

## November 2025 Acorns and God

Many sources this year, from the Woodland Trust to the BBC, have been commenting on the fact that this year is a 'mast year', a year when there is a particular abundance of acorns and other fruits and seeds. In the middle of October, Derby Diocese holds its annual Clergy Conference, and this year I came home from Clergy Conference with two acorns in my pocket. What, you might ask, do acorns have to do with a clergy conference?

Well, the theme of this year's Clergy Conference was 'The parable of the sower,' a parable Jesus told about a sower throwing seeds lavishly over good soils and bad; throwing seed over the path, over rocky ground, and among thorns and weeds, as well as onto good soil; throwing the seed into places where it had very little chance of growing and producing a harvest, as well as into places where it was likely to grow.

As you can imagine, over the last 2000 years there have been many interpretations of this parable. Often commentators picture the 'seed' as being the knowledge of God and his love for us, and they explain they how we can be like the various soils, with many things preventing the love of God really 'taking root' in our lives, but how when it does we produce a 'rich harvest' of good in the world. God is pictured as like the sower, lavishing his love and his care on both those who will respond and those who won't.

Jesus regularly taught about God, using examples from the natural world, and several speakers at this year's Clergy Conference focused on how the natural world, God's creation, reveals God's character. One speaker spoke about God's character revealed in the extravagant abundance of nature, telling us how in its life time a healthy oak tree produces about a million acorns – hence the acorns in my pocket - (although only one is needed to replace the tree itself), and how that extravagant abundance of the oak tree sustains other life in countless ways. Another speaker spoke of their 'church in the wilderness', meeting in forgotten or waste places, inviting in passers-by, and learning how God relates to us by noticing, and observing closely, how a community of life and growth emerges and flourishes, in places that we may tend not to value.

So this month, my challenge and my prayer for myself is to seek to become better at looking closely at the natural world around me, and letting it teach me about God. And my invitation to all of us is to join me on that adventure.

Yours in Christ,

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