

**Fifth Sunday after Trinity**  
**Collects, Readings and Reflection**  
**12 July 2020**

*Our church is open every day for private prayer.  
Until we can meet again for public worship,  
you can also use this sheet in conjunction with our recorded service  
which you can find at <https://youtu.be/HXRrfdmxwPE>,  
on the Christ Church Shamley Green YouTube channel  
or via the link provided on our website [www.shamleygreen.net](http://www.shamleygreen.net)*

**COLLECT**

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 our vocation and ministry  
we 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.

**OLD TESTAMENT READING**

**Isaiah 55:10–13**

Thus says the LORD:10 As the rain and the snow come down  
from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the  
earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower  
and bread to the eater,

11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not  
return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

12 For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the  
mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all  
the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;  
and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.



**PSALM**

**Psalm 65**

1 You are to be praised, O God, in Zion; to you shall vows be performed in Jerusalem.

2 To you that hear prayer shall all flesh come, because of their transgressions.

3 Our sins are stronger than we are, but you will blot them out.

4 Happy are they whom you choose and draw to your courts to dwell there! they will be satisfied  
by the beauty of your house, by the holiness of your temple.

5 Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation, O Hope of all  
the ends of the earth and of the seas that are far away.

6 You make fast the mountains by your power; they are girded about with might.

7 You still the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the clamour of the peoples.

8 Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will tremble at your marvellous signs; you make the  
dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.

9 You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; the river of God is full of  
water.

10 You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth.

11 You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; with heavy rain you soften the ground and  
bless its increase.

12 You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty.

13 May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, and the hills be clothed with joy.

**NEW TESTAMENT READING**

**Romans 8:1–11**

1 There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

3 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,  
4 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.  
5 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.  
6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.  
7 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,  
8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.  
9 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.  
10 But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.  
11 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.

## GOSPEL

**Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

1 Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake.  
2 Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.  
3 And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow.  
4 And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up.  
5 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.  
6 But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away.  
7 Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them.  
8 Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.  
9 Let anyone with ears listen!  
18 Hear then the parable of the sower.  
19 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.  
20 As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;  
21 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.  
22 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.  
23 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** 'The Parable of the Sower' *The Revd. Gussie Walsh*  
(Watch in our recorded service)

On our online service this morning I have put a slideshow of my Vegetable patch. It starts with some very positive pictures of healthy growth- but as the show progresses you will soon see that all is not as perfect as Monty Don's Vegetable garden. The nibbled beans and parsnips, the black fly, the brambles and the lack of shoots where sugar-snap peas had been planted all give a somewhat different picture.. in other words it is a loose illustration of the parable that Jesus told about a farmer who went out to plant some seeds. Many of you will know that Middle Eastern farmers in those

days, broadcasted the seed over an area rather than sow them into the predrilled lines that we know today. So it takes little imagination to see that as the farmer was scattering the seed they landed all over the place. Some fell on the well-trodden path that surrounded the field, some over the shallow ground where there were underlying rocks, others ended up amongst the thorn and weed growing margins of the field while others landed in the good, fertile well-cultivated soil where they would produce fruit and more seeds. Later in the explanation, Jesus tells his disciples that he is the farmer and the soil represents the different heart responses to those who he was telling the story to - while the seed, which has his active and creative DNA within it, is his message. Here 'the word of God is proclaimed by the Son of God'.

Which made me think... Not only about the areas of my life field that needed to be worked on but also - how does Jesus broadcast the message about the kingdom today? As I was mulling this over



I remembered when I was at theological college in Oxford I went to see an installation by the artist Paul Hobbs' called The Holy Ground. It was made up of a circle of sand and in the centre was 'a metal sculpture of a bush lit by a flickering red light.' Around the edge of the circle were about 25 pairs of shoes made of different shapes, sizes and materials.

The artist says that he was inspired by the event in the OT when Moses is looking after his sheep in the wilderness. One day he notices a bush that is on fire but is not burning up. So, intrigued, he stops to investigate. But before he can get any closer God speaks to him from the bush, and says, "Moses, Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is Holy ground." God then goes on to tell Moses that he has chosen him to lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. A brief encounter that was to change Moses' life, and take him on a different path altogether. So the artist Paul Hobbs asked a bunch of people around the world to take off their shoes and tell a story about how and when they had a 'seed' encounter with God, and how it too had changed their lives. As you can imagine the stories were deeply moving - among them were 'shoe' stories similar to Paul's experience on the Road to Tarsus - when God speaks directly out of the blue into someone's life, other times it was through an event or an act of kindness, often when someone was in a vulnerable situation. And for some it was after years of searching, questioning and reflecting that they had the eureka moment of knowing the new path they were to take....

