



St. John's Scroll

May 2025 Vol. XLII

Upcoming Services

Date	Liturgical Day	Time	Rite	Officiant & Sermon	Altar Guild
05/04/25	The 3rd Sunday of Easter	10:00 AM	Morning Prayer Rite 2	Samantha Funk	Ellen – Lynn
05/11/25	The 4th Sunday of Easter	10:00 AM	Communion Rite 1	Ossie Knowlton	Charlotte – Olga
05/18/25	The 5th Sunday of Easter	10:00 AM	Morning Prayer Rite 2	Stephen Bradford	Olga – Charlotte
05/25/25	The 6th Sunday of Easter	10:00 AM	Deacon's Mass Rite 2	Alan Rockwood	Mandy – JoCarol

May Birthdays

Mandy Stephens May 8
Conall Doss May 27
Taylor McKenna May 27

Spencer Landis Doss and her husband Conall will be in Ketchikan this summer working for the museum. They are looking for house sitting opportunities and will be in town from May 11-June 4. Please contact Spencer if you can help her out. Her number is 907-617-5307.

Four Questions for...Charlotte Ames



1. *You've been attending St. John's a long time. What era would you say is the "golden age" of our church? What made it so?*

I think it was when Fr. Gary was here as our priest during the 80s & 90s. He was young, very musical (played guitar and piano), and had lots of energy. He was good with kids and involved with the community.

2. *One job you've had is as a server at the altar, so I'm sure you've seen a lot of interesting things over the years. Can you share with us one funny story from working that closely with the celebrant?*

When I was a server for Fr. Ron, I really had to be on my toes. When he genuflected he preferred using the gong rather than the bells. When we reached that portion of the Eucharist service I had to be on my knees all ready to hit the gong three times in synch with his genuflecting. One time he didn't genuflect, but I hit the gong as usual.

After the service I asked him why he didn't genuflect, and he said, 'I didn't think we were in synch today!'

3. *What would you say is the most important feature of your faith in Christ?*

I know that I can talk to God anywhere. I talk to Him in my car a lot. I don't feel that I'm a very 'religious' person; I just feel a fullness knowing He's inside me. And I'm not from a religious family, so I don't know where this all came from...I just accept it and know that I am blessed.

4. *Of all God's promises to His people recorded in the Bible, which is the most precious to you?*

Forgiveness for all my many sins.

Where are They Now? **Vicky Newlun**



Saint Benedict's Episcopal Church

Vicky Newlun now lives in Lacey, Washington, about an hour south of Seattle. She attends St. Benedict's Episcopal Church, and is quite active there, as she's both a Vestry member as well as back-up Sunday School teacher. When Vicky lived in Ketchikan, she worked as a middle school resource teacher, and she has found a home doing the same thing at Nisqually Middle School. "I have a great principal and the staff there is excellent. There are about a thousand students at Nisqually," Vicky says.

Vicky's daughter, Tasha, lives in the coastal town of Florence, Oregon, and has two young children, aged 1 and 3. Red-headed granddaughters! "I get to see my other granddaughter, Kyra, every three weeks," Vicky says, "and Kyra spends all her school breaks with her mom and sisters in Florence. It's only about five hours away, and is a beautiful drive. Please come visit me if you are in Washington," Vicky writes, "I miss you and send my love to each of you."



Avianna & D'Lilah



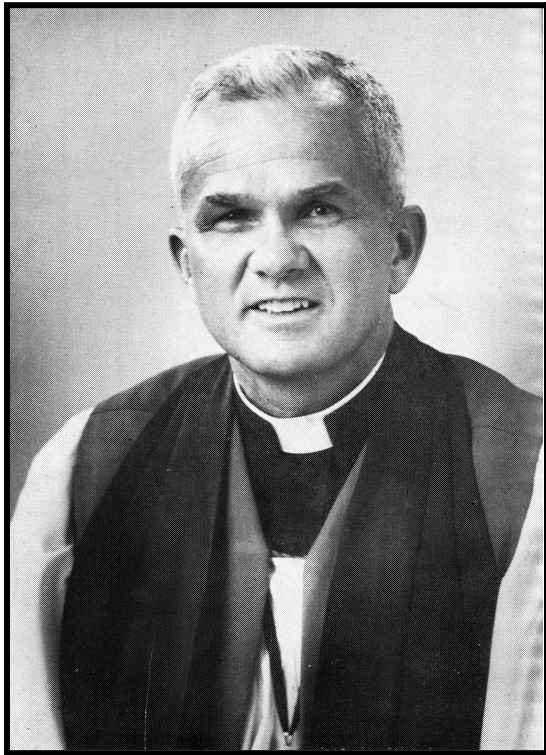
Kyra Rose



Tasha with Avianna Grace who is 1 year old, D'Lilah Lee who is 3, and Kyra Rose who is 12 years old.

The Flying Bishop

BISHOP WILLIAM J. GORDON of ALASKA



Nationally known as the 'Flying Bishop of Alaska', Bishop Gordon logged more than 1 million flying hours visiting congregations.

On a wall of St. Matthew's Church in Fairbanks, Alaska, is a series of historic stained glass windows. One shows a typical summer Alaskan landscape with a smiling figure in the foreground; against the mountains flies a bush plane. There is a small blue square, a "blue box," on the rear fuselage of the plane. That, and the

beaded cross the figure wears, hint that something more than being an Alaskan bush pilot may be going on.

The life and influence of the stained glass figure helped shape the Episcopal Church, and his ministry helped shape the church's understanding of ministry. He was always known in Alaska as simply "The Bishop" . . . the Rt. Rev. William J. Gordon, Jr., third Bishop of Alaska.

In the summer of 1943, Alaska was in the midst of war, with fighting in the Aleutians, and the legendary first Bishop of Alaska, Peter Trimble Rowe, bishop for 47 years, had died the previous year. He had been succeeded by the Rt. Rev. John Bentley, the suffragan since 1931. Bishop Bentley had recruited for Alaska the Virginia Seminary deacon, soon to

be priest. who landed in Alaska that summer. William Gordon, a native North Carolinian and son of a parish priest, was just 25 years old, and in love. Onboard ship to Alaska, he had met Shirley Lewis of Washington, a young secretary. That July they were married in Seward, Alaska, and then, shortly after Bishop Bentley ordained him to the priesthood, they were asked to move to Point Hope, high on the Arctic Coast, to serve at St. Thomas' Church. The Gordons arrived that summer of '43. Over the next five years, as missionary-in-charge, he would travel 6,000 miles by dog team to Arctic Coast villages, and learn lessons from the Arctic and her people that would shape the rest of his life.

At the age of 29, while he was camped in an abandoned igloo between Kivalina and Point Hope, with the dog team resting outside in the wind, William Gordon was elected, by the House of Bishops, to be the next Bishop of Alaska. He succeeded Bishop Bentley, who had been called to the national church office. At the time, he was the youngest person in the history of the Anglican Communion ever called to be a bishop. His consecration was delayed the following year, until he had reached the canonically required 30 years of age.

Following his consecration in 1948, he moved his family to Fairbanks, and began an Episcopal ministry that soon captured the imagination of the country. After a summer of traveling on riverboats to visit his congregations, he earned his private pilot's license in 1949 and took to the air. He was soon known nationally as "the Flying Bishop of Alaska," and this is where some of St John's Episcopal Church enters the history. The year that Gordon became a pilot was the year he came to Ketchikan to confirm our own Judy Stenfjord and Olga Simpson. Olga remembers the push during those years to get Bishop Gordon his own plane, and three years later Episcopal Church Women raised money nationally to buy him a single-engine aircraft. How did they do this? Through filling thousands and thousands of the little UTO (United

Thank Offering) mite boxes with coins. This is why his plane was nicknamed "the Blue Box," after the blue-hued UTO cardboard boxes!

By the time of his Alaskan retirement in 1974, Bishop Gordon had logged more than 1 million flying hours in Alaska.

A strong proponent of the rights of Alaska native people, Bishop Gordon's vision of the church emphasized the call of all people, through their baptism, to ministry wherever and whoever they were. This emphasis led to significant changes in national church canons, to allow for the ordination of "sacramentalist" or "local" clergy, a deliberate emphasis on lay ministry in the commission on ministry canons, and a national/international interest in what would come to be called 'Total Ministry.'

Retiring from Alaska in 1974 after more than a quarter-century as our Bishop, Gordon traveled throughout the world sharing his vision of ministry as Project TEAM (Teach Each A Ministry) and then, in 1976, became Assistant Bishop of Michigan. He died there Jan. 4, 1994, two years after the Diocese of Alaska founded in his name a non-profit corporation called Wings of the Spirit Transportation Endowment.

In June of 1994, under a softly falling summer snow, the Bishop's final services and burial were held at Point Hope, where it had all begun.

