



The ABC News_{letter}

Aldgate – Bridgewater – Crafers
The Anglican Parish of Stirling

Redgum scarcity edition

July 31, 2020

What's the difference between Jesus and Santa? Jesus gives unconditional love, whereas Santa's love is unconditional. According to popular Christmas lore, Santa bestows gifts on children if they are good. This may seem to be a harmless practice – if Santa is real – and yet it's not, because it fosters and reinforces the notion that our worth depends on whether we are good or not.

Is Santa real? As shocking as the suggestion might seem, when it comes to judgment, Santa functions in the same way as another mythical figure, whose name is made up by swapping a few letters around. In the Bible, Satan is not a person, but a function. Even St Peter gets labelled Satan by Jesus on one occasion, because he is acting/ functioning in a particular way. Primarily though, the Satan's function is to accuse people of wrong – doing. Through this, he delivers them to judgment. As God is all-loving and so not judgmental, who judges? Human beings of course. In this way, we can say that Satan is a function of human society - not as God intended it to be though, but fallen, or flawed, human society.

Jesus showed that it is not so much people's shortfalls that diminishes or destroys life, but other's judgment of them. This is seen when Jesus intervenes in the potential stoning of a woman 'caught in adultery'. Jesus accepted human weakness and simply asked people to change their ways. Judgment, on the other hand,

is about approval/disapproval. Jesus calls us to love, not to be good, to engage in what is life-giving, not follow laws. Yet Christians have often opted for the latter. Seeing confession as apologizing for what we've done wrong, is evidence of that. Its purpose is not to admit our moral failures. When we make it into that, we are not worshipping the loving God, but the one who functions to judge us.

The more we see confession as cleansing us of moral failures, the more we play the approval/disapproval game, which is about judgment, and judgment of ourselves and others go hand in hand (because the same mechanism is involved). In that way, we are not being freed from sin. We are *committing* sin (as condemnation through judgment).

The true purpose of confessing sin is to accept that we are forgiven (set free) from being caught up and driven by rivalry (which judgment is a manifestation of).
Andy.





Hello God. I'd like to confess that I thought confession was listing what's bad about me, but now I see that judging myself in that way is the real sin.

Wishing your butler had given you jam, for your birthday?



Instead of MOANING
Buy your own instead

Pick up from Inez Johnson

Next **Monthly Market**
at Bridgewater:
Saturday
5th September

PLEASE BOOK FOR SERVICES
It is a **legal requirement** that we record who attends and a management requirement that we know how many are coming.



To attend Sunday worship

Book by 12 noon Fridays

To attend Wednesday am at Aldgate

Book by 12 noon Mondays

Bookings are also required for funerals, weddings and baptisms.

Leave your name & email address or phone number at:

stirlinganglicanparish@gmail.com

or 8339 1274

Non-bookers can join worship if numbers allow.



The most difficult and worthwhile feat of all is to become so rich inside ourselves that we become careless of other forms of wealth and status. This richness, and the stillness out of which it comes, really makes it possible to love others. Our children, our marriage partner, our colleagues, our friends, are no longer any kind of threat, and can therefore be given the undivided attention, the absolute concentration, which is only possible in freedom. *Monica Furlong*

**All of our church buildings will remain
closed between services**

Comments on the Readings for Pentecost 9

Prayer of the day We pray to be free of striving for a sense of worth through doing good things, and instead become inspired by a desire for true justice for people.

Genesis 32:22-31 It is the night before Jacob is going to meet up with his brother Esau, with whom he has been estranged since taking Esau's birthright. Knowing the danger of the encounter, he has sent his family away, and so is alone. Night falls and Jacob must face his demons. He wrestles with a spirit being and as a result receives a wound, a new name, and a blessing (share in the divine power of the being he wrestles with). The life that he will hand on to his family will always bear the mark of his struggles on this night



Psalms 17:1-7,16 The poet is struggling to justify himself in the face of his enemies' accusations. We skip his request for God to punish his enemies, thereby dragging God into his pain and his plan for its relief, and conclude with his affirmation that 'seeing' (becoming aware of) God is enough to help him cope with his

hardship. We too can find strength enough in times of trouble, by just being aware of God's presence.

Romans 9:1-8 Throughout his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul has stressed that relationship with God comes through Christ, which begs the question of whether there is anything special about the Jewish tradition. He states that there is, but that what matters most is that everyone can enjoy a relationship with God. Paul is so keen for his fellow Jews to experience this, that he is willing to give up what matters most to him, if it would help them to have it. Maybe there is a principle here which we can apply to all religions and cultures, which is that each is special and unique, but also offers something that any person can share in. That's what Paul is referring to as 'children of the promise', as opposed to 'children of the flesh'.

Matthew 14:13-21 Jesus' disciples assume that the crowd has no food (a metaphor for spiritual sustenance) and so must be sent away to find some, but they have the giver of food (Jesus), so there is no need to leave. Rather, they must pay attention to the One who is in their midst. Jesus' action reflects the basic actions of the Eucharist: taking bread, blessing it, breaking it and sharing it. Jesus has given us a simple means of attending to his presence with us.



Note Jesus' excellent hand hygiene!