



SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

July 12, 2020

Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

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Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Esau and Jacob – twin brothers in our Genesis reading – couldn't have been more different – unlike Chloe and Zoey who both like their crafted cushions in finished faux fur and love their HD LED LCD 4K Pixel TV's – Lucky they're with AAMI.

^^Esau and Jacob were different to each other – ²⁷When the boys grew up, Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. They couldn't have been more divided. ^As their mother Rebekah was told by GOD: ²³'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.'

As Isaac pleaded with GOD for children, so the Bible encourages us to ask and even plead for our most

personal and important requests. GOD wants to grant our requests; but He wants us to ask Him. Even then, as Isaac learned, GOD may decide to withhold His answer for a while in order to:

1. Deepen our insight into what we really need
2. Broaden our appreciation for His answers; or
3. Allow us to mature so we can use His gifts more wisely.

A birthright was a special honour given to the firstborn son. It included a double portion of the family inheritance along with the honour of one day becoming the family's leader. The oldest son could sell his birthright or give it away if he chose – but in so doing, he would lose both material goods and his leadership position. By trading his birthright, Esau showed complete disregard for the spiritual blessings that would have come his way had he kept it. In effect, Esau “despised” his birthright – and he did it for the immediate pleasure of food – acting on impulse rather than pausing to consider the long-term consequences of his decision. Esau even exaggerated

his hunger by saying: “I am about to die”. The soil of his heart – as we will talk about later – was choked by the thorns of impulse, intense immediate satisfaction and giving in to temptation. Norman J Cohen is a Jewish academic scholar in New York, and he suggests “**that reconciliation between Jacob and Esau is always possible because they are part of each other’s identity. They are like 2 halves of a whole, and each need what the other has. Esau needs the patience and forethought of Jacob and Jacob needs the position and strength of Esau. Each is identified by his relationship with the other. They can never escape their bond.**”

^The first verse of our extract from Psalm 119 is the most important one for us today: **Your word is a lantern to my feet: and a light to my path.** To walk safely anywhere at night, we need a light, so we don’t trip over or fall. In this life, we walk through a dark forest of evil. But the Bible can be our light to show us the way ahead, so we don’t stumble as we walk. It reveals the entangling roots of false values and philosophies. The soils of our hearts

must be open and ready to receive the guidance we need as we journey through life.

Paul reminds us that JESUS' death, resurrection and ascension has set us free from sin and given us power to His will – by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Paul divides people into 2 categories:

1. Those who are dominated by their sinful nature;
and
2. Those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

All of us would be in the first category if JESUS hadn't offered us a way out. But we must choose to centre our lives on JESUS daily – in the good soil of our hearts. The Holy Spirit doesn't give us a certain feeling so we know we have received Him. We know we have received the Holy Spirit because JESUS promised He would come to us. The Holy Spirit is GOD's promise or guarantee of eternal life for those who believe in Him. The Spirit is in us now by faith, and by faith, we can be certain to live with CHRIST forever.

Our Gospel for today contains the familiar parable of the Sower – or as some call it “The Parable of the Four Soils.” A parable compels us to understand and discover spiritual truth by using everyday objects and relationships. Parables also conceal the truth from those too lazy or too stubborn to see it. To those who are honestly searching, the truth becomes clear. We must be careful not to read too much into parables – forcing them to say what they don’t mean. Each parable has a central meaning unless specified by JESUS.

This parable should encourage spiritual sowers – those who teach, preach, and lead others. The farmer sowed good seed, but not all the seed sprouted, and even the plants that grew had varying yields.

British theologian Angus Ritchie suggests that this parable invites us to ponder what kind of soil we are. In doing so, it focuses our attention on how to become more receptive and responsive to grace. Our part is not the initiator, nor is it entirely passive. It is GOD who gives

the increase – but He chooses to make us His co-workers.

By our life of prayer, and, in particular, through recognising and repenting of our sins, we can become deeper and more fruitful soil, allowing the LORD to uproot the “thorns” that choke off the growth of life within us. Explaining this parable to the disciples, JESUS identifies the thorns as “the cares of the world” and “the lure of wealth.”

Known as Fr Simeon, a trappist monk in the U.S. says that this parable speaks of a dynamic event whereby the Word of GOD – JESUS – becomes incarnate – embodied in human flesh, and bears fruit in the good soil of each human being. JESUS desires to become incarnate in the womb of our heart. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Word became flesh in the Blessed Virgin’s womb. In our passage from Paul’s letter to the Romans, he teaches them that this same Spirit must dwell within them. CHRIST is formed within us, if

we – like Mary – are overshadowed by and, indeed, know the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Like the seed in our parable, the Spirit comes to us as a divine gift. But, like the soil, we must be receptive to His work. Both our Gospel and our Romans reading require a decision. As Sarah Heaner Lancaster¹ - an American academic, points out “There is no neutrality. One either lives for GOD or not, and by not living for GOD, one displays loyalty to another dominion.” All who have ears must listen.



JESUS invites us in today’s Gospel to consider 2 things: GOD’s word given to us, and the state of our hearts and lives to receive His Word. JESUS presents these various states as different kinds of soil for the sowing of GOD’s Word – describing how we all have different capacities to listen, understand and follow GOD’s Word – so as to bear fruit in our lives.

¹ Sarah Heaner Lancaster is Hazen G. Werner Professor of Theology at Methodist Theological School in Ohio.

Jacob and Esau needed parts of each other's soil to be complete; Psalm 119:105 tells us that we need the light of GOD's Word to make clear our path; Paul reminds that the Spirit living within us is the same Spirit that raised JESUS from the tomb and the Gospel invites us to ponder what kind of soil we are – so that we can rid ourselves of the thorns, the nakedness and the hardness of heart which act as obstacles to the Word made flesh in our lives.



May we pray:

Gracious and merciful GOD, you sent your Word among us to bring forth life and to renew the face of the earth. Open our hearts to receive the Word that became flesh in your Son, JESUS CHRIST, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one GOD for ever and ever. Amen

Life Application Study Bible Daily Prayer 2020

GOD's Word 2020

Sunday's Coming Premium – the Christian Century

newsletter@christiancentury.org

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/10-july/faith/sunday-s-readings/5th-sunday-after-trinity> date accessed 08/07/2020