



**Reflection for September 9, 2020: Alexander Crummell
[1819-1898]**

*The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart; *
the commandment of the Lord is clear
and gives light to the eyes. [Psalm 19:8]*

In a recent parish meeting, one person asserted that the coronavirus pandemic has brought out the *resilience* of Trinity members. Despite our physical isolation and the personal stress of adjusting to new work and school schedules, our friendships have deepened, worship has strengthened our faith, our and we have continued our commitment to feeding our neighbors.

Alexander Crummell is an example of resilience. In fifty years of ministry in America, Europe, and Liberia, over and over again he rejected the prevailing belief that people of African descent were less than human. Even though he faced racism at every turn in the Episcopal Church, he believed until the end of his life that the liturgy and moral discipline of the Episcopal Church could be the foundation for a single, multiracial, and transnational Christian republic. He was a leader in the immigration of American blacks to Liberia and he worked hard to establish a Christian republic there. He also led the resistance against southern American bishops to establish a missionary district for black congregations. His faith was unwavering and selfless, his vision of the Church persisted through great personal disappointments, and his belief in God's purpose for people of African descent has mapped the way to becoming the Beloved Community that we continue today.

Today's gospel of the sower teaches us two things about the kind of example that Alexander Crummell holds for us. We plant seeds in our everyday encounters, often without paying attention to what we are doing--in the way that we look into the eye of a stranger, in our willingness to wear a mask and to forego comfort in order to validate someone else. We can neither know nor control the ground where that seed will fall, and we cannot predict if and where it will blossom. But we plant the seed; we offer a choice, and growth blossoms. At the same time, like Alexander Crummell we need not let the seeds of fear and hatred take root. We have a choice about how to tend to the seeds that are planted in our lives. Letting those seeds land on hard ground is sometimes as wise and faithful a choice as tending to the seeds of the Word. Alexander Crummell did both. He discerned the difference between human self-righteousness and God's Word. He did not see the blossoming of his mission that we now see in today's Episcopal Church.