

**Lectionary readings: Isaiah 44: 6-8; Psalm 86: 11-17;
Romans 8: 12-25; Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43**

For reflection and prayer

- **Isaiah 44:** God is here speaking to the Jews in exile. God's people were always very quick to criticise God when things went against them. Are we any different? Are we not quick to blame God when we are faced with difficulties, instead of affirming His presence with us, and opening ourselves up to this God who loves us dearly? Here is a God who can be trusted, a 'rock' who remains firm and steadfast and never turns away from us, but goes on loving us and being to us all that we need. This week we might like to reflect on the kind of God we worship.
- **Psalm 86:** We are told something more about God in these verses, something we have been reminded of again and again. He is merciful, gracious, slow to get angry, full of unfailing love, faithful. Is this the God we know?
- **Romans 8:** Paul is here describing what life in the Spirit is like for us who are children of God. We have an unbelievable inheritance, not just life after death with God, but life with God here and now. Paul speaks of the 'joyful anticipation' we feel about what awaits us after death. Is this how we feel about death? This time of waiting Paul likens to a woman who is pregnant. This time of waiting doesn't diminish us; we are enlarged in the waiting, and the more joyful our expectancy is. But we all get tired as we go through life; we get discouraged; we find we can't pray. And

that's when God's Spirit comes alongside us, to help us, to translate our tears and our sighs into prayers. Let's pray this week that we will allow God to enlarge us so that we are filled with His life, so that the experiences of life don't diminish us, but we become all God wants us to be, blossoming into our true selves, filled with that joyful expectancy.

- **Matthew 13:** God is the One who sows good seed in the world, and He wants us to cooperate with Him in sowing love, forgiveness, compassion, understanding, respect, acceptance. So often we want to destroy all those who 'sow weeds', but if we did that, we would have to destroy ourselves too, for we are all a mixture of good and evil. Let's rather allow the Holy Spirit within us to help us to be all that God wants us to be in this world, doing His will of sowing love and compassion and goodness where we are.

A prayer

'Teach me your ways, Mighty Counsellor, that I may walk in truth ... I give You thanks, O Beloved, with my whole being. O that I might radiate Your light for ever. Great is Your steadfast love toward those who call upon You. You deliver their souls from the depths of despair. O Beloved, numerous fears rise up within me; like an army they seek to overwhelm me, and they would keep me in darkness. Yet You are merciful and gracious, ready to forgive and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Be present to me and receive my prayer; imbue me with strength, and help me to release each fear. Pour forth Your Light into my soul, that all that is hidden in darkness may come forth into awareness. For You, O Beloved, are my Redeemer and my Comforter.'

(Psalm 86: 11-17 Psalms for Praying)