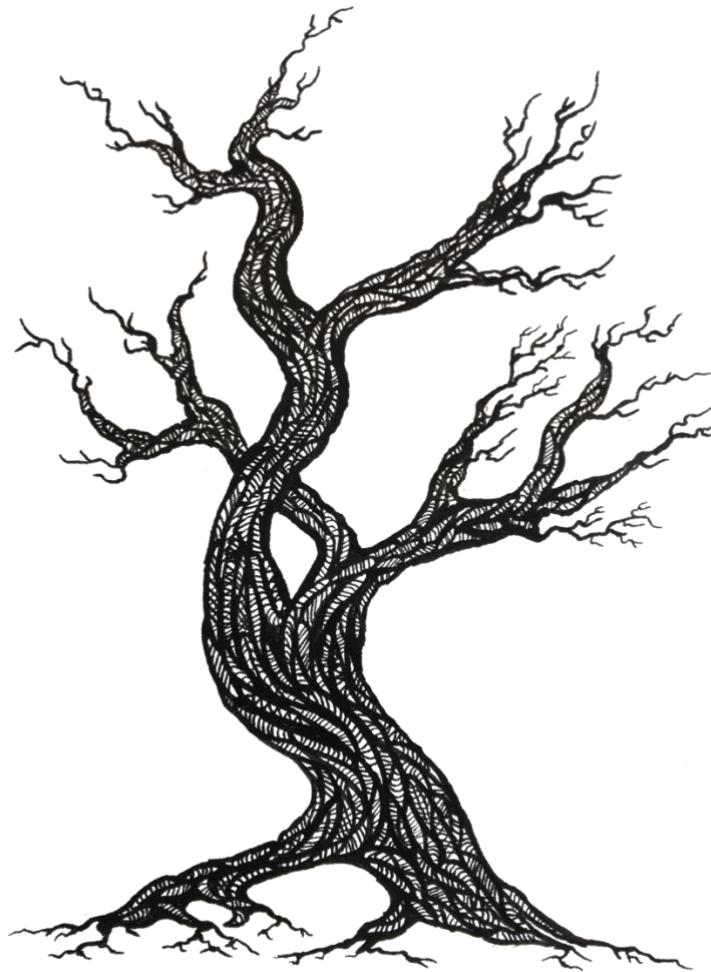


## **Fifth Sunday after Trinity**

Prayers, Readings, Reflection and Song.

“Welcome to another short act of worship for the Parish Church of St Martin. For those who are able to follow it as written or listen in, I hope it offers some comfort, encouragement and a sense of being together despite the distance between us.” Rev Jonny



*Be still, and draw yourself closer to the God who rests beside you,  
before you and within you.*

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

*All* **Amen.**

The Lord be with you

*All* **And also with you**

Lord God, our maker and our redeemer,  
this is your world and we are your people:  
come among us and save us.

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit:  
Lord, have mercy.

*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart:  
Christ, have mercy.

*All* **Christ, have mercy.**

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided:  
Lord, have mercy.

*All* **Lord, have mercy.**

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.

*All* **Amen**

*The Collect for the day*

Almighty and everlasting God,  
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church  
is governed and sanctified:  
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,  
that in their vocation and ministry  
they may serve you in holiness and truth  
to the glory of your name;  
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

*All* **Amen.**

**THE LITURGY OF THE WORD**

*Gospel Reading, from Matthew 13*

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 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!"

"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.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**All Praise to you, O Christ**

### *Reflection*

Before we think about the seeds and the soil and the rocks and the thorns, let's just have a quick look at something else: the people on the beach, because that's where this parable really begins.

It's been a relentless time for Jesus. Earlier this same day, Matthew tells us, Jesus has had what looks like a rather bitter falling out with his own family – telling them when they call him that they are not his mother and his brothers. No wonder Jesus is looking for some time alone.

But he doesn't get a chance. Within moments such great crowds have surrounded him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach.

Just imagine them - the crowds on the shore of the lake in the hot sun, some of them chatting among themselves, others distracted by fractious children, some who have come to be healed only waiting until Jesus has finished in order to approach him, others who had come to argue, and just a few straining forward to catch every word.

And what does Jesus say to them, his very first word: 'Listen!' Listen.

