

Sixth Sunday after Trinity Sunday 19 July 2020

Collect

Merciful God

You have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding:
Pour into our hearts such love towards you that we, loving you in all things and above all things,
May obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire;
Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit
now and forever
Amen

Readings

Isaiah 44:6-8

Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts:
I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.
Who is like me? Let them proclaim it, let them declare and set it forth before me.
Who has announced from of old the things to come?
Let them tell us what is yet to be.
Do not fear, or be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it?
You are my witnesses!
Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know not one.

Romans 8:12-25

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.
I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Matthew 13:24-30

He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them

grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’

Reflection

We are all continually affected by the difficult things in life. Most of us, at some time, have to face tragedy or illness or insecurity in life, either for ourselves or for those we love. So our gospel reading, which talks of good seed being sowed and growing, but of weeds springing up around the growing crop, is very apt. In Matthew's parable today, it is God's hand that sows the seed. Matthew describes the field in which the Son of Man is working, which contains both good and evil. We might look on this field as the world we live in.

Of course when Matthew writes this gospel he already knows the end of the story – the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, our Saviour. The Son of Man who walked and talked on earth was the Son of God - the coming judge. There is no doubt that evil is widespread in our world, but in this reading we are given hope that evil has a limited life span – that eventually in God's time, the crop will be weeded and the evil removed.

Goodness, love, truth, mercy and righteousness – the presence of God's kingdom – are stronger and will last for ever. We are told something else important as well: it is not for us here to separate good from evil now, and there is actually no easy, prescribed, practical way to draw a line between good and evil anyway. We have to wait trusting God knows what he is doing to separate out the weeds. And, while we are waiting, we are all to join in with our part in the growth of Christian belief and the life of the kingdom that Jesus came to show us. In Jesus' day, the Pharisees were known for their eagerness to form a pure religious community, keeping the righteous separated from the others, judging who was "in" and who was "out" by their own rules. Rules make it simpler, and the stricter the better some might say. Jesus showed the Pharisees, and us, a new way based on love and compassion. It is not easier, but it is God's chosen way.

Jesus was open and in no hurry to put boundaries around his own group of followers. Jesus' disciples are called to be salt and light, living the life of the kingdom, and showing God's love in our world. The parable's question awaits our response: are we growing good seed or weeds in God's good soil? It takes persistence to do our part, patience not to do God's, and faith. And in it all we are forever assured of who we are: God's children held in the palm of God's hand.