. He just did. The Israelites had no particular merit, but God chose them because it was His Will to do so. He is God. He does as He pleases.

Having been chosen to be the chosen people, what was required of the Israelites? That they remain faithful and that they should keep God's Commandments.

How did the Israelites know that they could trust God? Because God had promised that He would be their God and they would be His people.

Why has God chosen us to be His people? What have we done to deserve His favour? Which of our merits led Him to love us? No answer. He just did. We had no particular merit, but God chose us because it was His Will to do so. He is God. He does as He pleases. We are justified by faith, not by our own goodness.

Having been chosen to be the people of God, what is required of us? That we remain faithful and that we should keep God's Commandments.

How do we know that we can trust God? Because God has promised us.

Why are there pain and suffering in the world? That's a very good question, which many people ask. People in the Bible asked it and people ask it today. Why should there be suffering in a world created by the all-powerful God Who is love? There are lots of answers given – all of them partial.

Some pain is good. People who don't experience pain (such as sufferers from Hansen's Disease, sometimes called leprosy) repeatedly injure themselves because they don't recoil from touching hot surfaces or sharp blades.

Some people suffer as a result of their own wickedness or folly. They might be said to deserve what they get, though it's not for us to judge. Only God has the right to judge people.

But many innocent people suffer because of the wickedness or folly of other people. That hardly seems fair! Either way, a good deal of the suffering on earth is a result of the abuse of human freedom. God gives us the freedom to choose between right and wrong. The fact that we choose wrong results in pain and suffering. Presumably, God's calculation is that the blessing of freedom outweighs the pain and death which

follow from its abuse. Better to be a human being who can make mistakes and even deliberately choose to do evil and to suffer for them (or cause suffering to others) than a robot which can do no wrong.

It has been said that the natural forces which are intrinsic to the world God has made inevitably have the potential for good or ill. Floods deposit fertile soil. So do erupting volcanoes (in some cases). People live near volcanoes and on flood plains because the farming is so good. Yet, they are then exposed to the risks of fire and water. Perhaps sin comes into this too as the poor are often the ones who live most exposed to the risks whereas the rich who derive most profit from them live on the higher ground and farther away from the crater. Possibly it is the case that a Nature which can sustain trees and flowers, animals and people, inevitably also sustains bacteria and viruses. Maybe it cannot be helped that the processes which promote healthy growth in us can also produce cancer.

We should be thankful that God applies the natural laws consistently for at least most of the time. If He switched off gravity when a tile slipped off a roof in the direction of a baby's pram, where should we be?

Another consideration is that it is all sorted out in the next world when we do all get what we deserve, whether reward or punishment, for the way we have lived on earth, but, by God's standards, we all deserve punishment and depend on God's mercy to forgive us, not His justice to give us our just desserts.

And then there is the thought that, in Jesus Christ, God shares our pain and thereby upholds us.

None of these answers is a complete answer to the question "why are there pain and suffering in the world?" In Romans 5, Paul doesn't seek to explain suffering. What he does is to describe how God helps us in our pain. He is with us. We are with Him. We talk to Him in prayer. He answers our prayers whether to take away our pain or to enable us to bear it. We experience God and His care for us. Enduring suffering and sharing it with God, builds our Christian character. We learn patience. We endure. We experience. All these things teach us hope, which is not ashamed, because God's love is shed abroad in our hearts, and we couldn't ask for more proof of that than the fact that Jesus died for us on the Cross.

Why has God chosen us to be His people? What have we done to deserve His favour? Which of our merits led Him to love us? No answer. He just did. We had no particular merit, but God chose us because it was His Will to do so. He is God. He does as He pleases. We are justified by faith, not by our own goodness.

Now, knowing all this, *we have a Gospel to proclaim.* Matthew 9: <sup>35</sup> *And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.* <sup>36</sup> *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.* <sup>37</sup> *Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;* <sup>38</sup> *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

We have received that Gospel which Jesus proclaimed in Galilee. We are the beneficiaries of His healing love. It is our responsibility to share this blessing, to do so ourselves in our relationships with other people, and to pray to God to raise up many with the specific vocation – clergy, missionaries, evangelists – to preach the Gospel at home and abroad.

**O** GOD, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee, mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee, both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*