

Call to worship

Teach us your ways, O God
that we may walk in your truth.
We will give you thanks, O Lord.
We will glorify your name for ever.
Turn to us and be gracious.
Give your strength to those
who call upon your name.

Praise: I, the Lord of sea and sky!

Verse 1

I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard My people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin,
My hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear My light to them?
Whom shall I send?

Chorus

Here I am Lord, Is it I, Lord?
I have heard You calling in the night.
I will go Lord, if You lead me.
I will hold Your people in my heart.

Verse 2

I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people's pain.
I have wept for love of them,
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
Give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak My word to them
Whom shall I send?

Chorus

Verse 3

I, the Lord of wind and flame
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them,
My hand will save
Finest bread I will provide,
Till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give My life to them,
Whom shall I send?

Chorus

All Age story

'Practice makes perfect.' Has anyone heard that saying before? What kinds of things can you practise to get better at? It seems that we can get better at most things if we practise.

If we do a sums or spellings test and get 10 out of 10, does that mean we are perfect? Maybe it just means we are ready to move on to harder ones!

What about playing football? Are the top, best players perfect? We might see some spectacular goals, but we also see some rubbish shots – so maybe not.

I wonder if Mary Berry's cakes are always perfect? Footballers can still play a good game, and Mary Berry can still bake great cakes, even if they are not perfect.

In fact, we do lots of things that are not perfect. And we can still have very happy lives!

In the Parable of the wheat and the weeds Jesus reminds us that our world is not a perfect place. There are going to be lots of things around us that are wrong, but Jesus encourages us to live according to his ways.

Pat likes whipping out the weeds in our borders, but in allotments where there are lots of different plants and vegetables, it's more difficult to get rid of the weeds.

Kevin and Sue have taken us down to their allotment this morning, and they have a quiz for us – is it a weed, or is it one of their vegetable plants that they want. They are going to show us 7 plants, and we are going to have to write down what we think each one is – weed or wanted. We'll find out the answers at the end of the video.

Weed or Wanted Video

Praise: His got the whole world in his hands

Prayer:

Lord, we gather and we pause
to think about your world:
such a beautiful place.
We want everything to be perfect,
but we accept it is far from that.
So, bring us together to learn from you
how to be your presence in the world,
how to create a right environment
and be fruitful for you in all we do.
Keep us always watchful and prayerful.

Lord, sometimes we are just so impatient,
wanting to get on with our lives,
wanting everything better.
But we know, our ways are not your ways.
We come to you [this morning]
rejoicing in the knowledge that you
can transform our lives

and the lives of those around us –
starting exactly where we are.
Thank you, Lord.

Lord, I confess to you this morning
that I'm not very patient with the weeds in my life.
I try to yank them out, without thinking of any harm that may cause,
to me or others.
Sometimes, I'm so frightened that those tangles will overcome me
that I try to ignore them, pretending they're not there.

Please forgive me, Lord,
and help me to trust you to show me your way.

Mighty God,
we come to you in humble adoration.
You take us, such very imperfect people,
and give us the chance to prove that
when we place ourselves in your care
we can be the people you want us to be.
We bless you, Lord.
We praise and adore you.
Amen.

Offering/Prayer

Reading: Matt 13:24 – 30; 36 - 43

Message: A world of wheat and weeds

This is generally a time of the year when weeds tend to take over our gardens. And they are pesky things aren't they? They pop up when we least expect them, and often they can take over a patch with amazing speed. One day area is clear, and the next – covered.

How did that happen so quickly. It gets even more frustrating when they appear in areas where the good stuff is, the lovely flowers and plants that gardeners spend hours trying to find the best spots in which to grow.

And if those weeds take hold in your lawn, then the fun really starts! Weed killer, lawn feed – been there, done that! Those weeds just don't seem to want to go away! Experts all vary in their opinions when it comes to treating lawns – some suggest totally removal of the existing lawn and starting over with fresh top soil and seed.

Then there are others who offer this advice: Don't worry so much about getting rid of the weeds. Just grow the grass, and the grass will take care of the weeds. Sounds too easy doesn't it – but maybe that's the advice Jesus was trying to communicate in this parable.

When you look at life, do you see the weeds or the grass? Do you look at other people and see them as basically good or basically bad? When you hear the parable of the Wheat and Tares, as our text for today is often called, do you see the wheat or the tares?

