

**Lectionary readings: Isaiah 55: 10-13; Psalm 65: 9-13;  
Romans 8: 1-11; Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23**

**For reflection and prayer**

- **Isaiah 55:** This passage speaks of God's faithfulness, and therefore the prophet is full of hope that his people will be brought back from exile. I wonder if we have the same confidence in God's faithfulness when we are experiencing difficulties and hard times? Do we experience joy and inner peace knowing that God is with us? Isaiah says that the whole of creation teaches us of God's faithfulness. Just as spring follows winter, so growth and new life come to us out of our difficulties and trials. God **can** be trusted. He **is** faithful. He is with us no matter what we are going through. Let's ponder this throughout this week.
- **Psalm 65:** A psalm of praise to God who answers prayer and forgives sin. He speaks of the joy of those who live in God's heart, and of the hope of those who trust in God. v9-13 can be taken literally or spiritually. If taken literally, these verses speak of God the Creator, a generous God who waters the earth making it rich and fertile, providing bountiful harvests, turning the deserts into lush pasture and causing the whole earth to blossom and sing for joy. We need to pray for those parts of the world where they don't experience such harvests and ask how we need to change in order to help feed the starving. Spiritually, these verses speak of God offering to us the Living Water of His presence, nurturing us, softening our hard hearts and bringing inner change and growth, our hearts singing for joy.

- **Romans 8:** Those who open their hearts to Christ find they have a new power operating in them that they knew nothing about - the Spirit of God. God, in Christ, came to share our life, entering into the '*disordered mess of struggling humanity*'. Paul calls us to '*embrace what the Spirit is doing in us*'. The Spirit enables us, as we trust God in us, to '*live and breathe God*'. Giving attention to God '*leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life....Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God....But if God has taken up residence in your life, you can hardly be thinking more of yourself than of him.*' (The Message) Much to reflect on here this week. Do we want to live a 'spacious' life? What does that mean to you?
- **Matthew 13:** The well-known parable of the sower. The seed of the Kingdom is scattered generously and indiscriminately. How we hear the Word of God and respond to it is our choice. Do we allow the word of God to penetrate to the depths of our being and challenge and change us, or do we allow it to wither and die? God wants us individually and as a church to respond to His teaching with open hearts and with a willingness and desire to have God's love affect us deeply. Are we really being receptive and open to God's Word and allowing it to change us? Do we really want God to be at the centre of our life, individually and as a congregation, so that our lives become fruitful and we, in turn, become sowers of the Word?

**A prayer**

*'Come, Holy Spirit, melt and break our hearts of stone until we give our lives to God and God alone. Come, Holy Spirit, root in us God's living word, that we may show the faithfulness of Christ our Lord.'* (CH4 Hymn 779)