

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost 24th July 2005

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Readings:

- Genesis 29: 15-28
- Psalm 105.1-11 page 332
- Romans 8: 26-39
- Matthew 13: 44-58

There's nothing like a drought to sharpen our thinking about the use of water in this land!

We have learnt much about how much water we use and we are beginning to get a clearer picture of its value!

There is debate about which crops are most water efficient. In cities we are more aware of the water we take for granted which flows from our taps and down our drains each day. We have learnt how our lawns do not need water — and we have seen with rain how quickly brown grass turns to green.

We have seen the development of water recycling — the use of grey water on our plants. We have seen the return of the rain water tank.

I think we have begun to question the amount of water used by industry and to encourage the recycling of water in places such as car washes and laundries.

We have seen the human cost where there is simply no rain and crops fail while animals suffer and farming becomes no longer viable or even possible. Then there is the human cost of despair, hopelessness and the indignity of poverty and total loss of livelihood.

When drought hits everybody is affected from the rising costs in supermarkets to the greater social cost.

We are fortunate to have drought relief, to have drought management counsellors and to be able to provide assistance through Anglicare and other funds **BUT** so often these measures don't go far enough **AND** they **do not provide long term answers!**

We know that in spite of good rain only recently, the overall picture is still not good. We do trust that the answers to our situation are to be found with God!

Not only in the provision of rain, but in the wisdom to use, plan and share our water for the greater benefit.

And for that purpose we need to pray in a whole range of ways, **BUT PRAY WE MUST!**

And so I encourage us all to use the prayers from the APBA printed on the [leaflet](#). Everyone will pray differently!

But what I would like to hear is the insight we get from our praying — whether it is something to do with how it affects us and changes our thinking, *or* maybe we are moved to some action — PRAY!

I am aware that the Old Testament reading about Jacob hoping to marry Rachel and working seven years only to be tricked at the last. Now you may recall that like Abraham, Jacob had been promised a great number of "offspring" — but now Laban's trickery seems to be thwarting that! It is Jacob's patience and stickability which serves him well and eventually love wins through. So often human organizations and structures can be deadly and frustrating and seem to halt the purposes of God.

Jacob's attitude of Patient Persistent Prayer guides us — in time — to God's answers.

And when we do not know exactly *how* to pray, we must still pray knowing that as St Paul says:

We do not know how to pray as we ought,
but that very Spirit intercedes
with sighs too deep for words.
And God who searches the heart,
knows what is the mind of the Spirit
because the Spirit intercedes for the saints
according to the will of God.

Prayer is *NOT* telling God how to act, *BUT* opening ourselves up to and aligning ourselves with God.

It is what Jesus speaks about when he tells the parables of the Kingdom.

We have heard [recently] the Parable of the Sower and Soils;
The Weeds in the Wheat.

Today's parables complete this portion of Jesus' teaching.

- The mustard seed — proverbially among Jews, a symbol of a small size indicating small beginnings. "from little things, big things grow!"
- The leaven — traditionally recalls the passover or the removal of leaven to make unleavened bread. Surprise! Here it is used to show how a small amount affects the whole.
- Treasure in a field — Poor man stumbles upon it unexpectedly ... sacrifice
- Pearl of great price — Rich man in a quest. Searching for the pearl... sacrifice
- Net of Fish — Good and Bad together until the end of the age.

Slow growing process of growth and change with Rich and Poor, Good and Bad. Some discoveries are unexpected, some a result of great searching until the end of the age. Our answers to drought are much the same and tied up with our relationship with God and all God's gifts.

In the Old Testament creation [story] Water was equivalent to Chaos. Uncontrollable. But God brings it under control!

As we worship today, let us commit to prayer that God will continue to bless us with the gift of rain and the wisdom to use it wisely.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, ...

NOR DROUGHT

nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.