Clearly the servants saw the tares. They wanted to pull them up immediately upon identifying them. The land owner, on the other hand, saw the wheat and insisted that the weeds be left alone until the time of harvest.

Commentators have insisted that the reason for the land owner's decision to wait is that a common poisonous weed, darnel, (*Lolium temulentum*) looks very much like wheat in its early stages of growth.

It is a plant related to wheat, that looks like wheat, that hides out in wheat, but is poisonous in the end, causing blindness and even death if too many of its small black seeds turn up in the bread dough. It would be difficult for the servants to know the difference between the good wheat and the bad darnel.

So, the wise response of any farmer of that day was to wait until the grain began to form and the distinction between the wheat and the tares was more evident. At that point something could be done, and often that was easier at the time of harvest.

What's important to us, I think, is to remember that Jesus says this parable tells us what the kingdom of heaven is like. He says, in essence, what was done in the past is done. We cannot undo the sowing of the weed seeds.

And worse, we can't always tell the weeds from the wheat. In other words, we must leave the sorting to God at some point in the future. In the meantime, we're to focus on growing wheat, not pulling weeds.

The expression - throwing out the baby with the bath water springs to mind!

Some people, in their zeal for the Gospel, do the same thing. They see only the dirty water. Or they see only weeds in their lawn. They see only sin in the lives of others.

So they throw the baby out with the bath water before they recognize the good that exists side by side with the bad.

We see this being played out before our very eyes at the moment. Yes, there have been some bad decisions taken with regards the handling of this pandemic, however there have also been some pretty good ones as well. Do we condemn the authorities for the bad decisions only, or do we give credit where credit is due?

Yes, it is sometimes all too easy to focus only on the weeds. That's not to say that we shouldn't be careful. There are things that we must avoid. But the more important task — and often the more difficult task — is to focus on the good.

Apparently, the method for training on how to detect counterfeit bank notes and coins spend the majority of their time focusing on the real thing. The reasoning is that by recognizing the real thing first, the counterfeits become more obvious.

But human nature wants an enemy to name. We want to be able to rally against something or someone more than we want to stand in favour of anything. We can find examples of this throughout history, but we can probably think of our own examples — where we've experienced it ourselves. A scapegoat is always a handy thing to have tucked up your sleeve

Most of the ancient creeds of the church, including the *Apostles' Creed*, were written, not to state what we believe, but to distinguish "us" from "them", the ones who had the wrong belief. They are more about wrong belief than about right belief because it's easier to find faults and failures than it

is to celebrate accomplishments and successes. We see the weeds in the garden rather than the genuine plants. (filioque)

You see, rather than focus on a common enemy, Jesus calls us to focus on the common good.

Rather than seeing what separates us and differentiates us from one another, Jesus calls us to see what it is that unites us.

People who not only understand, but begin to shape their lives by this parable, are among the most significant folks in history.

People like John Wesley who spoke of the catholic nature of the church. People like Mandela who refused to write off the white population in South Africa.

People like Martin Luther King, whose "dream" was a world where equality allowed all people to benefit.

God's plan is clear – leave the weeds and the wheat to grow – I am willing to risk weeds for wheat. After all, he does own the field!

Praise: Before the throne of God above
Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heav'n He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there, the risen Lamb
My perfect, spotless Righteousness
The great unchangeable I AM
The King of glory and of grace
One with Himself, I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ my Saviour and my God
With Christ my Saviour and my God

Prayers of Intercession

Lord God, we pray for our world and its people.
So many different cultures, colours, languages

– but we are all your children, all special in our own right.
Whatever our gender, race, colour or creed, we all belong to you.
We all need your love.

We pray that we might learn to live in harmony with each other,
to recognise that even someone halfway around the world is still
our neighbour in your sight. Far or near, we all belong to you.
We all need your love.

With today's technology we have access to news from afar,
almost before it happens. Help us not to become blasé about
the situations we see, but to pray and care faithfully for all concerned.
In war or peace, we all belong to you.
We all need your love.

We pray for those near and dear to us: protect them, wrap them
in your loving arms, and in sorrow and in joy, be with them.
Near or far, we all belong to you.
We all need your love.
Amen.

A sending out prayer

God who sows
and God who reaps,
God who allows growth
even in the hard places,
God who waits patiently
for the right time,
send us out now
into the fields of your world
to plant hope
amidst the weeds and seeds of life. And may we learn
to scatter love wisely
till you gather us in once more.

The Prayer (Elaine, Dan and Olivia – Timothy Eaton Memorial)