And as I looked at these shoe stories I realised that Jesus sows his seed in a myriad of ways ... for unlike 'Suttons' you cannot put God in a packet... and furthermore it is always personal!

So I wonder how you encountered God?

- Have you sensed his presence in a particular place, at a particular time of suffering or elation?
- Has lockdown given you a space to reflect and encounter God in some new way?
- And what happened - how did you develop the seed of thought or experience?
- Did it/has it changed you/taken you on a different path? For God's seed always has a purpose, it is to bear fruit for the Kingdom.

I would like to finish with one of the shoe stories. Laura Calenberg, a model from New York City donated a pair of pink thin strapped high-heeled sandals. She says this: *Being on the covers of top European fashion magazines was no longer a dream for me but a reality. I could hardly believe it! All I ever wanted was to be in magazines, earn lots of money, and travel all over the world. My logic was that if I was successful and working as model then I must be beautiful. But my entire life was focused on my weight, hair, clothing, and overall appearance and attractiveness. I became a workaholic, working seven days a week because I knew nothing was guaranteed. And I became exhausted and sick. During this time as I reflected on my life, I questioned my values and ideas about beauty, and the kind of person I had become within. These questions and doubts were hitting me when I was still at the peak of my career. I saw the shallowness of it all and felt very empty inside. I had built my life on things that weren't secure. . .on what the culture or my boyfriend thought, or how much money I made, or how popular I was. I was building my life on shallow sand. I had neglected my relationship with God and chosen my own way. No*

wonder I felt so empty! So, what is beauty? It's what's found inside, what's in your heart. Humility is beautiful, though not popular in my business. Security and self-esteem are beautiful. And knowing God personally brings beauty, because knowing He loves you and accepts you brings security and self-esteem to your life... Only Christ can make us beautiful in God's sight. Laura Calenberg went on to found Models for Christ. Over the past 20 years she has met with girls from all over the world who have sought fame and fortune as models in New York City, helping them to see that real beauty is in Christ.

Let's pray – Lord, we thank you for the gift of life you have given each of us. Prepare our hearts so that we can be receptive to your message of forgiveness, hope and love.

Help us to hear your voice and trust that, through your Spirit, you will show us the path we are to walk- so that our lives may grow to be fruitful for your Kingdom. Amen.

*(In a moment of quiet why not stop to reflect on how receptive your heart is to God's seed in all areas of your life... I hope it is as good and as fertile as Monty Dons' soil is!)*

### Post script.

Furthermore I also think that we are part of the sowing and the growing, because Jesus said just before he left the disciples:

*'I have given you all authority in heaven and on earth.*

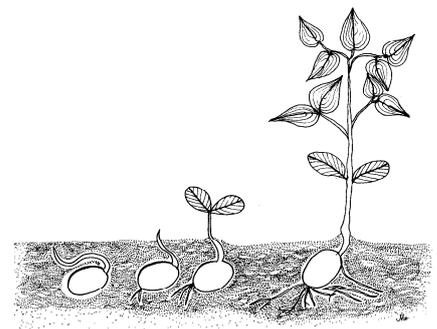
*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations – baptise them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teach them to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this, through my Holy Spirit I am with you until the end of the age.'*

In other words, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we have been given his blessing to broadcast, through word and deed the good news about Jesus. Which brings me to a second point in the light of that commission... seeds can be put into the soil but any Gardener will tell you they still need to be nurtured. And who might do that? Who will nurture your seed so that it grows and produces fruit? Is there more than one seed or does the seed simply represent the indwelling of Jesus through his Holy Spirit? And what is this seed for? And then how or who will nurture someone else's seed?

On a personal note, as I was reflecting over the last days about the kind of soil I am, I realised that there were parts of my life that represented at least three of the four soils. I needed to ask myself - has the word lain on the surface and been rejected or ignored. Has it begun to grow in me and then I've become distracted? However as any Gardener will tell you, even hard-baked, rocky, thorny soil can always be worked on to become the medium by which we can grow deep, strong roots for healthy and productive growth. And so it is with us...

### **FINAL PRAYER**

Divine sower, scattering seed, never hoarding,  
wasting life - or so the world thinks;  
give us the depth to receive the gift so freely given  
and the maturity to revel in love's abundant, reckless growth;  
through Jesus Christ, the grain of life. Amen.  
*(Steven Shakespeare 'Prayers for an Inclusive Church')*



### **BLESSING**

May God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the source of all goodness and growth, pour his blessing upon all things created, and upon you his children, that you may use his gifts to his glory and the welfare of all peoples;; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, rest upon you this day and remain with you always. Amen.

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