When we're tramping through St Catherine's Woods with the girls and I hear a woodpecker, I say the same: Listen!. And at that moment the girls stop completely still – not moving a muscle. We wait in the silence for a minute or so before the woodpecker goes again – only for a short burst – and we begin to track its location. Each time we have to remain completely still as we hear a little more, and search high in the canopy for where the noise originates. If we are lucky – and if we are completely still – we might just see a flash of green or a little red hat. We have found

our elusive bird.

Listen!

The people on the beach are just like the ground in the parable. Were they ready to stop what they were doing? Were they willing to stay still for moment, to stop rushing and rest in the peaceful presence of Jesus – to listen for his words and draw closer to the source of his being?

Like the good soil – not perfect, but good. Good enough.

The good soil is ready to receive the word of God. But how is it ready?

It is clear – clear of rocks and weeds. Clear of obstructions and excuses. Just think of those people on the shore who came with more questions and criticisms than a genuine desire to hear. Like ourselves, when we take more comfort in our reasons to doubt than in our desire to trust. Good soil takes time to clear.

I remember when I was a boy I would watch my dad prepare a vegetable patch by rooting out weeds and stones. The weeds would go on the compost that would in time rot down to compost and one day feed the plants with life giving nutrients. The stones he would spread out on a little path he was creating to help him mark out and reach the plot.

That's a beautiful image. The weeds and thorns that we become aware of in our own lives will one day feed our faith. Our struggles and our griefs will be our teachers, our nurturers, if only we give them their proper place and time. Just like the stones that would blunt the spade and split the roots, take them out, but do not bury them again or throw them away – those things that can cause us pain can also become the path that leads us to fruitfulness.

The good soil is clear.

And as the farmers among you know – good soil must also be broken.

I was reading a book about the history of modern economics the other day (I've had a fair bit of time on my hands!) and it began with a chapter on the plough. 10,000 years ago, a simple device was created that could break-up the surface of the soil, bringing nutrients to the surface and allowing moisture to seep deeper. The land could now be brought to yield 6 times what would otherwise be provided through hunting and gathering. The agricultural revolution began when the soil began to be broken.

Our souls, like the soil, need to be broken too. Those folk on the beach that day – many of them were being broken every day by the harsh conditions of Roman rule. Many of them were broken social outcasts who would never be accepted inside the codes of Jewish purity. They were broken, and so they were ready to hear the words that Jesus spoke.

It is when our own certainties are broken down that we can begin to listen, too. You only have to think of the last few months to realise how much relentless noise and

certainty there was in our lives before Lockdown began. We had become convinced that unless the shops were full of shoppers, and unless the skies were full of aeroplanes, then the fabric of society would cease to function. But then everything did stop. Certainties began to crumble and guess what – the world didn't end. And through the cracks we began to see a different way of living – a gentler, kinder, more generous and grateful way of being.

We allowed the tight surface of our soil to be broken. We are still there, and we can still learn so much about what it means to be human, before the ground closes tightly in again.

Good soil is what Jesus wants our souls to be.

But Listen! It's not about perfection. It is about being willing to stop – to stand still. It is about looking for the rocks and the thorns and the weeds in our lives and not chucking them away, but allowing them to feed our faith afresh. It is about being broken. Allowing our rigid certainties to be cracked open like the furrow of the plough.

That is when the seeds of love take root. That is where the love of God will grow.

Amen.

### *Song*

**Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.**

**Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,  
speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.**

**Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -  
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,  
past put behind us, for the future take us:  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.**

*Prayers of Intercession*

*Pray for one another – those in our church community*

*Pray for the Parish, the Island and the World*

*Pray for the sick, the isolated, the anxious and depressed*

*Pray for the dying, and those who mourn*

*Pray for yourselves, and for your own needs*

Lord in your mercy

**All Hear our prayer**

*The Intercessions may end as follows*

Merciful Father

**All Accept these prayers**

**for the sake of your son,**

**our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

*The Peace*

Peace to you from God our heavenly Father.

Peace from his Son Jesus Christ who is our peace.

Peace from the Holy Spirit, the life-giver.

The peace of the triune God be always with you

**All and also with you.**

Let us pray with confidence, as our Saviour taught us

**All Our Father**

**who art in heaven,**

**hallowed be thy name,**

**thy kingdom come,**

**thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;**

**and forgive us our trespasses**

**as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory**

**For ever and ever. Amen.**

*The Blessing.*

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love,  
defend you on every side,  
and guide you in truth and peace;  
and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and  
the Holy Spirit, be with you and remain with you always.

*All* **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

*All* **In the name of Christ. Amen.**