



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 13 JUNE 2021 – 2nd Sunday after Trinity

COLLECT

Lord, you have taught us
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:
send your Holy Spirit
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 20: 1-9

- 1 May the Lord hear you in the day of trouble, ♦
the name of the God of Jacob defend you;
- 2 Send you help from his sanctuary ♦
and strengthen you out of Zion;
- 3 Remember all your offerings ♦
and accept your burnt sacrifice;
- 4 Grant you your heart's desire ♦
and fulfil all your mind.
- 5 May we rejoice in your salvation
and triumph in the name of our God; ♦
may the Lord perform all your petitions.
- 6 Now I know that the Lord will save his anointed; ♦
he will answer him from his holy heaven,
with the mighty strength of his right hand.
- 7 Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses, ♦
but we will call only on the name of the Lord our God.
- 8 They are brought down and fallen, ♦
but we are risen and stand upright.
- 9 O Lord, save the king ♦
and answer us when we call upon you.

2 Corinthians 5: 6-10 & 14-17

⁶ So we are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.

¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation;^[a] the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.

Mark 4: 26-34

The Parable of the Growing Seed

²⁶ He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸ The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹ But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³⁰ He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³² yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

The Use of Parables

³³ With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴ he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Reflection- this week from Hannah

Have you ever forgotten something, and then re-discovered it, changed? I remember Bishop Paul Bayes telling the story of a forgotten pair of football boots. They came home from a match, still in the plastic carrier bag and were shoved under the bed for weeks and weeks. Then, one day when they were needed again, there was panic as the household scurried around trying to find them. When the boots were eventually discovered, there was grass growing out of the clods of brown earth that had stuck to them all that time ago. 'The unseen work of God' said the Bishop!

There in the dark, by themselves and without human intervention, seeds had germinated and new life sprung forth. The parable of the growing seed gives us a similar image. The creative relationship is between seed and earth- not anything that the farmer does. How it happens, is a mystery. Yes, we stand two thousand years on with a much more complex and nuanced understanding of ecology, but the point is that this process remains mysterious, happens in the dark and (as most gardeners know) is a thing of joy and delight.

The unseen work of God is like this- from the tiniest of seeds, like a mustard seed, a whole ecosystem can grow, and it is God who enables that to happen, not us. The real work is never ours- it belongs to God. All we need to have, or perhaps all we plant (or agitate?!) in another, is that little speck. A speck of faith. Even on our worst days, it's hard to imagine not having that. A number of years ago a well-known atheist group put posters on London buses that said 'there probably isn't a God'. Ironically, there's a mustard seed there in the 'probably'! They didn't quite dare to say anything more definitive, so they were left with a statement of faith. Indeed, it's a very rare thing to find anyone without that mustard seed of faith.

These parables challenge our sense of anxiety about living our faith and the signs of God acting in the world- we can worry so much about how that should be, and it can sound like hard work, but it really isn't *our* work- it's God working in us, with that small seed of faith, nurtured in the earth, which grows and spreads to become a majestic and sprawling tree- a tree which the birds of the air can nest in. In other words, a tree that is a connected part of creation, a blessing to others and source of life. And it all begins with a mere speck of a seed.