

Parish of St. Thomas, Apostle & Martyr, Ipswich

Fifth Sunday after Trinity - 12th July 2020

Collect:

Almighty God, send down upon your Church the riches of your Spirit, and kindle in all who minister the gospel your countless gifts of grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Psalm 119.105-112

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances.

107 I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word.

108 Accept my offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your ordinances.

109 I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.



110 The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.

111 Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

A reading from the book of Genesis (25.19-end):

These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger."

When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew (13.1-9,18-23)

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 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."

This is the gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, o Christ.

Reflection:

Do you make bad decisions when you're hungry?! This lockdown has been quite a test for some of us, being constantly close to the fridge! Quite often the bad decisions we make when we're hungry result in us nibbling on something unhealthy. But it's rare they have consequences quite as dramatic as the one Esau faced. In a moment of weakness, when his stomach was rumbling and his thinking was clouded with hunger pains, Esau gave up his birthright for some bread and a bowl of lentil stew. It's worth us taking a minute to explore what that meant; what exactly was a birthright?

The birthright, which Esau sold so cheaply, is concerned with the leadership of the family and the continuation of the promise God gave to Isaac's Father, Abraham – that all the world would be blessed through Abraham's descendants. Esau sold Jacob the right to be the religious torch bearer, and in doing so wrote himself out of the lineage that would lead in a couple of generations to King David, and in many more generations, to Jesus.

The decision Esau made that day revealed what he valued – his own comfort in that immediate moment. What we value is important because it often becomes the basis for how we choose to live. Our whole lives can be shaped by what we hold as important.

It gives us cause, perhaps, to stop and ponder on what we value. What is important to me? Sometimes a way of discovering what we value is to look at where we use our resources. To what do we give our time, our love, our enthusiasm, and our money? Our Gospel reading today suggests to me a reason why this question matters: it matters because what we value can determine what type of soil we have.

The parable of the sower shows us that there are many reasons why people may not recognise, understand, and accept the word of God. Sometimes there is no root, it is not embedded deeply enough to last when difficulties come. Other times the lure of wealth and the priorities of the world choke it, stopping it from being given the care needed for it to grow properly.

What does good soil look like? It's the people who hear the word and whose actions bear fruit in the kingdom of God. Perhaps we can tend our soil when we value spending time with God, choosing to spend our 5 minute coffee break praying for others rather than perusing social media. Perhaps it comes when we value justice, choosing to put our head above the parapet and speak out on behalf of someone being treated unfairly. Perhaps it comes when we value loving our neighbour, choosing to spend money on a good cause rather than a takeaway coffee. What we value shapes who we are and how we live, enabling us to prepare the best soil possible so we can receive the fullness of all God wants to give us. - Emma Haggart (*ordinand on placement*)

*We are the body of Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.
Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life.
Alleluia! The peace of the Lord be always with you.*

**Here are the words of two hymns you
may like to sing or pray this week:**

Beauty for brokenness
Hope for despair
Lord, in the suffering
This is our prayer
Bread for the children
Justice, joy, peace
Sunrise to sunset
Your kingdom increase!

*God of the poor
Friend of the weak
Give us compassion we pray
Melt our cold hearts
Let tears fall like rain
Come, change our love
From a spark to a flame*

Shelter for fragile lives
Cures for their ills
Work for the craftsman
Trade for their skills
Land for the dispossessed
Rights for the weak
Voices to plead the cause
Of those who can't speak

Lighten our darkness
Breathe on this flame
Until your justice
Burns brightly again
Until the nations
Learn of your ways
Seek your salvation
And bring you their praise.

Now thank we all our God,
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom his world rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours to-day.

O may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in his grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
The son, and him who reigns,
With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God,
Whom earth and heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore.

*Call this number ↓ for free, for a greeting
from Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury!
Then listen to hymns being sung, prayers, or
reflections. Give it a go, it's a lovely way to worship
from home!*



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers

