

The United Benefice of
St Michael on Greenhill, Lichfield
with St John, Wall



COLLECT AND READINGS
12th July
5th Sunday after Trinity

From this Sunday the readings will include a canticle and a psalm which we will be saying in church instead of hymns. They are printed here so that those worshipping at home can use them as well.

Collect

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.

Amen

Canticle - Venite

- 1 O come, let us sing to the Lord;
let us heartily rejoice in the rock of our salvation.
- 2 Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving
and be glad in him with psalms.
- 3 For the Lord is a great God
and a great king above all gods.
- 4 In his hand are the depths
of the earth
and the heights of the mountains are his also.
- 5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands have moulded the dry land.
- 6 Come, let us worship and bow down
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.
- 7 For he is our God;
we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Psalm 65:1-7

- 1 Praise is due to you,
O God, in Zion;
to you that answer prayer shall vows be paid.
- 2 To you shall all flesh come to confess their sins;
when our misdeeds prevail against us, you will purge them away.
- 3 Happy are they whom you choose
and draw to your courts to dwell there.
We shall be satisfied with the blessings of your house,
even of your holy temple.
- 4 With wonders you will answer us in your righteousness,
O God of our salvation,
O hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.
- 5 In your strength you set fast the mountains
and are girded about with might.
- 6 You still the raging of the seas,
the roaring of their waves
and the clamour of the peoples.
- 7 Those who dwell at the ends of the earth
tremble at your marvels;
the gates of the morning and evening sing your praise.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

New Testament

Romans 8.1-11

¹ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you^[a] free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh,^[b] God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.^[c] And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life^[d] because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of^[e] his Spirit who lives in you.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 13.1-9,18-23

¹ That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. ³ Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. ⁹ Whoever has ears, let them hear."
¹⁸ "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Post Communion

Grant, O Lord, we beseech you,
that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by your governance,
that your Church may joyfully serve you in all godly quietness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Sunday Sermon

The link for the Sunday sermon is

<https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/sunday-sermons.html>

For those who receive this by post the text is printed below.

Trinity 5 2020: The Parable of the Sower

As Jesus sits in a boat, he teaches the crowd who have gathered by the lakeside. He tells them stories, parables to help them understand the good news that he brings. Among the crowd are those who are committed to him and his ministry – the twelve disciples and others too. Also there are the curious – perhaps they are drawn by the novelty of this man and his teaching. Some are there because they know he has already had run ins with those in authority and they want to see what happens next. Others are seeking something – maybe this is the answer to the gap in their lives- their discontent with the way things are and the way they are – surely things could be better.

If anyone thinks though that Jesus and his message are going to be a runaway success, then the story of the sower will make them think again. Jesus tells them, and us, how it is – this is reality. No matter how the sower works to sow the seed of the word of God, some will fall upon barren ground or weedy ground or hard ground. And some too will fall upon fruitful soil enough to bear fruit and provide nourishment and seed for another sowing.

Maybe those who are more reflective among the crowd begin to wonder what kind of soil they are – what kind of response they are making to what Jesus is teaching.

But Jesus surely also tells the parable as encouragement for his own committed followers. He has already sent them out in pairs to spread the word of the Kingdom of Heaven, healing the sick and bringing new life. As they go around, they experience welcome and a good reception but also rejection and even ridicule. They know that the word falls upon different soils – and not all of it flourishes despite their best efforts. For Jesus to say that this is reality – the way the world is – even with the life giving word of God is encouragement. This is God's word and we can only do our faithful best. How people respond is up to them and their conscience.

Over the last months – since gathered worship in churches was stopped – ministers and congregations all over have been unbelievably imaginative and creative about bringing the word of God and the comfort of the good news to as wide an audience as possible. I say unbelievable because who would have thought that clergy and congregations of all kinds and traditions would learn so fast to record, stream and present the gospel within so many different platforms of modern communication. It's a testimony to the convictions of so many – that the word will not be silenced whatever the circumstances – and no one now can really ever make jokes again about how the church is slow to change and respond.

It has been exciting to see how many people have picked up on what is on offer. It has been heartening to count those who participate in worship on-line – watch recorded sermons like this- and engage with the life of the Christian community in a new way – maybe for the first time.

Now, as we begin to return to worship in our church buildings – albeit in limited and unfamiliar ways – it is timely that we hear the encouragement of Jesus in the parable of the sower.

It is wonderful that so many feel able to gather together again. We have missed each other. We know that others are not ready to come back yet and they are in our hearts today. It will be a cause of great thanksgiving if some who have joined in on-line, in recent months find their way to join a church community – we pray that they find a welcome and fellowship there. It is our prayer too that whatever people have received over the last weeks, will sow the seed of God's loving word in their lives and in some way will flourish.

