

Morning Worship for the fifth Sunday after Trinity

Preparation

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;

the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:

the whole earth is full of his glory.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

faithful and unchanging:

**enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you,**

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

God the Father forgives us in Christ

and heals us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,
all slander and malice,

and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

(cf Ephesians 4.30,32)

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

Lord our God,

in our sin we have avoided your call.

**Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.**

Have mercy on us;

deliver us from judgement;

bind up our wounds and revive us;

in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God,

who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,

bring you his pardon and peace,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The word of God

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

There is 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. (Romans 8:1–11)

This is the word of the Lord; *thanks be to God*

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

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.' (Matthew 13:1–9, 18–23) This is the Gospel of the Lord; *Praise to you O Christ*

A reflection by Revd Joy Cousans Vicar of Eaton Bray with Edlesborough

Like many people during lockdown, I spent time in the garden. One thing I had never done before was to grow some vegetables from seed. It was a mixed picture. The lettuce grew magnificently so that I had far too much. The cucumbers started off well and then something happened and they all died. The tomato seed was out of date and it was very late for planting, but somehow most of them germinated. It remains to be seen if they will fruit, but they have lots of flowers.

Jesus used pictures of common everyday things to convey his message. He talks of a woman making bread, sheep and shepherds and people planting and reaping. The sower was a common sight in Palestine. Everyone there would have been familiar with it. Unlike our modern day farmers, the sower went out with his basket of seed and flung it over all the ground. Only then was the seed ploughed into the soil. Much of Israel consists of poor soil and there is nothing abnormal about the conditions which the sower in the parable encountered. In fact, all of them may have occurred within the same field. For example, the rocky ground of the parable is stony ground with a light covering of soil. To the sower, it would look fine as he sowed his seed. It was only when ploughing began that the underlying rocks would be discovered. The thorns Jesus refers to wouldn't be there when the seed was sown. They were prickly plants which grew up faster than the wheat and drowned it out.

Although this is called the parable of the sower, it is actually a story about seeds and soil. The four different soils represent the reactions of people to hearing Jesus' message. It is one of the few parables that Jesus explained. The seed, that is the message from God, is scattered liberally by the sower. Each person is responsible for their response to it and they respond very differently. Some people are like the path. Hearing the gospel, the good news, has no impact on them at all. They reject it straight off and do not change in any way. There

are others who are like the rocky ground with only a thin covering of soil. They respond well to begin with and may get excited about joining the church and getting involved. Yet when difficulties arise, they fall away. The Greek for 'fall away' literally means 'is tripped up'. So this is not a gradual loss of interest but a collapse under pressure.

Jesus describes some of his hearers as being like the soil where the thorns grow up. They begin to follow Jesus, but other things become more important than the often challenging task of being a Christian. They give up. Those who are like the good soil, however, grow into Christian maturity and the best qualities that faith brings show in their lives. They are the ones that bear fruit. At different times in their lives, the same person may have a differing response to God's message.

In the California chaparral, many of the native seeds can lie dormant for years. Some of the chaparral plant seeds require 30 years or more of accumulated leaf litter before they can successfully germinate. Others need a fire to trigger their growth. For ceanothus and Manzanita species, the adult plants die in the fire and it is only then that the seeds begin to germinate. The seeds can lie dormant for many years; they are waiting for the right conditions before sprouting. In some ways, this can be compared to the seed of God's word. In some people, that may take years to come to fruition. Seed sown in childhood may lie dormant for decades before some event reawakens a desire for God.

I think the two key things to remember from this parable are the lavishness of the sower and the need for each individual to respond to the gracious invitation of God. The sower broadcasts his seed liberally, throwing it around regardless of the underlying conditions. He doesn't only put time and effort into those areas which he knows will be successful. He covers the whole field in the hope that at least some of the seed will fall into good soil and produce a harvest. Spurgeon wrote: '[the sower] is not responsible for the harvest: he is only accountable for the care and industry with which he does his work.'

God gives us the task of sowing the seed- of sharing with others the good news about Jesus and of helping them to see how God is at work in their lives. But we are not responsible for how the seed is received or for making it grow. That is up to each individual and up to God. Let us pray that God will help us to be generous in our seed sowing and that he will bring the seed to fruition in his good time.

Our faith

Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Catherine Wendeler

Let us join together in praying to God for the needs of the church, the world, our communities and ourselves, trusting in his love which reaches out from before the foundation of the world.

Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer**

We pray for God's church, especially for the people he has called to be prophets and teachers in our generation. We pray that they will be strengthened and protected by the Holy Spirit.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer**

We pray for the leaders of the world carrying responsibilities for the lives of their people. We pray for all victims of the world's injustices and for a new spirit of righteousness and integrity in the hearts of the powerful. Lord, in your mercy; **hear our prayer**

We pray for the people of our parish especially for those who feel excluded, exploited or ignored. We pray that as God's people we may work to build a community as open and generous as God's love shown to us in Christ Jesus.

Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer**

We pray that God will bring healing in mind, body and spirit to all who are troubled. We pray that in lives darkened by any kind of pain,

distress or grief the light of Christ will bring comfort, hope and a sense of God's all encompassing love.

We pray for the people who are ill in hospital during the current pandemic; grant them renewed strength, hope and peace of mind in their hour of need. We pray also for all those listed on our prayer boards, on our prayer chain lists. At their years' end we remember those who have passed through the curtain of death and prepare a place for us with you. We pray for those who have died recently without the comfort of their families, may they rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy; **hear our prayer**

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, hear these prayers we offer you in his name. By the power of your Holy Spirit work within us and among us to bring your kingdom values into this world, let your will be done so that all people may live only for your praise and glory. Amen.

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**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.**

Conclusion

The Collect for the day

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.

You are worthy, our Lord and God,

to receive glory and honour and power.

For you have created all things,

and by your will they have their being.

You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,

and by your blood you ransomed us for God.

From every tribe and language and nation,

**you have made us to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.**

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb

be blessing and honour and glory and might

for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 4.11;5.9b,10,11)

We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person, nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God**

and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

be with us all evermore. Amen.

Please let us know if you want us to pray for you either individually or if you would like to be included on the Prayer Chain.

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Reverend Joy Cousans; Reverend Stephen Burge

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