Sermons from the Vault

Seed-sowing

by Stephen Bradford

In Matthew and the other gospels, Jesus has a central theme of the kingdom of Heaven. And to provide us a vision of the kingdom of Heaven, Jesus shares with us seven different parables, each one telling what the kingdom of heaven is like, and each revealing a different aspect of the kingdom, so when we look at them together we get a good picture of what the kingdom of heaven is all about.

The first parable Jesus shares is our Gospel reading today, the Parable of the Sower. This is one of Jesus' most famous parables, appearing in three out of the four gospels; John is the only one who excludes it, as he does all parables. Like most parables it is simple, and yet it contains essential teaching about God's kingdom – both for Jesus' original audience and for us today. Let's consider a question: Why is it that some people respond to the gospel while others do not?

Why is it that you can talk about Jesus with friends and family, and some will respond positively while others will shut you down? Why is it that a preacher can share the same message with a whole group of people all at the same time, and some will accept the message while for others it seems to fall on deaf ears? This is the question Jesus raises and then answers in today's parable. Studying this parable and what it teaches can make us more effective in our witness for Christ because as we will see, it all comes down to how the person receives the message.

Let's begin with the first part of our reading, where Jesus tells the Parable of the Sower: Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. Matthew sets the scene for us here. This is the Sea of Galilee. The large crowds gather

around him, and he is forced to use a boat for his pulpit. Picture Jesus sitting in the boat a little way out from shore, with all the people gathered along the shore at the water's edge to hear him. I imagine the shores along the Sea of Galilee as sloping upward, creating an amphitheater effect, and the people sitting up along the banks listening to Jesus as he taught.

Matthew goes on to relate that "...[Jesus] told them many things in parables..." So, what is a parable? A Biblical parable is a type of story that contains a comparison or a parallel to something familiar to the listener or reader. A parable is simply a way of teaching a spiritual truth using a commonplace, down-to-earth story or illustration. And in this parable we heard this morning, Jesus describes a farmer sowing seed and then four different places where the seed fell.

The first of these is where the seed fell along the path: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up." As I understand it, farm fields in Jesus' day were set out in long, narrow strips, and farmers would use the ground between the strips for pathways. These paths would eventually get packed down from all the walking, and the ground in that path would get compacted and hard as rock, and no grass would grow there. That's what this path in the parable was like. The seeds just lay on top of the path, so the birds swooped down and ate them up.

The second place seeds fell was on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since the earth they were in was shallow. But when the sun rose, they became scorched, and since they had no root, they withered away. Are these rocky places just soil that had a lot of rocks in it? I think Jesus is describing something a little different here. The rocky places were those areas that featured a thin skin of topsoil resting on top of an underlying shelf of rock. The dirt might be several inches deep at the most. The seed would germinate and quickly spring up, but the roots stopped dead at the rock, and the plant would literally starve to death from lack of moisture.

That's exactly what happened to these seeds that fell on the rocky places.

The third place the seed ended up was among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. This probably looked like good, rich soil, but it contained weeds that were natural to that area. The result: dormant weeds and thorns would grow up together along with the farmer's plants and choke them out before they could bear any fruit.

The fourth place where the seed fell, however, was on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty times what was sown. The seed sprouted and produced a crop, and this was a very good crop. Most farmers would be happy with a ten-fold increase, so what Christ relates here represents an exceptionally abundant harvest.

This is the parable. Jesus tells a simple story about a farmer sowing his seed. The seed falls on four different types of soil with four very different results. Then Jesus closes out the parable with an exhortation for the crowd to hear. He said: "Let anyone with ears listen!" Jesus uses this phrase several times in the gospels, and it implies more than just hearing with your physical ears. Simply hearing the word is not enough. You must not only hear; you must also seek to understand and, hopefully follow, for the message to bring any benefit. Here, the benefit is Jesus' interpretation of the Parable of the Sower.

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path, so the gospel of Matthew calls the seed "the word of the kingdom." Or the word of God. Sowing the seed represents sharing God's word with others, especially the message about the kingdom – the gospel, the good news that God sent his Son Jesus into the world to be our Savior. The sower here is not just Jesus, though; the sower is anyone who shares God's word with others. You and I can and should sow the seed.

Jesus proceeds to warn his audience about three obstacles – three hindrances that keep people from receiving the word of God as it is sown. The first is Satan. Our reading today referred to him as the evil one. When anyone hears the word of God and does not understand it, Satan comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart, just as some of the seed is sown on the hard path and snatched away by birds.

