

A wilting faith

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* Jeremiah 17:5-10, Psalm 1 and Luke 6:17-26

It seems clear, from reading the Old Testament and psalm today, that it's preferable to be a tree planted by water than a shrub in the desert. So why do we often end up resembling the latter?

Today's Gospel reading gives us a clue as to why our faith might wither and wilt. This passage, sometimes known as the Sermon on the Plain, comes early in Jesus' ministry – the first time he preaches after choosing his disciples. The people want "to be healed" and are "troubled" – and he cures them. Thirsty for healing, they recognise Jesus' power and crowd around to touch him, as the woman with the issue of blood would later do.

Given such desperation surrounding him, it might be perplexing that Jesus' sermon is anything but comforting. He talks of those who are poor, hated, reviled and defamed, who weep.

Oh Lord, whose presence brings healing and whose word quenches our thirst, prepare us to meet life's challenges head on, sure in the knowledge of our reward in heaven. Amen.

World Radio Day

by Caroline Hodgson

February 13 is designated World Radio Day (WRD). We tend to think that the internet has superseded radio as the world's preferred medium of communication, so you might be surprised to learn that around the globe radio is still more widely used than the Worldwide Web.

Radio has historically played an important role in Christian mission, such as reaching out to those behind the Iron Curtain between the 1950s and 1980s. It remains a

Yes, he tells them that they will be blessed, but only after a life of suffering and rejection. On the other hand, those who are rich, well fed, who laugh and are well spoken of, have already "received your consolation", and can expect to be hungry, to mourn and weep.

Perhaps it's little wonder that we more often resemble a desert shrub than a well-watered tree. Nobody said it would be easy, and Jesus spells out just how hard, but ultimately rewarding, it is. Because if we learn how to negotiate (and even, by God's grace, enjoy) the hard part of faith, we will ultimately have cause to "Rejoice... and leap for joy". 🌸

fundamentally important medium for churches in remote parts of the world, enabling Christians to stay connected in places where travel is difficult or impossible.

During the coronavirus pandemic, when people were unable to attend church in person, many tuned in to follow Sunday services on the radio.

So this World Radio Day, why not take time to reflect on whether radio has helped you in your faith, and to give thanks for this powerful and enduring technology.

<https://en.unesco.org/commemorations/worldradioday> 🌸



Ways of praying Collect

by Richard Greatrex

There have been collects in Western church rites since the fifth century, taking a specific form that can be traced back to Hebrew prayers. The collect is a high point in the Eucharist, occurring shortly after the confession. Concise and rhythmical, it consists of three elements: an introduction by the minister (usually "Let us pray"),

then silence during which the congregation focuses on what they wish to bring before God, which is finally drawn together by the minister in a carefully structured prayer. The silence is a vital component of the whole, pooling our individual needs, what we carry to the service or wish to receive from it, and offering them corporately. The collect prayer, as entreated by the minister, rounds off these unvoiced thoughts, presenting them to God and providing further focus for the remainder of the liturgy. The collect is usually addressed to the Father through the Son, who is accompanied by the Holy Spirit, thus ending in a Trinitarian doxology. 🌸

“Creation is 'safe' not because it moves by programme towards a predetermined goal but because the same loving creativity is ever exercised upon it.”

W. H. Vanstone (1923-1999), Canon Emeritus of Chester Cathedral and author