But the reality, that Jesus reminds us about, is all around us and the very context in which the word of God is still sown. Many things are returning to a kind of normal. We can begin to visit friends and family – which is wonderful. The pubs are open – a blessing in my opinion. The shops are there every day as they always were. Work is starting up. There are holidays to catch up on. And for some the cold reality of harder times – no work – financial and personal challenges – lack of confidence in a changed world will bear down upon them. All these things – the good and the sad – begin to crown into our lives.

Maybe in some places on-line services will maintain the new contacts they have made, will hold a wider community together and lead to fruitful things. But the reality is that there are now distractions and concerns – draws on time and attention – which will take people off into other things.

But let's not be discouraged by any of that – this is God's work and as the conditions change and life goes on – even in new ways – all we can do is our faithful best and be as aware as we can of new people and new possibilities.

Now all of this might seem very church centred – about us and about numbers of worshippers. But actually the parable of the sower is much broader than that – has a lot to say about our present situation as a community and a country. We need to ask – what is the word of God that the sower sows – that Jesus shares in his parables, teaching and healing? Yes, it clearly is about belief – belief in Jesus as the Word of God among us with God's gracious words upon his lips. But if we pay attention to his teaching, we see that it is so much more than that. The word of God is the word of human

flourishing – the encouragement to create a more just and inclusive and caring community. Jesus teaching is about care for the poor, the marginalised, the voiceless, the less powerful, the wounded and the hesitant. It is also about the responsibility of the stronger, the more influential and the confident. What kind of community might emerge from a pandemic – what kind of justice in society might we create – what strong bonds of care and concern might we forge – all these things were being thought about and commented on by many while our freedoms were restricted in lockdown and we had the time to consider important things – rather than rush onward to the next thing in the diary. Now as we see restrictions being lifted, we may well wonder about the different soils into which this potentially life-giving seed is falling. Some of it will fall upon fruitful ground and people and movements will make the greatest efforts to bring about change and renewal – we need to be alive and alert to this.

But there are other soils – other grounds that are not so fertile – even poisonous. The cares and distractions of life we have already mentioned. But there is one soil that does not feature in Jesus’ parable – perhaps not so obvious in his day – before our consumer society and our demand for individual choice. It is the soil of “Me, me”. The life that so quickly returns to being self-centred and never mind the others. We have seen it in people crowding together – it won’t happen to me – bringing fear to seaside communities by ramming the beaches – carelessly and unthinkingly leaving disgusting amounts of rubbish on those beaches and in our parks – others can clear it up – its not my responsibility. The soil that is all about *me* is not ground on which the word of life and community can flourish.

Perhaps the most truthful response to Jesus’ story of the sower is to admit that all of us are the different soils at different times. We are distracted, our attention is drawn away, we can get enthusiastic and then lose interest. We all have a patch of “me, me” soil too. But we also want to be fruitful – to be bearers of good news – bringers of hope and renewal for ourselves and others. Coming back to church reminds of that – our weekly practice of reflection, confession, absolution and re-commitment not only refreshes the soil of our hearts– it strengthens our resolve to be sowers of the seed and not only hearers of the word: always remembering Jesus’ encouragement to step out in hope and expectation as the sower in the parable – for this is God’s word for God’s world and he will provide both seed for sowing and the harvest.

Simon Baker

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Nick Rutter, John and Sonia Doidge, Jeyan Anketel, Reg and Chris Kirk

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Anthony Staples aged 6, Audrey Egleston, Colin Eastwood, Yvonne Harper, Ian and Judith Watson, Alison Cox-Toplis, Julian & Wendy, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Robert Harris, Bill Hill, James Knight, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Renee Wellings, Felicity Woodfield

Those who have died

Ralph Werrell

ST JOHN

Those who are ill and their carers:

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

Prayer Requests

You can text prayer requests to 07388 529020

CHURCH NOTICES

SUNDAY WORSHIP IN CHURCH

From this Sunday 12th July both St Michael's and St John's will be open for worship at our usual times of 8.00am and 10.00am.

It is a great delight for us to welcome people back into church for worship. We must also remember and support those who are not able to attend. Our recorded readings and sermons will continue to be sent out as we have been doing. In that way we will be able to maintain our unity and fellowship around the Word of God whether we are in church or at home.

The form of the service in church will be said Holy Communion and seats and pews will be arranged in such a way that social distancing can be maintained. The seats used for Sunday services will not be used again until the next Sunday.

Communion will be in one kind only – the bread – and will be received standing.

There can be no singing at present, but there will be music.

We have produced a full set of local guidelines to help everyone who is organising our services. These conform with the government and Church of England guidelines. You may wish to look at them [here](#):

To make things easier here are a few bullet points to remember when you come to church for worship.

