



Sunday 12th July 2020

5th Sunday after Trinity

**The Beacon Parishes Mission Community of Ipplepen with Torbryan,
Denbury, Broadhempston and Woodland**

FIRST READING

Genesis 25.19-End

The Birth and Youth of Esau and Jacob

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;
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. Afterwards 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 skilful 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.

Esau Sells His Birthright

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.

PSALM

Psalm 119.105-112

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

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

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

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

I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
Your decrees are my heritage for ever;
they are the joy of my heart.
I incline my heart to perform your statutes
for ever, to the end.

SECOND READING

Romans 8.1-11

Life in the Spirit

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.

GOSPEL

Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23

The Parable of the Sower

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!'

The Parable of the Sower Explained

'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.'

Reflection by Reader Hillarie Griggs on The Parable of the Sower

On reading this parable we tend to immediately reflect upon which type of soil we are and hear it as a challenge to be, or as a confirmation that we are, "The good soil". We turn it into a parable about ourselves. Jesus ends the telling of the parable with the words, quoted in verse 9, "Let anyone with ears listen!" This is a clue that what he was saying should not just be taken at face value but he wanted his listeners to struggle, to ask questions and to think more deeply about what he was telling them.

This parable is known as The Parable of the Sower or sometimes The Parable of the Seed, I have never heard it referred to as The Parable of the Soil! So I want to reflect on the sower and the seeds.

The sower does not seem to be a very good farmer and the audience when Jesus first told this story would have recognised this. He seems wasteful, inefficient and has a very ineffective way of planting seeds. He is planting the same seed and putting in the same effort into planting into the different soils. He is not carefully selecting which soil. No soil is selected as being undeserving of the sower's seeds. Every type of soil is given the opportunity to grow and bear fruit. The sower has made no pre-judgements of the soil's worthiness. The parable is about the generosity of God. Unlike us he doesn't judge who is worthy to hear his word. God wants everyone to know him and to be given the opportunity to hear the gospel and to grow in faith. Jesus, knowing that his words would not always bear fruit, did not stop proclaiming the good news. He is encouraging us to be like him and generously to go and sow the word in some seemingly poor soil. Although with limited resources of money and time we may wonder about the wisdom or efficiency of this but Jesus has promised if we are faithful the end result will be a bumper crop.

What about the seeds we plant? They should be the seeds of faith, hope and love bearing the fruits of peace, equality and justice. We can see on the news that these are not always the seeds that are planted in our world. Some of the seeds that are planted are ones of fear and prejudice. The fruit that these bear are ones of inequality and injustice especially between people of different gender, race, sexual orientation and religion. But there are signs of hope, at a local level more people are supporting and volunteering for social justice projects like food banks and also the international campaigns such as Me Too and Black Lives Matter. These campaigns at least make us aware of issues and give us a platform to learn more about how our preconceived ideas have affected other's lives and prevented them flourishing and reaching their full potential. It makes us question our own prejudices and what privileges we have benefited from.