



Worship resources Trinity 4

The word of God, unfortunately, is a battle-ground in the Church at times. As a result, Christians are perceived to fall into two camps – those who take the word literally, and exalt the word almost to the level of an idol, and those who seem to almost ignore the word completely. This



caricature misses the great variety and richness of the various approaches to and understandings of God's word that we have in the Church, though, and so I hope we can avoid the stereotypes altogether.

Our prayer for this week is that, as we explore these Lectionary readings about God's word, we will find a life-giving and liberating way to honour the Word in our worship.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Genesis 25 : 19-34

We have been hearing over recent weeks how God blessed Abraham for his faith. And for a while, all seems well, as God's will is worked out first through

a son and now the birth of grandsons. But God's eternal good purpose constantly suffers setbacks through human selfishness and deceit, not least within a family.

The Psalm - Psalm 119: 105-112

Isaiah 55 : 10-13

We shall hear in the Gospel the familiar parable of the seed - the Word of God - sown in different conditions. Isaiah too used the picture of God's word taking root and being fruitful, guaranteeing joy and peace when the time of exile would come to an end.

Romans 8 : 1-11

Paul has discovered that sin is never completely conquered. But the amazing consequence of faith in Jesus Christ is that God does not utterly condemn us. Our lives are quite different, because they are directed to God, and through his Spirit he gives us true life.

Matthew 13 : 1-9, 18-23

If you have ears, then hear a parable. God's presence and God's word are broadcast everywhere, like seed falling in every kind of soil and climate. To you it has been given to hear and understand and be fruitful.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

[http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Genesis%2025:%2019-34%0A%2BOR%0AIsaiah%2055:10-13%0A%20Acw%20Psalm%20119:%20105-112%20%0A%2BOR%0A%20Acw%20Psalm%2065:\[1-8\],9-13%0ARomans%208:%201-11%0AMatthew%2013:%201-9,%2018-23](http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Genesis%2025:%2019-34%0A%2BOR%0AIsaiah%2055:10-13%0A%20Acw%20Psalm%20119:%20105-112%20%0A%2BOR%0A%20Acw%20Psalm%2065:[1-8],9-13%0ARomans%208:%201-11%0AMatthew%2013:%201-9,%2018-23)

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O God, the protector of all that trust in thee,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy;
Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy;
that, thou being our ruler and guide,
we may so pass through things temporal,
that we finally lose not the things eternal:
Grant this, O heavenly Father,
for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord.

Collect Two

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy:
Increase and multiply upon us your mercy;
that with you as our ruler and guide,
we may so pass through things temporal
that we finally lose not the things eternal:
Grant this, heavenly Father,
for Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Because two sparrows are sold for a penny and even they do not go unnoticed by you, Gracious God, we boldly offer our prayers, saying, "Lord have mercy," and respond, "Christ have mercy."

For all who gather around this table of mercy, that the body and blood of Christ might strengthen us in lives of compassion and service to others. Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

For all who work to supply our daily bread.
Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

For the hungry and the starving.
Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

For those who feel themselves to be on the outskirts of our congregation - the lonely, the shy, the despised and those who have known ridicule, that they might be made welcome this morning in the sharing of the peace. Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

That all preparing for baptism and confirmation might have the courage to live out their Christian vocations on a daily basis.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

For this faith community, that we might openly model forgiveness, acceptance and new life in Christ.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Gracious God, help us not to harden our hearts, but rather always to turn to you. Grant that our prayers and our lives might be worthy of the name Christian. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

Eternal God,
comfort of the afflicted and healer of the broken,
you have fed us at the table of life and hope.
Teach us the ways of gentleness and peace,
that all the world may acknowledge
the kingdom of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

O God of mercy,
in Jesus Christ you freed us from sin and death,
and by your Holy Spirit
you nourish our mortal bodies with life.
Plant us now in good soil,
that our lives may flower
in righteousness and peace. Amen.

Ancient Gardener,
your holy word is planted in our hearts
as good seed in fertile soil.
So nurture us
that we may bear fruit abundantly. Amen.

Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,

that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards
of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

Flood our lives with your grace, O Lord.
Fill our whole being with your radiance,
our innermost souls with your presence,
and our very wills with your strength.

Let us shine with the light of Christ,
let us preach by example
and let us carry nothing in our hearts
but your love; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

John Henry Newman, 1801-90

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbours. Amen.

Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things:
graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true
religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of your great mercy
keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who
is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God,
now and for ever. Amen

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the
new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the
fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by

their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

O Lord, my God, grant us your peace; already, indeed, you have made us rich in all things!

Give us that peace of being at rest, that sabbath peace, the peace which knows no end. (*St. Augustine*)

Keep us, O God, from pettiness; let us be large in thought, in word, in deed. Let us be done with faultfinding and leave off self-seeking. May we put away all pretences and meet each other, face to face, without self-pity and without prejudice. May we never be hasty in judgment and always generous. Let us take time for all things; make us to grow calm, serene, gentle. Teach us to put in action our better impulses-straightforward and unafraid.

Grant that we may realize it is the little things of life that create difficulties; that in the big things of life we are as one. Oh, Lord, let us not forget to be kind. Amen. (*Mary Stewart, Queen of Scots*)

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Genesis 25:19-34:

"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." What a pre-natal message for a mother to receive! Rebekah doesn't ultimately see a problem in having a favorite of these children - she chooses the stronger. But for my own mother, I know there is nothing worse for her than when her children are fighting with each other. She can't choose, she just wants everyone to 'get along.' How would you receive this news, personally, and for the people it will affect?

I've always thought Jacob and Rebekah were pretty nasty and scheming in this story line - but you have to admit, Esau is not too bright to give up (NRSV reads 'despised') his birthright for some stew. I guess we often are willing to sacrifice something of value for our immediate pleasures, even to our own detriment. It's the American way, no?

Psalms 119:105-112:

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet" - this is a great praise chorus/camp song made popular by Amy Grant - it is also, in my mind, a good view to hold of scripture: A lamp to my feet and a light to my path. I think the words

put scripture in its appropriate place: illuminating our way by God's word, without becoming idolatrous of God's word.

"I am severely afflicted. Give me life, O Lord, according to your word." This is a great prayer to bring to God - ask God for life!

Romans 8:1-11:

"therefore now no condemnation" - these are such awesome words. We are not condemned, in the midst of a world that is so condemning.

"Christ Jesus has set you free" - freedom and free are words tossed around a lot today. How are we free in Christ? Is this the same or different from freedom we talk about in political circles today?

the limits of law are clear when held up next to the amazing-ness of God's grace

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23:

Jesus' parables are amazing things, because they are always more than they seem. We like to decode everything in them, saying, this = this and that = that, knowing what each image corresponds to. But parables don't really work that way, piece by piece. We must take them as a whole.

Where do you see yourself in this parable? Rocky soil? Parched by

If God is the sower, why doesn't God only sow seed in the good soil?

By Beth Quick

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Two ideas that come together in this week's readings are God's Word and God's Life – both of which are experienced through God's Spirit. In Isaiah, God's Word is proclaimed as reliable and able to accomplish its purpose, which is also celebrated in Psalm 119. In Genesis, God's word about the wrestling twins is seen to be true as their relationship works itself out as the two boys grow into men. In Psalm 65, although the word is not specifically mentioned as such, the effectiveness of God's word is seen in similar ways to

