

AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION 12th July 2020

5th Sunday after Trinity

To prepare ourselves for our worship, we reflect on the day and on our relationships.

- *What good things have come from God today?*
- *Where have I fallen short?*
- *What will I try to do differently in future?*

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Our hearts are not always receptive, and we need the Lord to touch our hearts so that we can receive his word.

Lord Jesus, you soften our hearts when they are hard.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

You warm our hearts when they are cold.

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

You open our hearts when they are closed.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

May the God of love and power

Forgive us and free us from our sins,

Heal and strengthen us by God's Spirit,

And raise us to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Collect (special prayer for today)

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen

READINGS

Psalm 65:8-end

Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs;
you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

You visit the earth and water it,
you greatly enrich it;
the river of God is full of water;
you provide the people with grain,
for so you have prepared it.

You water its furrows abundantly,
settling its ridges,
softening it with showers,
and blessing its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty;
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.

The pastures of the wilderness overflow,
the hills gird themselves with joy,
the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,
the valleys deck themselves with grain,
they shout and sing together for joy.

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!'

'Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a

while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'

REFLECTION

"A sower went out to sow". You may, at some time, have attended one of our local flower and produce shows. Perhaps you entered something yourself, or maybe if you have a garden, you just grow a few things for your own enjoyment. Even if you don't indulge in gardening, you no doubt have an idea of the care involved in bringing plants to fruition or flowering. First of all, there is the special compost in which to plant the seeds and then the well tilled soil in which to plant out the seedlings once they have been hardened off. Even if the seeds are sown directly into the soil, the focus is on making sure that they are sown in the best possible medium and that they are not wasted.

So what are we to make of the sower in the gospel story today? He is not focusing all his efforts on the ground which will produce the best results; he throws the seeds everywhere, even in seemingly unproductive places. Which of the gardeners among you would try to sow seeds on a well-worn path so the birds eat them; on rocks where they are unlikely to grow, or among weeds that will most likely choke them out?

It just seems rather crazy, even when talking about broadcast sowing, that a farmer would waste such a precious resource, the basis of his livelihood, in this way. It doesn't make good business sense at all. Businesses are, after all strategic about location, maximising their effort towards the arena of greatest result. I'm sure that Morrisons, Tesco, Waitrose, Lidl et al do a lot of research to ensure that they only open new stores where they are likely to be successful and grow the business. Find the fertile soil and throw the seed there!

So it would seem that the sower in the story leaves much to be desired both in his agricultural and business practices. He is apparently quite content to fling the precious seed anywhere. And that then begs the question, why? Maybe he does it to remind us of the extravagance of God's love; that nowhere is beyond God's care and redemptive activity. By sowing his seed not only on the good, fertile soil, but also on the barren, rocky, broken places

he is suggesting that God's vision for the world is often to be discerned in the broken and apparently hopeless places of the world.

This does make me wonder whether we tend to concentrate our efforts on the 'good soil' where success is more likely, thereby limiting our sowing of the news of God's love. We rarely do know the outcome for the seeds that we sow. Perhaps we focus too much on the outcome of our sowing rather than on the sowing itself. Perhaps we are too afraid of apparent failure to even try to sow the seed of the good news of Jesus anywhere other than in the seemingly fertile soil.

I can't help thinking that this parable is not so much about the good soil as about the good sower. This sower is not so cautious and strategic as to throw the seed only into those places where the chances for growth are best. No, this sower is a high-risk sower, relentless in indiscriminately throwing seeds on all soil; as if it were all potentially good soil; on the rocks, amid the thorns, on the well-worn path, on each one of us.

So, for me, this story is a reminder of the extravagance of God's love for all people, and that there is no place or circumstance in which God's love cannot be found; where the seeds of his grace may actually sprout and take root. And it is up to us to seek out those places, and to spread the Good News with the same profligacy as the sower casts his seed.

And so, we pray

**Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your disciples, 'I am with you always'.
Be with us today, as we offer ourselves to you.
Hear our prayers for others and for ourselves,
and keep us in your care. Amen**

Heavenly Father, may your words of truth take root in our hearts and grow to rich maturity. May we hear your will for us and act upon it; may we take seriously our responsibility to encourage and nurture one another in faith.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, may every act of selfless giving and every search for truth be richly blessed and rewarded. May the word of God reach all who are ready to receive it, and let us set no boundaries as to who they might be.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, make our homes places of love and growth, welcoming to all who visit them, and loving to all who are nurtured there. Help us through the quarrels and heartaches in this place, and remind us to honour one another as your cherished ones.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

Heavenly Father, may all whose bodies, souls or minds are aching know the comforting and strengthening power of your companionship, and the healing work of your love. May we be more ready to help and befriend one another through these difficult times, in the name and love of the God we worship.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Heavenly Father, we bring before you,
those who have died in faith
and will now see you face to face.

We bring before you, our lives and all that we are
including our successes and our failures;
we thank you for the gift of life
and ask that we may get to know you more deeply day after day.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen**

We give thanks for the saving death and resurrection of Jesus and ask him to be with us now

**Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen**

We pray God's blessing on each other

**May the Lord bless us and keep us;
may the Lord make his face to shine upon us, and be gracious to us;
may the Lord turn his face toward us and grant us his peace. Amen**



"A sower went out to sow...[some] seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

Matthew 13:3, 8