

## TAKE TIME OUT – *Pastoral Retreat*

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### Sunday Scriptures: 18<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**Scripture:** *John Wesley's explanatory notes on Romans are helpful (available on line)*

#### **Romans 1:7** NRSV

<sup>7</sup>To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **Romans 1:24-32** NRSV

<sup>24</sup>Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup>because they exchanged the Truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, Who is blessed forever! Amen! <sup>26</sup>For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, <sup>27</sup>and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. <sup>28</sup>And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. <sup>29</sup>They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, <sup>30</sup>slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, <sup>31</sup>foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup>They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die – yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them.

#### **Romans 2:1-11** NRSV

<sup>1</sup>Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgement on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things. <sup>2</sup>You say, 'We know that God's judgement on those who do such things is in accordance with Truth.' <sup>3</sup>Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgement of God? <sup>4</sup>Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realise that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? <sup>5</sup>But by your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgement will be revealed. <sup>6</sup>For He will repay according to each one's deeds: <sup>7</sup>to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honour and immortality, He will give eternal life; <sup>8</sup>while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the Truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. <sup>9</sup>There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, <sup>10</sup>but glory and honour and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. <sup>11</sup>For God shows no partiality.

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**Reflection:** This week I have been led to offer something a little different for reflecting on the Word of God. There is a lot that we can learn by observing nature and contemplating the life cycles of God's creation around us.

### **The Story of the Bees**

There was once a beekeeper that worked hard to nurture and build a colony of bees. All was going well; the colony was growing, the bees were contented and producing an abundance of honey. Then one day a wasp smelt the honey and stung its way into the hive, causing havoc and stealing honey. The bees did not retaliate, but instead laid their dead to rest, repaired the damage and continued to produce honey for the good of the whole colony. Time went by and all was well until the wasp returned with seven others; again they stung their way into the hive, causing havoc and stealing even more honey. The bees still chose not to retaliate, but instead laid their dead to rest, repaired the damage and continued to produce honey for the

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good of the whole colony. More time passed by and all was well once more, until the wasp returned with many others, all stinging their way into the hive, causing havoc and stealing most of the honey. On this occasion some hornets, observing the success of the wasps, followed them into the hive seeking out the queen bee. When they found the heart of the colony, they killed her and stripped the hive of all its honey. Remarkably, the bees still chose not to retaliate! Instead, the remaining bees that survived the invasion left the destruction of the hive and gathered together for support. Having lost the heart of their colony, they worked together to find a new queen and start a new colony.

So what did the beekeeper do?

The wanton destruction of the bees that were so loved and nurtured was devastating to the beekeeper. However, because the colony of bees had been growing and producing honey, the beekeeper had been making another hive to accommodate the developing colony. This was immediately installed in a different position among an abundance of flora and fauna that would attract and feed the bees.

In the meantime, the remnant of the bee colony had temporarily congregated into a large swarm supported by the branches of an old oak tree, and on seeing the new hive, surrounded with food they inhabited it and made it their new home. The bees had a new heart and the beekeeper was pleased once more to enjoy contented bees and an abundance of honey.

What happened to the old hive?

The old hive was left abandoned to freezing winters, burning summers, and the storms of changing seasons in between. Slowly but surely it was broken down by the ever changing climate until it was no more.

The beekeeper knows that it is not only bees who seek after honey!

The beekeeper provides for bees that produce honey, not for others who seek to steal it!

**Amen!**

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**Hymn/Song: Healing Streams** by John Hartley; Stuart Townend & Kelly Minter

**CD:** The Best Celtic Worship album in the world...ever! **Disc: 2 Track: 13**

Will You hide me in Your shelter  
Will You shade me with Your wings  
When the heat of day consumes me  
Let me drink from healing streams  
Drink from healing streams

Will You lift my heavy burdens  
Will You pave my path with peace  
And when the road is steep and stony  
Let me bathe in healing streams  
Bathe in healing streams

*When the joy of morning tarries  
When the waves of darkness roll  
Will You shine Your light of faithfulness  
Giving courage to my soul*

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*Courage to my soul*

Will You lead me to repentance  
Will You make temptations flee  
When I'm filled with condemnation  
Will You show Your scars to me  
Show Your scars to me

*And when the joy of morning taries  
When the waves of darkness roll  
Will You shine Your light of faithfulness  
Giving courage to my soul  
Courage to my soul*

And in the place where trouble waits  
Lord I shall not fear  
The Comforter, the Counsellor  
The Saviour is here

Will You hide me in Your shelter  
Will You shade me with Your wings  
When the heat of day consumes me  
Let me drink from healing streams  
Drink from healing streams

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**Poem:** An extract from **'The Prophet'** by **Kahlil Gibran**

And now you ask in your heart:

"How shall we distinguish that which is good in pleasure from that which is not good?"

Go to your fields and your gardens and you shall learn that it is the pleasure of the bee to gather honey of the flower;

But it is also the pleasure of the flower to yield its honey to the bee.

For to the bee a flower is a fountain of life;

And to the flower a bee is a messenger of love;

And to both, bee and flower, the giving and the receiving of pleasure is a need and an ecstasy.

People of Orphalese, be in your pleasures like the flowers and the bees.

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**Prayer:**

Almighty God, remind us of Your Word; give to Your people Truth and peace; sorrow and repentance for our sins and the grace of Your merciful forgiveness. Grant us, in all our duties Your help, in all our perplexities Your guidance, in all our dangers Your protection, and in all our sorrows Your consoling love. God our heavenly Father, You alone know the hearts of Your children; touch us each one with Your grace, we pray; that we might follow the example of Jesus and be filled anew with the Holy Spirit. **Amen!**