Isaiah's prophecy – the abundance that the earth brings forth. In Romans, God's life is experienced through God's Spirit who is available to us through Christ – the Word of God. Finally, in the Gospel, Jesus speaks about the word of God as seed that is scattered and that fails to produce in various soils that are not optimal, but that, in good soil, provides abundance. At its heart, the Lectionary seeks to invite us this week to open our hearts to God's Spirit, to receive God's word and to embrace the abundant life that God seeks to give us.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: It is tempting, in the face of this week's readings, to view the world in simplistic terms – if we just listen to God's word, abundance will come, and life will be ours and all will be ok. In one sense there is truth in this – if we allow the wisdom of God's word to guide us, we will care for the world, and ensure that it's ability to provide food is not jeopardised by our foolishness and greed, while also ensuring that food is distributed equitably; if we allow God's word to guide us, we will avoid the destructiveness of our human brokenness and sin, and enjoy the life-giving benefits of living with justice mercy and grace. If we allow God's word to guide us we will open ourselves to God's presence and enjoy relationship with God that inspires and empowers us, while enabling us to bring life to others. However, life is also far more complex. Sometimes we face lack and suffering through no fault of our own. Sometimes the call of justice is not as clear as having one right way to go, but leaves us to make difficult choices between alternatives that may have different pros and cons. But, it is important that the two extremes – of blind, literalistic application of God's word, and of complete disregard for God's word – are avoided, and that, in working with God for the healing and rescue of our world and ourselves, we allow God's word to guide us, while also taking account of the wisdom that science, reason and common sense can give – all of which can also be thought of, in some sense, as a word of God. Christ's call for us to be good soil means that we need seek to be those who study and receive God's word responsibly, thoughtfully and prayerfully, and then allow it to direct us as we interact with others, work for justice and seek to bring life as God's Spirit empowers and guides us. This is the opposite of being "Bible-bashers", and is the gracious, sensitive, compassionate attitude of those who have been both convicted and challenged by the life and message of Christ. It is these sensitive but strong servants and prophets that our world so desperately needs.

LOCAL APPLICATION: As preachers and leaders in communities of faith, it is tempting to use God's word as a way to control others so they respond and behave as we want them to, or as we believe they should. It is tempting to go

the easy route of surface, literalistic reading of Scripture, because of the busyness of our lives and ministries, and it is tempting to encourage our people to read the Bible in this way as well, so as to avoid difficult questions and the possible struggles of different interpretations and opinions creating dissension or confusion. But to do this fails both us and our people in two ways. In the first instance it reduces God's word to a book alone, and robs us of the richness of experiencing God's word primarily as the person – Jesus. In the second instance, it robs us of the surprising and life-giving discoveries that come when we celebrate questions and diversity. And for those who come to our churches God's Word can be the source of comfort, healing and invitation, if we will allow it be. Unfortunately, the church has too often been seen as a place that robs people of life rather than giving life, of judgment and condemnation, based on God's Word, rather than on the grace and mercy that that same Word offers. It's not that we ignore the tough challenges of following God's word, but that we embrace them for ourselves – the call to follow Christ into compassionate and sacrificial living, and the call to be life-givers for others – rather than using them to control or judge others. And, as we do this, we draw others into the joy, challenge and blessing that comes from living in alignment with the word that was taught and lived by Christ – the final word of God.

SERMON OUTLINE 1

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 – The sower... a memorable day with a memorable story told by Jesus to the crowd on the shore as he taught them from a boat...

1. The Sower:- *A sower went out to sow...* Jesus describes what happens to the seed as it falls on the different types of soil - & later explains its meaning (18-23)... The traditional means of sowing was for the farmer to scatter the seed broadcast up & down the field... Naturally the seed would land everywhere on different types of soil...

2. The Seed:- was scattered by the sower – with the explanation of St Luke (8.11) – *The seed is the word of God* – faithfully proclaimed by Jesus & his followers down the ages – scattered abroad in human hearts everywhere throughout the world..

3. The Soil:- Jesus focuses on where the seed falls:- **a) path** – strips between fields - *birds came and ate them* **b) rocky ground** - *no depth of soil - they were scorched...* **c) among thorns** - *thorns grew up and choked them...* **d) good soil** - *brought forth grain* – a plentiful harvest!