- Sanitise your hands on the way in – sanitisers are available
- Keep a proper distance at all times
- Sit only in seats as indicated
- Leave the church as instructed by the clergy and do not stay in church for conversation
- Conversation may continue in the open space of the churchyard
- Take with you the Sunday service sheet when you go
- You may wear a mask if you wish, but it is not required
- Be aware of others at all times
- Children are welcome but there will be no toys or activities provided

Rector and Churchwardens

CHURCHES OPEN FOR PRIVATE PRAYER

Our churches are now open for private prayer only.

St Michael's Lichfield is open between 2.00pm and 4.00pm and will be open at this time every day. The church will be staffed during opening hours.

St John's at Wall is open on Wednesdays and Sundays from 10.00am to 4.00pm. The church will not be staffed during opening hours.

In both churches provision there is for hand sanitization, cleaning and social distancing. We are delighted to be able to open our churches, but we also want to make sure that everyone is safe.

BIBLE STUDY - WEDNESDAY 15th JULY at 10.30am We will be sharing our favourite bible verses with each other. We use "Zoom" for these meetings. Our next Bible Study series begins on Wednesday 22nd July. We will be looking at and discussing the book of **Daniel** - which contains some well-known stories we all remember from Sunday school! The sessions will include an introduction and discussion. The text for the week and the questions we will be talking over will be posted on the website the weekend before each session. Anyone is welcome to come along and join in or simply listen and take in what is going on. If you would like to join in please contact Angie in the office.

WORSHIP BY ZOOM

We will be holding live worship by Zoom on the first and third Sundays of each month. These services bring together those who can attend church and those who are unable to do so. They are an important way of keeping our fellowship together. If you have not joined in one of these services before please do. The next service is as set out below.

Sunday 19th July 6.00pm.

You can join the service from 5.45pm. The service will last about 40mins. There will be readings, prayers, a short address and hymns.

If you would like to join in please email Simon on simonbaker57@outlook.com and you will be sent a direct link. You do not need to have Zoom downloaded on your PC or other device.

If you have already joined a Zoom service, you should receive the link a few days before. If you have not had a link by Sunday morning, please email.

FROM THE DIOCESAN BULLETIN

#BuildBackBetter

People are invited to sign the [#BuildBackBetter statement](#). #BuildBackBetter is a platform for everyone who wants the UK to come out of the Covid crisis a stronger, fairer, greener country.

It urges those in authority to prioritise the resourcing of health, social care, housing and other vital public services to meet future needs, mend inequalities in society, create secure, well-paid, rewarding jobs for all, and tackle the climate emergency.

Join Rowan Williams, the Bishop of Manchester, Big Issue founder John Bird and many others in signing personally or on behalf of your

organisation <https://www.buildbackbetter.org.uk/?source=twitter&>

OTHER NEWS

Farewell to Betty Richmond

Betty and her late husband, Ken have been regular worshippers here at St Michael's Church for many years.

Betty is moving to Hughenden in High Wycombe to be closer to her family and will be worshipping at St Michael and All Angels church.

We all send our love and best wishes for a very happy future.

Farewell to Peter, Rowan, Milo, Ellie, Rupert and Gabriel

Peter, Rowan and the family will be moving to Hong Kong in the next few days. We wish them a safe journey and a happy life in their new home. They have promised to send us regular updates which will appear in the newsheet and magazine.

ENGLAND'S SAINTLY LANDSCAPE

Trevor James, after forty years gathering, examining and assessing evidence, of the influence of the early Christian saints on the English landscape, has drawn his conclusions together so that others may share his wider interpretation.

To this end he has recently published his book "England's Saintly Landscape" and has made 20 copies of his book available to St Michael's for sale, at a cost of £10, the proceeds from which will go into Church funds.

I have read the book and found it to be a most informative and interesting commentary on how England's local population's and trade's reverence of the early Saints influenced the geography of early Anglo-Saxon England, which persists well into our present day, by the adoption of saints as patrons by various trades and professions and/or proximity to Pilgrimage routes along which many religious communities were established to provide succour to pilgrims on their long and arduous journeys.

Should you be interested in purchasing a copy of Trevor's excellent book please 'phone Lyn Shiel (01543/320437) for details.

VOLUNTEERING AND CHARITIES

LICHFIELD FOODBANK is continuing to function and is dealing with increased numbers of clients. Donations of items can still be made at the collection boxes in our local Co-op, Tesco and Waitrose supermarkets. The particular items needed are – **snacks (breakfast bars, crackers), custard and tinned meat**. If you can, please do support this appeal. **The drop off point in church is now available when the church is open**

STAYING IN TOUCH

The office Phone is not currently being regularly monitored. The ministry team and others are continuing a ministry by telephone to keep in touch. Rector, Simon Baker (☎ 01543 253010)

ITEMS FROM OUR MAGAZINE

The Magazine for August will be printed and delivered at the end of July, so there will be no more magazine articles published in the newsletter from now on.

The Rector, Simon Baker

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