

Sunday July 12th - Trinity 5

Opening Antiphon:

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
**Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice.**
O enter then His gates with praise;
Approach with joy His courts unto;
**Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.**
To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
The God whom Heaven and earth adore,
**From men and from the angel host
Be praise and glory evermore.**

We come from our scattered lives to meet with God.
Let us pause to recognise his presence with us.

As God's people we have gathered.
Let us worship him together.

Preparing ourselves for worship:

Loving God, we have come to worship you.
**Direct our thoughts, and teach us to pray.
Lift our hearts to worship you in spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

Confession: We say sorry to God

Christ the light of the world has come to dispel
the darkness of our hearts.

In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our sins.

God our Father,
we come to you in sorrow for our sins.

For turning away from you,
and ignoring your will for our lives;

**Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.**

For behaving just as we wish,
without thinking of you;

**Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.**

For letting ourselves be drawn away from you
by temptations in the world about us;

**Father, forgive us:
save us and help us.**

Absolution:

**May the Father of all mercies
cleanse *us* from *our* sins,
and restore *us* in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hymn of Praise or Gloria

Mighty God

beyond all time and space

greater than our minds can fully grasp

ruler over all that is and has been and ever shall be

We worship you.

Loving Father

Kind and merciful

full of goodness and compassion

constantly watching over us and directing our steps

We worship you

Saviour Christ

flesh of our flesh

sharing our humanity yet one with the Father

loving to the point of death yet bringer of life

We worship you.

Holy Spirit

free and mysterious

source of guidance and inspiration

filling our hearts and minds and lives

We worship you.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

God of gods and Lord of lords

with awe and wonder

joy and gladness

love and praise...

...We worship you. Amen. (adapted from Nick Fawcett)

Collect - *the special prayer of the day.*

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

BIBLE READINGS

Romans 8:1-11 New International Version (NIV)

Life Through the Spirit

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, **2** because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. **3** For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, **4** in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. **7** The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. **8** Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not

belong to Christ. **10** But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life[d] because of righteousness. **11** And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, Alleluia.

I am the way the truth and the life, says the Lord.

No one comes to the Father except through me.

Alleluia

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Matthew 13:1-9 New International Version (NIV)

The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. **2** Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. **3** Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. **4** As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. **5** Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. **6** But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. **7** Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. **8** Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred,

sixty or thirty times what was sown. **9** Whoever has ears, let them hear."

Matthew 13:18-23 The Parable of the Sower explained

18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:

19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. **20** The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. **21** But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. **22** The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. **23** But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

The Venerable Dr Jane Mainwaring - Archdeacon of St Albans

Today's gospel reading is one which will be familiar to many - the parable of the sower.

It's a story retold time and time again. I've lost count of the number of times I've crouched down as a seed and pretended to grow, only to be withered in the sun and 'eaten' by a child pretending to be a bird! But when I've done this, when I've crouched down in the school hall or on a church hall floor, or

at the front of church during a service, and tried to grow from my crouched position, there is always a gentle feeling of freedom and joy when, on the fourth time, I get to grow and grow - and that's not just to do with the joy that my knees feel by not having to crouch anymore!

There is joy in growing both for ourselves and for others. To see other people grow sometimes gives us even more joy.

I can still remember both my children learning to ride a bike without stabilisers - that moment when, after much running along with them, holding the back of the bike steady, they suddenly get their balance and they're off! They suddenly gain that confidence to go further and further before putting their feet down or wobbling, and get faster and faster!

In every aspect of life it is good for us to grow and it is a joy to watch others grow.

The growth that Jesus was originally describing was people growing in their knowledge, understanding and relationship with God.

He said the seed that 'was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word (of the Kingdom) and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields.'

Many seeds have been sown over these last months as we faced the pandemic together - seeds of the spiritual kind and sociological kind, and seeds of the more physical kind. There has been new seeds sown of community spirit- people meeting, often for the first time, others in their neighbourhoods through seeking to support the most

vulnerable or through coming out of our homes on Thursday evenings to clap for the NHS and for all key workers - strangers talking to one another as they wait in the queue outside shops - the corporate need, which the vast majority of people have signed up to, to protect one another by keeping our distance.

There has been the seed sown of greater appreciation for those who do vital jobs in our community - the key workers - who are so often overlooked and under paid.

There have been seeds sown about the value of family time, with many people reporting that they really valued more time to be together, to be with their children.

There have been seeds sown, in a very powerful way, which have challenged us at every level of society as to the value and care we place on every individual - particularly those of a different colour skin to our own.