This means that Satan has the power to take away seeds that we try to plant. Have you ever tried to explain your faith in Jesus to a friend who is not a believer? You share the idea of grace, and sin, and Jesus and the cross, but the person you are talking to says: “I don’t get that part. I just don’t understand it.” As soon as you try to plant the seed, it is taken away, before your friend even has time to understand or believe. 2 Corinthians 4:4 tells us that “...The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” I think that Satan is the god of this age who has blinded the minds of unbelievers to the truth of the gospel.

So, the first obstacle or hindrance to people receiving the gospel is Satan himself, while the second is a false profession of faith. Here is what we heard: “As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away.” In this scenario the person professes faith with gladness at first but later wanders away. I think we have all seen this happen a number of times. Someone receives the gospel gladly, is excited about being a Christian, start coming to church or reading their Bible, and then, all of a sudden, something comes up, and they stop. What happened? Jesus says they had no root. It was a false profession of faith.

Colossians 2 tells us, “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him.” Paul is saying you need to be rooted in Christ, and a person with no root is a person without Christ. A surface faith is shallow and superficial. A true

profession of faith in Christ comes from your heart. That's the problem with the group of people represented by the second or rocky soil: they only had faith on the surface, and surface faith is not saving faith.

Can we do anything to prevent someone from making a false profession of faith in Christ? I don't believe we can eliminate them completely, but there are certain things we can do to help. First of all, I think we present not just a message but a real person. The basic Christian confession is, "Jesus is Lord." We are winning people to Jesus, not just to a church or a religion.

The third hindrance to people receiving the gospel is a worldly focus: "As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the Word, and it yields nothing." Jesus indicates here that a worldly focus can choke the Word out of a person's life, and He gives us two examples of what a worldly focus looks like.

First, there are the cares, or worries of this life. People get distracted by problems at home, work or school, with the kids, with the car, etc., and the word of God gets choked out because the person gets distracted by the worries of this life. If we place our focus on God, He will help with the worries that keep us separated from God.

The second thing Jesus refers to is the lure of wealth. Think of the rich young ruler who walked away from Jesus because he could not part with his wealth. That seed got choked out real fast! But you don't have to be wealthy to get tripped up by this one. The Bible says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." You don't have to have a lot of money to have your heart set on the allure of being well off. In 1st Timothy the Bible calls the pursuit of wealth a trap and a snare. In Proverbs we are told, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

Satan's attacks, shallow roots, and worldly cares put an end to much of the seed, and then finally we come to that which produces a crop: "But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

The seed in the good soil represents the one who hears God's Word, seeks to understand God's Word, and then grows in God's Word. And isn't that what we're looking for when we share our faith with someone? We want to see God's Word take root in people's hearts, and we want to see people growing in Christ. I suspect this last part of the parable would have been especially encouraging for the disciples as they prepared themselves to go forth and preach the gospel throughout the world.

Let me close with three points from this first of seven parables in Matthew: First of all, be careful how you hear. This may be the main point of the Parable of the Sower. The seed that grows abundantly is no different from the seed that lands on the path, or on the rocky ground, or among thorns. It's all the same seed; it's all the same message, but what matters is receiving it with an open heart and a willing mind. So be careful how you hear the Word of God.

Secondly, sow God's word wisely. Be a good witness for Christ. Share God's word with people whenever you can, but do it wisely. Know the three hindrances to the gospel from this parable and guard against them accordingly. Pray that God would prepare people's hearts to receive his word.

And then thirdly, be assured of the harvest. When you share the gospel with others, yes, some of the seed will land along the path, while some will going to fall on rocky soil or among the thorns. But some is also going to fall on good soil, and so you may expect there will indeed be a harvest. Share the gospel, pray for people, and then watch as God does his work. I think that is what the Parable of the sower is all about.

Devotional

By Rod Landis

“And He said unto them, ‘Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto those who are outside, all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins be forgiven them.”

(Mark 4: 11, 12)

Stephen Bradford and I chose the same subject in this issue of the *Scroll*, the Parable of the Sower – he for the sermon he preached recently, and which is reproduced here, and I for this brief devotional. I’ve wanted to write these thoughts for some time, and hope you’ve read Stephen’s sermon already as I placed it first chronologically. That way you have context as he has laid out the “plot” of this parable, and I don’t have to be redundant. All three Gospel writers who include the parables record not only the Sower parable and Christ’s interpretation of it, but also the above cited verses from St Mark, which bridge the parable and its explanation and is communicated only to the twelve disciples. What does Christ mean in saying that parables, of which the Sower is a prime example, are understandable to some and not to others? And is there a hint of exclusion here? Why would it matter that some might “hear and repent” if they understood, and anyway isn’t

it fair that everyone should have the same chance to hear and understand?

