

Readings for Rogation Sunday

10th May 2026

First Reading: Deuteronomy 8:7-18

The LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you.

Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. Do not say to yourself, “My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.” But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 6:6-10

There is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

Gospel: St Matthew 6:25-33

Jesus said: “I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

A Reflection for Rogation Sunday

from Rev'd Anne Macdonald

For us, as a rural and eco congregation, there is much in the celebration of Rogation Sunday that reverberates with the community and place we live in. Nowadays it is an interesting combination of the traditional and the present. Traditionally the days leading up to Ascension were dedicated to agriculture. A time for giving thanks for, and asking for a blessing on, 'the fruits of the earth and human labour'. In many places a time for walking the bounds of the parish. More recently, the definition of the word rogation has been expanded so that many now think of these days as an opportunity to give thanks to God for the wonder that is his creation. Of course, today, in the Northwest Highlands, we no longer live in an agrarian society, but in spite of the reduction in numbers working in agriculture and fishing it is still a core part of this and similar communities' identity. At the same time more people have benefited from being able to access leisure activities in rural areas. So, is it possible to relate today's readings to the reality of our lives today? Well, the readings for Rogation Sunday draw us in to the beauty of God's creation, presenting us with a picture of abundance and fruitfulness, enough food for all, a world in which there is place for humanity within creation. But these readings are not rose-tinted visions of creation, they are a vision of what the world could be like. They carry a message about how we should live our lives and they remind us about our responsibilities. They are certainly not about rights to land and resources.

So let us turn to the reading from Deuteronomy. Sometimes texts like this have been interpreted as God giving power over creation, and indeed over a specific place, to human beings and not only that but to particular humans, as a reward for being diligent followers of the law. Also disappointingly, some Christians today have interpreted passages such as this one to justify why they are comfortably off and others are not. Other groups have used these passages to claim land already inhabited by other people. However, it is possible to look at this reading from Deuteronomy from another angle: God had led the tribes of Israel to this land, with considerable difficulty it has to be said, not because they "deserved it" but because he had entered into a covenant with Abraham. They were not rewarded for good behaviour – on the whole they had behaved pretty poorly. They were given a land full of resources because God keeps his word and as part of that covenant God instructed them to remember that everything comes from him and to keep his commandments. Now we know that the covenant with Abraham has been overwritten and expanded by the covenant entered into by Christ. A new covenant which encompasses the whole of humanity. We also know that Christ charged us to love God, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. In today's world more than ever loving our neighbour means living lightly within creation so that others do not suffer. Both Clare and David have spoken to us many times about how all of creation is our neighbour and of course David Coleman gave us a wealth of thoughts about this in our study day earlier this year. That theme continued last week when David talked about the reading from 1 Peter which asked us to become living stones and to create spiritual homes for others. An image which places us in the midst of God's creation.

Turning briefly to the extract from Paul's letter to Timothy, which of course contains that frequently misquoted phrase about "the love of money" as part of the message to live modestly and not be distracted. This whole text is a reminder by Paul to his readers of Christ's teachings about how to live our lives, and we can see that it leads neatly into the Gospel reading for this Sunday. It begins with 'There is a great gain in godliness combined with contentment' and continues with 'if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these'. Now the first thing to call to mind

about the Gospel reading is that it is part of a long passage starting with the Beatitudes, where Jesus spent time with the crowd teaching them about living well. This beautiful passage paints an unforgettable picture of this world. That expression 'consider the lilies' continuing on to 'Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of them' is like an impressionist picture painted with words. It can really grab our attention and remain with us as an image of God's creation. Jesus was part of the society he lived in, he was not removed from it. He knew his biblical history, he was rooted in his environment, and he was a great communicator. Using the world around him he was asking his listeners, which includes us, to focus on something really important. Was he asking us to live fecklessly? I do not think so. At that time, one of the standard approaches to public speaking was to use hyperbole to make people think. So here we have Jesus attempting to draw people's attention to the balance between living well and living to excess. He is not promising wealth in return for good living. That reduces God's promise to a bribe. He was leading us to live as God hopes we will for our own sake and for the sake of others.

Intriguingly, Jane Williams has suggested that the group of people Jesus was speaking to were neither wealthy nor poor, and reasonably well educated and that Jesus was pushing them to realise what God asked of them, how God challenged them. Perhaps this is a good way for us to think about this Gospel reading. God knows, and the passage tells us this, that God knows what we need to live but he wants us to live in accordance with the two greatest commandments which Christ had talked about. The Gospel passage ends with 'but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness'. We have been given the answers about how to seek the Kingdom of God. Christ told us that he was the way to the Father and he has taught us what we need to do. If we love God and love our neighbour. If we act like "living stones" then we will live lightly as part of creation. So, for us living here, in a beautiful part of the world, where we can see the "lilies of the field" it is a good thing to continue the traditional celebration of our neighbours the farmers, fishermen and crofters who produce the food we eat and to add to it by reflecting on how we can become better neighbours to the rest of God's creation.