



# More about Today's Scriptures

## Proper 10, Year A

Today's readings remind us of the surety with which God's salvation will come. Rebekah gives birth to Esau and Jacob, through whom the promises to Abraham will be fulfilled. Paul reminds the Romans that God's Spirit is alive and at work in us. In the gospel, Jesus describes his ministry through the parable of the seeds and their various responses.

### **Genesis 25:19-34**

The twin brothers Esau and Jacob are rivals even in Rebekah's womb. She struggles to understand the painful conflict and through an oracle learns that the two children will always be in conflict. They are unlike in appearance, interests and behavior.

### **Romans 8:1-11**

Paul continues his discussion of the contrast between life in the flesh and life in the Spirit. Paul uses the "Spirit of God," the "Spirit of Christ" and "Christ in you" almost interchangeably, emphasizing that the source of the Spirit is God, that the full manifestation of the Spirit is in Christ, and that Christians experience the Spirit communally in the Body of Christ, the Church.

The indwelling of Christ does not, however, exempt Christians from physical death, for their bodies are still mortal, subject to death (8:10); but it does give the Christian a new quality of life that will triumph over death. The resurrection of Christ marked the beginning of the "age to come"; at the culmination of that age death will be destroyed. Until then, through the Spirit, God brings that future into the present and Christians begin to live in their new life.

### **Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23**

Today's reading begins this gospel's third great discourse, called the discourse of the kingdom, or the parable discourse, because it is built up from seven parables. In its original setting, the parable of the sower was probably one of contrast, pointing to the superabundant yield for the kingdom in the last days despite the past and present frustrations and the apparent lack of success of God's work in Israel's history and in Jesus' ministry.

The allegorical interpretation of the parable shifts attention from the harvest to the varying conditions in the field, from the coming of judgment to the spiritual receptivity of the hearers of the gospel. It exhorts converts to assess the depth of their response.



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### Reflection

All gardeners must envy the inevitable, abundant harvest promised in Matthew. But when we dig, we stumble on the first rocks in our gardens. We clear the ground, we dig, we plant and we adjust our dreams as we go. But, by September we find ourselves again ruefully surveying the results. Jesus has such failures in mind when he tells this parable. Never mind, he seems to say, the harvest comes, in rich abundance.

No doubt Jesus also had in mind the frustrations and failures of Israel when he told this story. We who hear the story today can add the frustrations and failures of almost 2,000 years of Church history. Wars fought in the name

of Christianity, the persecution of our Jewish brothers and sisters, and a division between rich and poor even more profound than in the time of Jesus—are these not enough to make us lose heart? Can the kingdom really come to redeem such failures?

We think of our own frustrations and failures, too. Can the kingdom really come to us?

Never mind, says Jesus. Never mind the sins. Never mind the frustrations and failures. Look—the seed is planted.

God's word, God's unfailing word, is spoken. Here the kingdom comes, in rich abundance.