There is more than a little room here to explore why the Gospel is so mysterious to some that it might as well be nonsense – or a nice story, but no more than that. Stephen makes the point in his sermon that parables are stories that teach a lesson, centering on homely, common themes that make understanding them simple. And this is true for those who are meant to understand. Spiritual discernment and a close relationship to the Savior are essential elements of “getting” the parable. However, a closer look at the derivation for the Greek word “parable” shows there’s an additional layer of meaning that inclines away from simplicity and toward something murkier. The Hebrew word that translates to “parable” is “*mashal*.” A *mashal*, instead of being straightforward, is associated more with what we would think of as a riddle. In the NIV, the word describing Christ’s stories is literally “hidden things” or “dark sayings.” Christ Himself nods to the obscurity associated with parables when He tells His disciples “...it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matthew 13:11).

This isn’t even a new message. Christ quotes the prophet Isaiah as ancient testimony that truth *cannot* be grasped by some: “...for this people’s...ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed...but blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear” (Matthew 13: 15, 16). The context is clear: a crowd of people heard the words of Jesus, and some whose ears work right received the truth, while others whose ears were “dull” did not. Same message: two

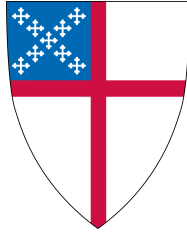
different orientations toward it. And neither Jesus nor Isaiah make excuses or explanation for failure to understand – the distinction is described as preconditioned. Some will hear because they are meant to, and others will not – but why? Because they're easily distracted? Because they're just not serious about spiritual things? Because they don't have the intelligence necessary?

I'm afraid none of these can be claimed as a reason people still, in our day, do not consider Christ worth following. It is because they are, in Paul's words, "slaves to sin" (Romans 6:20). Slaves do not set themselves free. They *cannot* set themselves free; someone else has to do it if it is going to be done. If you are one of Christ's own and know it, this is so because *He* saved you, *He* defeated sin when he rose from the dead, and *He* lives to make us "slaves to righteousness" (Romans 6:18). In short, the truth of God's Word fell on "good soil." This is the interesting thing about what Christ says about some being able to hear, and others having an inability to hear: it leads right into and is underscored by the message of the Sower parable.

What is the seed being sown? The "word of the kingdom," (Matt. 13: 19, 23) God's Word, which in Jesus' time was the Old Testament but for future believers is the canon of Scriptural literature we call the Holy Bible. Nowhere does the parable suggest that equal amounts of seed ended up in different places, only that "some" fell here, "some" elsewhere, but the only seed that took permanent root and produced "children of the kingdom" (v. 38) was what Jesus called "the good seed."

The seed, which is God's Word, proves its value (as "good") because it found its way into the "good ground" (v. 23), but it is also true that because it is God's Word, the seed is "good" to begin with and so naturally would be sown in soil where it would thrive. Either way, the seed that roots and grows does nothing in and of itself; the sower tosses it, and it lands on good soil. Even more telling is the seed that lands in conditions that make growth impossible: it is eaten by birds, or cannot grow roots because of the rocks it lies among, or starts to grow but is choked by thorns. None of the bad things that happen here are the result of the seed's will to do anything but grow, but it cannot because failure is inevitable. Growth will not happen if the natural conditions that threaten a plant's survival are involved, and since we know from His Word that God does not act randomly, the other force that acts independent of human free will is God's sovereign design.

His Word is sown, and if it does not fall on soil God has prepared for it, the seed will not grow – it will be eaten, will wither, or will be choked out, just the same as those who hear Christ speak but whose ears do not work. This is not a Gospel of exclusion, just an objectively fair assessment of the situation: people do what they most want to do, and if that is to repent and follow Christ, this is the evidence of "good seed." And if what they really want to do is lead a sinful and selfish life that does not include Jesus and His sacrifice, this is evidence that the soil conditions cannot support growth.



Clergy: Mtr. Barb Massenburg, retired; Deacon Alan Rockwood

Clerk: Ossie Knowlton

Sexton: Ellen Funk

Organist: Samantha Funk

Altar Guild Chair: Ellen Funk

Members of the Vestry: Stephen Bradford, Senior Warden; Hunter Davis, Junior Warden; Ellen Funk, Peggy Pennington, Dr. Priscilla Schulte, Samantha Snodderly

Scroll editor: Rod Landis

St. John's Episcopal Church
503 Mission Street, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901