4. **The Success 18-23:-** as Jesus explains the parable – how people receive the word of God. There will be disappointment in many cases – but success is ultimately guaranteed in (23) *in 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.*’ - in an abundant harvest and obedient heart. Ultimately God promises and encourages every faithful preacher through **Isaiah 55.11** *my word... shall not return to me empty.*

By Norman Porteous

SERMON OUTLINE 2

The parable of the sower is very familiar and you will have heard many explications of it over the years. I must confess when I hear the parable, I think of my own little attempt to grow lettuce or sunflowers in the garden. When things don't grow it isn't of any importance. But Jesus was trying to tell his people that the barriers to growth, spiritual growth, were real and frightening and could mean the difference between life and death. In Jesus' time the population as a whole were much more keenly aware than most of us now are, of the vital nature of agriculture. The people around Jesus all knew that if the seed did not flourish then starvation, illness and death would shortly follow. This brings a new urgency to the parable.

In his explanation of the story Jesus spoke of the parable as meaning that the types of soil meant different types of personality and their ability to grasp and retain the meaning of the Word. I wonder too, if Jesus' story might be applicable to each one of us: that we are across our lifetimes quite differently able to be receptive to God's word? What if we move in and out of being strong healthy productive plants and revert to becoming spindly or drooping plants at others?

People in this congregation often speak to me about their sense of grief about their children or grandchildren either not having any faith or not a faith which takes them to church. I do not feel we should despair. Many people return to regular worship at key change points in their lives: when they have their first child, when their children do not need them quite so much, after a bereavement. I firmly believe that God calls to us. I believe that our hearts are restless till they rest in God, and that we are pulled gently back to Him, if not in our lives then at the end. God will never let go of us, though we may not always be conscious of it. To return to the metaphor that Jesus uses. I think there are times when we are barren soil indeed. Perhaps when we are very

sad or vulnerable. We become barren when we are disappointed or feeling lost.

But the sower, God, just keeps on patiently sending out the seed until we are ready to receive it aright!

Rev Dr Joan Crossley

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

Sermons at the Mount - Starts with a moving description of a summer camp for handicapped persons, one of whom is this preacher's brother. Good exposition and application of the parable of the sower.

<http://revgoforth.wordpress.com/sermons-on-matthew/matthew-131-9/>

["The Sower's Lesson,"](#) the Rev. Joseph Evans, *Day1*.

http://day1.org/3038-the_sowers_lesson

["Response to the Good News,"](#) the Rev. Dr. Jimmy Allen, *Day 1*.

[ay1.org/1103-response_to_the_good_news](http://day1.org/1103-response_to_the_good_news)

["God Is a Foolish Farmer,"](#) Dylan's Lectionary Blog, Proper 10A. Biblical Scholar Sarah Dylan Breuer.

http://www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/2005/07/proper_10_year_.html

CHILDREN

Worshipping with Children - a fantastic resource for each week! Based on the lectionary, there is quite simply *oodles of stuff* (This phrase is of course from a deep translation of a minor riff in the Septuagint!) Seriously, this lady has looked at children's literature, Harry Potter et al, and used her chosen examples skilfully to explain the lectionary readings for the day. The writer has 35 years experience on church staff in the USA, mainly in children's ministry.

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2011/06/year-proper-10-15th-sunday-in-ordinary.html>

Anna's Hosannas - simple direct children's talk. Or, there is a script for a dialogue approach.

<http://annashosannas.net/Ordinary-Time-15A.php>

"Planting the Seed"

<http://annashosannas.net/Resources-for-July-10%2C-2011.php>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Praise to the Lord the Almighty

Bind us together, Lord

Lead us, heavenly father lead us

Breathe on me breath of God

O for a thousand tongues to sing

O Word Of God Incarnate

Almighty God, Thy Word Is Cast

Lord, We Hear Your Word With Gladness

Lord, Thy Word Abideth

Thy Word (*Link to YouTube video*)

Your Word: Chord Chart; Mp3 Download (*Link to Amazon Mp3 Download Store*)

Breathe (*Link to YouTube video*)

I, The Lord Of Sea And Sky (*Link to YouTube video*)

Please commend this resource to colleagues - they simply send an email to churchnewsireland@gmail.com with the message Passwords in the title