

2023-07-23 ... 10am Morning Worship Sermon ... Revd Sue Armstrong
Genesis 28: 10 – 19a; Psalm 139: 1 -12; Romans 8: 12 – 25; Matthew 13: 24 – 30, 36 – 43

Looking at our readings today we are reminded of how throughout time God's plan and his love for us are constant.

In the **Genesis** reading we have Jacob obeying his father, setting out into unknown territory and there being reminded that God is with him at all times and in all places – he just was not aware and needed reminding, as we all do: ***“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it”*** ... how many times do we feel alone and need to recall this wonderful phrase reminding us that wherever we go God is with us.

In **Psalm 139** we are again reminded of this, wherever we are God is with us. Let us read it together:

***“O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, ‘Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night’
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you ...”***

How fortunate we are that today's Epistle has Paul being rather more straightforward: no longer do we have him struggling in convoluted sentences to explain the logic of freedom of choice versus the law or right versus wrong and how hard it can be to pick one's way through the opportunities life offers. Instead we see him returning to his abiding belief that those who turn to God through Christ and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit become His children, able to call Him Abba, Father and rejoice in his love.

Our Gospel reading sees Sower Parable take 2 as Jesus again uses the farming example of sowing seed and watching it grow. Last week the example was pretty straightforward – this week the disciples need help. But Jesus reminds them that they are the ones who know what the parables are about, unlike the others who are still mystified. ***“Let those who have ears hear.”*** After all they have been with Him, **PTO**

have heard Him teach, have seen Him at prayer, and witnessed the healings He has done, but He explains for them – in this life good and bad grow together, no earthly institutions can do otherwise but this parable encourages churches to wait and keep the faith because vindication was coming. For the first Christians this was a promise that their enemies would be vanquished. Now we have other enemies to face, secularisation, scepticism, atheism, media misrepresentation as well as the more dangerous things inside us, our own 'demons' of pride, selfishness, idolatry and so on ...

The battle against these enemies goes on and will continue until our lives are done but we have that phrase from Jacob to hold onto: **“Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it.”**

Let us hold fast to that, rejoicing that we can say: **“Abba, Father you are here with me.”**