

Robin Dodge
Holy Faith, Santa Fe
12 July 2026

Proper 10 – Year A
Isaiah 55.10-13
Psalm 65.(1-8), 9-14
Romans 8.1-11
Matthew 13.1-9, 18-23

In the name of the one, true, and living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the midst of this summer, in the midst of this heat wave, in the midst of this growing season (not only for the growth of crops but also for personal growth and the growth of the Church in this green season after Pentecost), in the midst of this drought and other dry places in our lives, today we are given refreshing and good news.

The psalmist praises God and reminds us: “You visit the earth and water it abundantly; you make it very plenteous; the river of God is full of water.” (Dear Lord, please send us some of that water here in New Mexico because, as we often pray during Morning and Evening Prayer for rain, we sure could use it.)

[As we hear that the river of God is full of water, we are reminded that God is the source of all water and that water is the fundamental element of baptism. Today, Mae will come to the waters of baptism, waters that change ordinary water from cleansing away dirt and grime to the waters of baptism that cleanse away the sin of the world – waters that change ordinary water that sustains all life to the waters of baptism that offer everlasting life. The psalmist continues to praise God:]

“You prepare the grain, for so you provide for the earth. You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges; with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its increase. You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths overflow with plenty. May the

fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, and the hills be clothed with joy. May the meadows cover themselves with flocks, and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; let them shout for joy and sing.”

Ours is a God of abundance who provides us with everything we need. God visits the earth and waters it abundantly. God prepares the grain, for so God provides for the earth. Even in the midst of our wilderness, God makes the time rich for grazing.

I was checking in with a parishioner this week who has been having a hard time of it lately. She was telling me all she was going through, and questioning why it was happening to her. And then she told me that she had had an epiphany. She realized God had not abandoned her. In fact, God had given her everything she needed to face what she was going through. God had given her strength. God had made her strong to meet the challenges she faced. Good and refreshing news indeed!

The prophet Isaiah picks up on this theme of abundance and provision, and continues with the imagery of moisture and growth, in the words of a familiar canticle from Morning Prayer: “For as rain and snow fall from the heavens and return not again, but water the earth, bringing forth life and giving growth, seed for sowing and bread for eating.” But then Isaiah compares the rain and snow to God’s word that goes forth from the Lord’s mouth and does not return empty. Instead, God’s word comes to us, to refresh us, to quench our thirst in dry times, to bring forth life in us, to give us growth. Wonderfully, God’s word will accomplish that which the Lord purposed and prosper in that for which God sent it.

St. Matthew brings us full circle in the Parable of the Sower by likening God's word to the seed for sowing that produces bread to nourish us. We are able to chew on the word God provides us for sustenance and be fed spiritually.

We are in the season of parables. For the next few weeks we will be hearing parables from St. Matthew's Gospel. Parables are "brief comparison stories, drawn from nature or everyday life, that tease the imagination, challenge accepted values, or illustrate a [larger] point." (Dennis C. Duling's notes to Matthew 13.3, HarperCollins Study Bible, NRSV, 1993)

Those in the Spiritual Classics discussion group may remember several years ago we read Amy-Jill Levine's book on the parables called Short Stories by Jesus. Dr. Levine is a professor of New Testament Studies at Vanderbilt University. Her premise is that the parables should be interpreted in line with how their original hearers - first century Jews - would have understood them. She insists that many of the parables have been domesticated into platitudinous allegories rather than the subversive challenges to conventional wisdom that they are supposed to be.

Blessedly, in today's Gospel, Jesus himself explains the meaning of the Parable of the Sower to the disciples and to us. The meaning is so straight forward that Dr. Levine doesn't include this parable in her book! But that doesn't mean that the Parable of the Sower is any less challenging for us.

In the parable, a sower sows seeds, some of which fall along the path, some fall on rocky ground, some fall upon thorns, and some on good soil. The seeds on the path are eaten by birds. The seeds amongst the rocks were scorched by the sun because their roots could not be watered and nourished by the soil. The seeds in the midst of

the thorns were overtaken and choked by other invasive plants. The seeds in the good soil took root, were watered and nourished, and bore much fruit.

The obvious question for us is what kind of receptacle are we for the word of God? [With Mae's baptism, we pray that the word of God will begin to take root in her.] Will the word of God take root in us? Are we like the path with no understanding or acceptance of God's word, so the evil one comes and snatches the word of God from us?

Are we like the rocky ground by first hearing God's word with joy, but because we aren't rooted in the Scriptures and don't cultivate our faith, we lose our way or a sense of hope when tribulations and persecution arise as we try to follow God's word? For those familiar with C.S. Lewis' The Screwtape Letters, this sounds like Wormwood's patient who is new to the Faith, but the exuberance of his new-found faith is wearing off, and he suspects it's just a phase he's going through.

Are we like the thorns who, because of our love of worldly things and our delight in riches, provide no room for growth in us for God's word?

Of course, the goal is to be the good soil so that God's word produces much good fruit through us. But there also is an incentive for us. The conclusion to the Second Song of Isaiah echoes the joy of God's natural world described by the psalmist at the prospect of God's restoration of Israel, which parallels our ultimate consummation and bliss through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hear again Isaiah's song in the context of the promise of our faith at the time of our death: "For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song,

and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle.”

In the midst of this rocky wilderness, prepare yourselves to be the good soil. In the midst of this time of heat and drought, seek water and refreshment. Prepare yourselves to receive and accept God’s word. Prepare yourselves to nurture it and be nourished by it. Prepare yourselves to grow and bear much fruit. Amen.