There have been seeds sown that have challenged our deepest sense of who we are - who we are when so much of what defines us, so much that fills our day, is stripped away. There have been seeds sown which have asked the questions of us about where is God in all of this - where do I find comfort in the depths of deepest sorrow? - where is joy to be found when so much has been stripped away?

For those who found the answers to the spiritual questions of life in the fellowship and worship found in our church buildings, there has been seeds sown about finding God in our homes, in nature – there have been seeds sown in finding

fellowship with others in different ways than over a cup of coffee at the back of the church after a service. So many seeds have been sown over these last few months.

The 'I wonder' question which our reading today, which the parable of the sower, makes me ask is – 'I wonder how many of these seeds will grow to bear fruit?', and, 'I wonder how many will not have good enough roots to carry on growing after this initial time is over, and how many will be choked by the return of all the things we usually fill our days and our lives with?'

And I ask these questions both of myself and of the community around me.

How are the seeds that have been sown during this time, when we've had to live life very differently, going to continue to grow? How can I, how can we, make sure the roots are deep enough that the new shoots won't wither? How can we stop the other things of life from choking the new shoots we're seeing grow?

I wonder whether the answer to these questions is to be found in the tender care that a gardener would give to new plants? A gardener would make sure that seeds and new shoots are regularly watered and given nourishment. A gardener would weed around seeds and new shoots to make sure nothing would get in the way of the plant growing. In other words, the gardener is deliberate in his or her attention to the plants, rather than scattering the seed and just seeing if things grow.

What seeds have been sown in our own lives during this time that we need to give deliberate attention to now, so that they

don't wither or get choked and can, instead, carry on growing?

Maybe that seed for you is about maintaining those new relationships and level of care in your community.

Maybe that seed for you is about making sure that time with family is not squeezed out again. Maybe that seed for you is about valuing people in new ways.

Maybe that seed for you is a growing appreciation that church is about people as well as physical space.

Maybe that seed for you is about finding a new or deeper relationship with God.

Whatever that seed is, it would seem such a waste not to see it continue to grow- doesn't it warrant some of the deliberate attention a gardener would give it?

And the best news is that when we decide to give this deliberate attention to a seed that has been sown in our lives, we are not the only gardener at work. God is ready to work with us - to be our co-gardener.

So whatever seeds have been sown in your life during these last few months, don't let them wither for lack of roots, and don't let them get choked by the pressures of life. Rather be deliberate in attending to them and as you do so, allow God to be a co-gardener with you, so that these seeds in all our lives may grow and grow, to be strong and stable parts of our lives, bearing fruit year after year .

Let us pray .

Creator God, You have sown many seeds in our lives over these last few months. Help us to know which to attend and care for now, that we may continue to grow in ourselves, and in you, in this next season. Protect us from all that might stifle or choke that growth and may we, together with you, grow more and more in your likeness, each and every day.

Amen.

Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in God the Father,
God almighty, by whose plan
earth and heaven sprang to being,
all created things began.**

**We believe in Christ the Saviour,
Son of God in human frame,
virgin-born, the child of Mary
upon whom the Spirit came.**

**Christ, who on the cross forsaken,
like a lamb to slaughter led,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
he descended to the dead.**

**We believe in Jesus risen,
heaven's king to rule and reign,
to the Father's side ascended
till as judge he comes again.**

**We believe in God the Spirit;
in one Church, below, above:
saints of God in one communion,
one in holiness and love.**

**So by faith, our sins forgiven,
Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,
we shall rise with him in glory
to the life that knows no end.**

**Prayers of intercession - Prepared and led by Pete and
Beccy Clark**

**By your words I can see where I'm going;
they throw a beam of light onto my dark path.
I've committed myself and I'll never turn back
from living by your righteous order. [Psalm 119, 105-106 (MSG)]**

Jesus said *"Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand."* Help us to ready our hearts and our minds so that we may *hear* and *understand* your words.

*Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our prayer***

Holy God, we pray for your church, especially for those that you have called to be prophets and teachers in this generation. We pray that they will be strengthened and protected by the Holy Spirit and that through them your Church will reveal the good news of salvation.

As the lockdown eases and we start to meet once more in our Church buildings, we pray that you will help us to do so safely and sensibly, and in a way that reassures those who are still cautious about being in public spaces with others.

*Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our prayer***

Creator God, we are your chosen stewards of this beautiful world; you provide us with the seeds and with the soil to sow

them in. But sometimes we abuse this privilege and exploit what you have provided us with. We look to you for forgiveness for the damage that we have done to this earth. We pray that you would show us ways of healing the wounds that we have inflicted on the land, on ourselves and on each other.

*Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our prayer***

Father God, recent events have further brought to light the inequality and injustice that still remains in a large portion of this world. We pray that in our communities, all will be welcomed and accepted regardless of race, colour, gender, creed, status or sexual orientation. May we always seek to serve you and our Saviour, Jesus Christ, in one another.

*Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our prayer***

Omniscient God, we pray for the front-line workers selflessly putting the care of others before themselves. Give your skill, sympathy and resilience to all who are caring for the sick and bring your wisdom to those researching new treatments. Strengthen them with your Spirit so that, through you, their work may bring healing to the world.

We pray for the local businesses that have remained open throughout lockdown, and for those that have only recently opened their doors to the community. For the shops, hair dressers, pubs, restaurants and markets which are reopening, we ask that you provide them with the wisdom to do so safely, whilst protecting livelihoods and bringing back a sense of normality to our local community.

*Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our prayer***

Gracious God, we raise before you all those who seek healing of body, mind or spirit, asking that they will sense the touch of your loving hands and feel your peace and presence alongside them, each and every step of their journey towards healing and wholeness. We take a moment to personally think of those who need your comfort at this time.

Pause to allow reflection.

*Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our prayer***

Loving God, you know each and every one that has gone before us. May those that have passed away see your salvation and find their peace and final rest in you. We especially pray for those who were a part of our lives, those who made us who we are and who we still miss.

Pause to allow reflection.

*Lord, in your Mercy: **Hear our prayer***

Faithful God, we offer to you these prayers for ourselves and for others. We ask you to accept them and to use them and to use us so that your will may be done on earth and so that more of your kingdom is revealed to those who seek you.

[Psalm 119, 111-112 (ESV)]

Your testimonies are my heritage forever,

for they are the joy of my heart.

I incline my heart to perform your statutes

forever, to the end.

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

As our Saviour has taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.**

**Your Kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours.**

Now and for ever. Amen.

Birthdays and Notices

The BLESSING and SENDING

**Almighty God, we thank you for
the gift of your holy word.**

**May it be a lantern to our feet,
a light upon our paths,
and a strength to our lives.**

**Take us and use us
to love and to serve all people
in the power of the Holy Spirit
and in the name of your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Let us bless one another in the words of the grace:
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit**

be with us all evermore. Amen

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ. Amen

Closing Hymn

Thou whose almighty Word
Chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight;
Hear us, we humbly pray,
And where the gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light!

Holy and blessed three,
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, love, might;
Boundless as ocean's tide,
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the world far and wide,
Let there be light!

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The Parable of the Sower

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. Matthew 13:23a

Based on Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 (NIV)



A D N B L P W W C F V B B H L
P L H M S E E D I H A R U R G
R Q D G R A S D O T O R M V G
O W X G P V C T X I H K M L P
O N V O J S A H B S V E E E B
T E R E T D T O J O X J R D R
P C G N W S T R U I X Y O R O
F F A O I E E N V L K O F E M
N L S N I Z R S W C G I K E C
P P B I R D S O O S B Q L H Q
K O W B Z P L R S C A B X T S
P P J S D L Y T R O A E I R L
C A R U A N A L X R F G J L T
Z E T H C G T L A C V O E L M
K Z S H W J R P W H M F Y Y Z

