

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 16 JULY 2023 - TRINITY 6

COLLECT

Merciful God,
you have prepared for those who love you
such good things as pass our understanding:
pour into our hearts such love toward you
that we, loving you in all things and above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 65.1-13

- 1 Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; ♦
to you that answer prayer shall vows be paid.
- 2 To you shall all flesh come to confess their sins; ♦
when our misdeeds prevail against us, you will purge them away.
- 3 Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there. ♦
We shall be satisfied with the blessings of your house, even of your holy temple.
- 4 With wonders you will answer us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation, ♦
O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.
- 5 In your strength you set fast the mountains ♦
and are girded about with might.
- 6 You still the raging of the seas, ♦
the roaring of their waves and the clamour of the peoples.
- 7 Those who dwell at the ends of the earth tremble at your marvels; ♦
the gates of the morning and evening sing your praise.
- 8 You visit the earth and water it; ♦
you make it very plenteous.
- 9 The river of God is full of water; ♦
you prepare grain for your people, for so you provide for the earth.
- 10 You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; ♦
you soften the ground with showers and bless its increase.
- 11 You crown the year with your goodness, ♦
and your paths overflow with plenty.
- 12 May the pastures of the wilderness flow with goodness ♦
and the hills be girded with joy.
- 13 May the meadows be clothed with flocks of sheep ♦
and the valleys stand so thick with corn that they shall laugh and sing.

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans, chapter 8:1-11

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is from Matthew, chapter 13, verses 1-9 and 18-23.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For a Eucharist/Communion from the Book of Common Prayer (Fitz), there is no Gospel Acclamation- people stand to hear the Gospel, and it is introduced with the words:

The Holy Gospel is written in the 13th chapter of the Gospel according to St Matthew, beginning at the 1st verse.

Glory be to thee, O Lord.

And then at the end:

Praise be to thee, O Christ.

For Eucharists/ Communion around the rest of Severn Loop, people stand to hear the Gospel and it is introduced with an Acclamation, as below:

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

Alleluia!

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Matthew, chapter 13 verse 1-9 and 18-23.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

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.'

A Reflection from Hannah...

In these days of summer rain, many of us are discovering whether our seeds fell on the good soil, the rocky ground or amongst the thorns! We may have an abundance of some plants (courgettes here), and wonder what on earth happened to the others (from a bag of ten dahlia bulbs, two have surfaced). It is a thing of mystery and frustration to get the conditions just right to enable everything we plant to flourish.

So often, Jesus used agricultural metaphors to make deep theological points. They were the stuff of everyday life, and everyone would have recognised the image of the seeds in various places as he told the parable of the sower. Today the greatest burden to us if we are careless is that our garden vision is far from the reality; in those days, the cost could have been life itself if crops failed and famine came.

So the good soil is vital- as Christ notes, it is necessary for healthy, lasting, life-giving growth. As disciples we seek out those ways of nurture that will help us to grow well, whatever our stage of life. But we are also invited to *be* the good soil for others- and for the world in all its complexity and interconnectedness. There are many temptations about the place, that aim to draw us away and send us onto rocky ground; but our responsibility to the world around us is part of our vocation as good soil, that finds its home in the great pattern of things... and in doing so, we find ourselves as well.

It's a challenge, but we do sometimes, through the pure volume of potential distractions, overthink it and forget ourselves. In our desire for the good soil, knowing who we truly are in Christ is a great place to start. I end with this poem- it is a beautiful meditation on vocation which helps us to address that question, but it is so very earthly too- reminding us of our creatureliness as part of nature:

Wild Geese

By Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.