

## ***I Can't Be Bothered!***

*Genesis 3<sup>8-15</sup>; Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 4<sup>13-5</sup><sup>1</sup>; Mark 3<sup>20-end</sup>*

*Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin. [Mark 3<sup>29</sup>]*

When I was a novice in the Church my boss, the Rev Humphrey J Vellacott, met with me at 09:00 every Monday morning. The main business of the meeting was to review who had been missing on the Sunday – he expected attendance at both the morning and the evening services. I went away with a list of the absentees and had to telephone them to ask why they were not there, knowing full well that, unless you delivered a death certificate in person, no excuse would be good enough (and you would be told). How things have changed!

Our focus this morning is on that difficult text in Mark, where he records Jesus as saying: **Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness but is guilty of an eternal sin.**

Jesus has been talking about **a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand**, making it clear to the Scribes that double-standards are never acceptable. The Scribes had seen the love of God in action and had attributed it to the Devil.

Jesus then goes on to say that you have to get relationships sorted: he is rude to his mother and siblings! – it is always God first and then things fall into place behind that. Humphrey was right in his brutal way, even if he did offend sensitivities.

As I understand this text, the simple advice is that if you are worried about having committed the (so -called) unforgiveable sin, you haven't! The unforgiveable sin, that sin against God, is indifference – that you don't care about God or what God thinks.

However, we have to be aware that we can be guilty of what used to be called **backsliding** in some Christian traditions: of losing our passion, our commitment and our energy and thereby become more indifferent bit by bit.

- ✘ Adam, when confronted by God about eating of the fruit forbidden to them, shifts the blame: **the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit from the tree, and I ate.** Eve takes the same approach: **the serpent tricked me, and I ate.**

How easily we too take that lead and make excuses for not attending worship, for neglecting to read our Bible or forgetting to pray. The real difficulty arises when we move beyond feeling we have to make excuses and we don't care about it anymore.

- ✘ Paul wants to remind us that this life isn't the one that really matters – in this life we should know **grace**, and that should lead to increased **thanksgiving**, and by extension, **the glory of God**. The appeal is to build something **eternal in the heavens** rather than the things that are **temporary**.

If we are honest with ourselves, we often do choose to gratify those things that are temporary because that suits our selfish and self-centred nature. Again, the difficulty is that we get so absorbed in what we do, or what we want to do, that the life with God is irrelevant to the life we live now.

At the beginning of this 'Green Season' where Christians are expected to grow in their faith, this will be for some of us a timely warning. Instead of slipping bit-by-bit into indifference about God, the Church, each other and, ultimately, ourselves, we need to be honest about restoring our passion for God and for the things of God.

William Barclay says here: *As long as people see loveliness in Christ, as long as they hate sin even if they cannot leave it, even if they are still in the mud and mire, they can be forgiven.* Wise words. It is only when we get to the point of saying about Church, about faith, about being a Christian 'I'm not bothered!' that God says to and of us, 'I can't be bothered either!'