PLANTS
WITHER
FELL
ROCKY

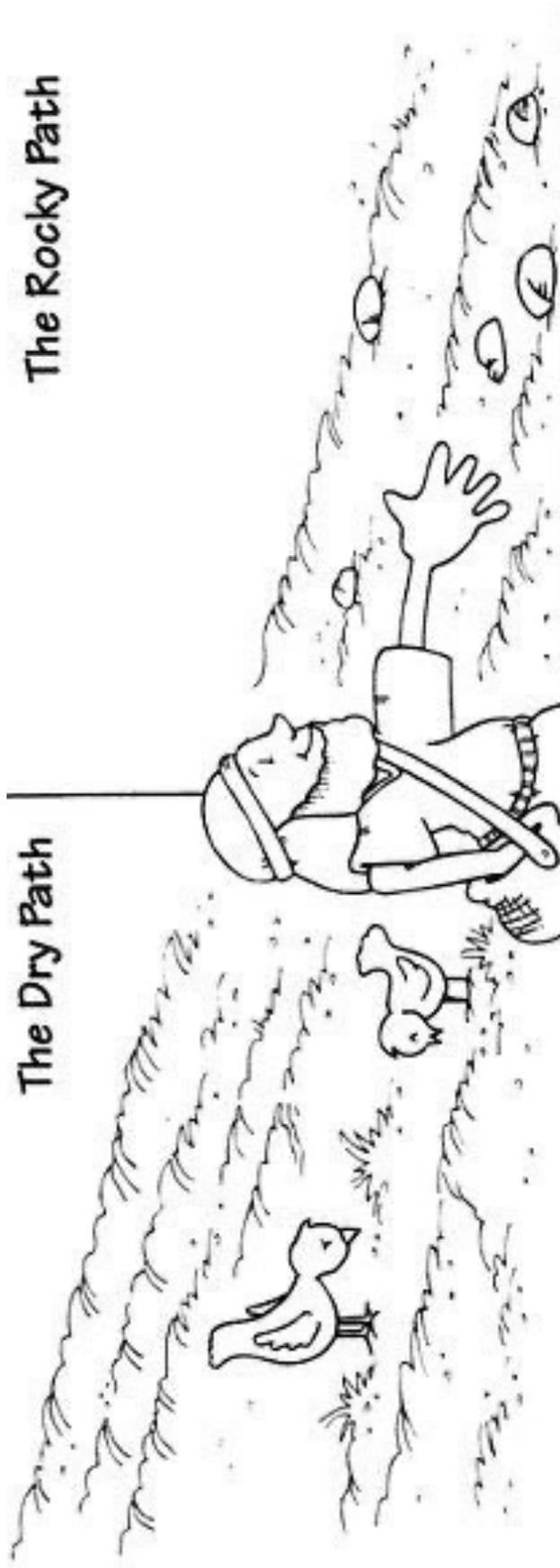
SCORCH
BIRDS
PARABLE
SHALLOW

FARMER
ROOT
SCATTER
GOOD

THORNS
CHOKES
SEED
SOW

CROP
SOIL
GREW
PATH

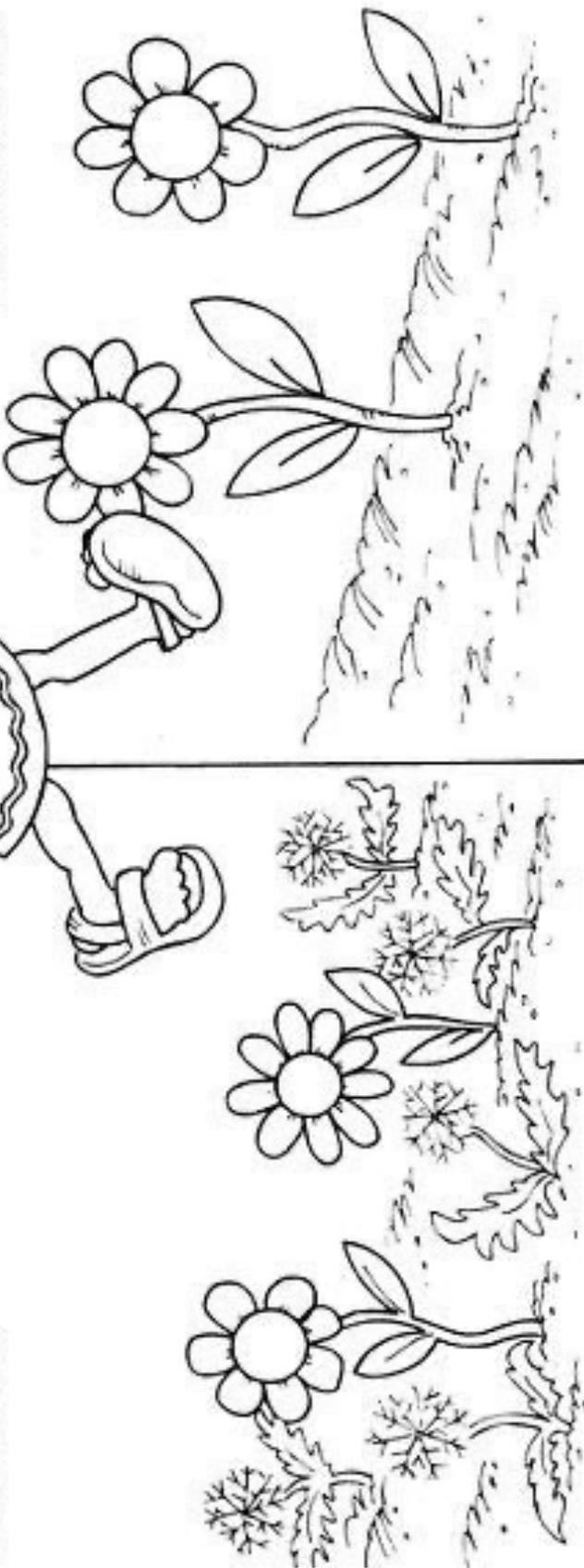
The Dry Path



The Rocky Path

The Weeds

The Good Soil



THE SOWER