

**Lectionary readings: Isaiah 5: 1-7; Psalm 80: 1-2, 8-19;  
Hebrews 11: 29 - 12: 2; Luke 12: 49-56**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Isaiah 5:** This passage speaks of God's love for His creation - and that includes us, for we are all God's people on whom He has lavished His love. God has given Himself totally to us, providing us with everything we need to live our lives well. He wants us to give ourselves to Him in the same way; but, instead, we choose to go our own way, and the result is that we do harm to one another, rather than treating one another with love and justice and living at peace together. Instead of blossom and fruit, God finds 'weeds' of selfishness, bitterness, hatred, bloodshed. And let us not just point the finger at others, but look into our own hearts and ask ourselves what response we have made to God's love. Let's reflect on how we can honour God in the way we treat one another.
- **Psalm 80:** Verse 2 in 'Psalms for Praying' spoke to me: *'Enliven Your people with compassion, that peace and justice might flourish.'* This is perhaps the greatest need of our time - for people to be filled with love and compassion, to become united with Love itself so that we may become lovers. God wants to companion us through the wilderness that is our world so that together we may cause the world to blossom and bear the fruit of love. Let's unite ourselves with the God, who has given Himself to us, and so become co-creators with Him to bring in His Kingdom of love, peace and justice.
- **Hebrews 11:** The writer to the Hebrews wants us to be inspired by those who have gone before us and who have exercised faith. He urges us to keep our eyes on Jesus as we continue our journey of faith, and be single-minded in trusting God, allowing God to enable us to be the best we can be for Him. So this week let's reflect on the baggage which is weighing us down and preventing us from making progress in our life of faith. It takes courage and humility to be honest about the things that we allow to blight our lives. If we are willing to face up to those things, we will know such blessing and healing. This may be an area for reflection this week.
- **Luke 12:** Verse 1 in The Message: *'I've come to start a fire on this earth - how I wish it were blazing right now!'* May I suggest that we think of this fire as the fire of God's love burning in our hearts? (Not the usual interpretation) How our individual lives would be changed, how our churches would be transformed if our hearts were burning within us with God's love! This is a difficult passage, but I believe that Jesus is here saying what the result of His coming is (and we see it so clearly in our own time): division among families, churches and religious believers, even enmity and hatred. It is not God's desire that there will be division, for He wants us to live at peace with one another and reach out in love to one another. But the sad fact is that we hold fast to our doctrines and are prepared to fight and kill to defend them. Is this what God wants of us, do you think? Jesus talks here too about interpreting the times in which we live. What might God be wanting to say to us through what is going on in our world at the present time? How are we challenged by our divisions and inability to live in love with one another? How can we become the people God wants us to be?