



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
5th Sunday after Trinity – Sermon for 10.00am 12th July 2020
Bible Readings: Romans 8: 1-11 & St Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

A vanity-crushing encounter

If, a few weeks ago, you read my Midweek Musings you may recall the account of my vanity-crushing visit to a supermarket during lockdown. There, a very kindly man insisted I took his place higher up the socially-distanced queue because, to quote, 'It's not right to keep the elderly waiting!' Sadly, he really did mean me!

A life-enhancing encounter

A fortnight ago, yet again, I became the subject of avid scrutiny in another supermarket. I was dressed in my clerical collar and, as I queued at the till with other customers, someone walked up to me and said straight out, "When did you first know that you were called to be a priest?" As the rest of the Clergy Chapter was absent, he had to mean me! I then recognised the man, as someone I had worked with in the finance industry in the late 1970s. I was about to respond when he said "I remember you speaking to me about your faith years ago and I thought then, someday, you'll be a priest." His prescient moment took me another 30 years to recognise because vocation seldom hits one between the eyeballs in a flash but instead creeps up unawares, until that epiphany moment when you just know that God means "I'm calling you!"

Sowing vocation and ministry

Today's readings and liturgy direct us all to consider vocation and ministry and, in that context, I'd like us to consider the ever so familiar parable of The Sower. Collectively we've probably heard dozens of sermons on this parable. Doubtless, we've all been taken through the detail about those seeds that flourished and those that expired before they had really taken root. But rather than drill down, if we step back a moment, what is the key focus of the parable, is it about the seed or, the soil or, the Sower?

Constants v variables

If the Sower had not gone out to sow then nothing would have happened. The Sower is the one constant in the parable for the Sower is God himself. The seed he sows is of equally good quality: that's what he sows in each one of us, however, the variable element, is the soil. The soil is life itself which God gives us to enjoy but temptation, persecution and acquisitions can strip away our former good intentions to adhere to God's word and be faithful to Christ. It's only those who as the BCP says 'Hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest' God's word who flourish in faith irrespective of

whether they have 'Rev' in front of their name or not. Why? Because as St Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans 'For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, to deal with sin ... you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you.' God's grace always goes before his calling of us, he values us equally and calls us individually to use the skills he gives to each of us personally. For some of us, it means dressing differently and not escaping attention even in the supermarket! However, for all of us the calling is to be with people, living alongside them not doing things to them but listening to them about what they most need. Whether people are inspiring like Captain Tom or seemingly the least engaging person on the planet they just need to know that they are loved by God. How might we help to gather in the lost sheep in our society?

Prayer and Presence

At the AGM next Sunday, it will be important that we all share our ideas and, indeed, our concerns for our church. AGMs should be far more than considering how we might survive the next 12 months. If we are to be in step with Guernsey society then our AGM needs us to discern how we can continue to 'revive and thrive' our purpose. Between now and then perhaps we might consider how the Sower, the Seed and the Soil translate into purposeful togetherness here at church. Joyfully, much is already going on as the Post-Communion prayer encourages, however, just as the Sower did not stand still sowing but kept moving forward, so too must we if we are to grow. To give you some thoughts to germinate, I've another three alliterative words to join this all together: Prayer, Presence and Proclamation. These are not new ideas they're already woven into our Mission Action Plan. Through our monthly Parish Prayers, we do draw together to pray for the life of our church in the life of this parish and, that prayerfulness is key to thriving. However, could we develop our Parish Prayers to help a wider circle of people? Potentially, that comes from the second germination point, 'Presence'. We're here Sunday by Sunday but the rest of the week, the building is largely unused. If we create a servery, how, might that help us make connections to embrace all ages?

Proclamation – food for thought

And the final germinate point to ponder is 'Proclamation'. That's far more than sermons, for my sermons seldom reach the majority of people and a priest, has no purpose without serving the people. Proclamation is about all of us, living our faith in daily activity in such a way that people want to share that faith too. There is no point in being at church if we, the people, are not the church. In the name of Christ and through power of the Spirit, may God give us his grace to have fertile ideas so that we can help to produce his fruitful yield of thirty, sixty and a hundredfold.

Amen