



WELCOME TO ST PETER'S ASH



THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY AT ST PETER'S IS CALLED TO CELEBRATE, LIVE AND REFLECT THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST

19th JULY 2020

TRINITY 6

<u>READINGS FOR TODAY</u>	PARISH OFFICE: Closed until further notice. TEL:01252 331161: e- mail: office@saint-peters-ash.org.uk BOOKINGS OF WEDDINGS & BAPTISMS – 01252 321517 WEBSITE: www.saint-peters-ash.org.uk
Isaiah 44 v 6 - 8	
Romans 8 v 12 - 25	
Matthew 13 v 24 – 30, 36 - 43	



In gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat too, let both grow together until the harvest.

COLLECT FOR – TRINITY 6

Merciful God,
you have prepared for those who love you
such good things as pass our understanding:
pour into our hearts such love toward 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,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

CHURCH SERVICES

At present there is only a 10 am Family Communion service in Church on Sundays. From Sunday 26th July we will have an 8 am Holy Communion as well, but in St Peter's Centre. We are unable to have both services in the same building at present, due to issues relating to the cleaning that would be necessary between the services.

From THIS Wednesday 22nd July there will be a service of Holy Communion at 9 – 30 am in church, in the nave, not in the Lady Chapel. Unfortunately, there can be no coffee and chat after this service at present.

The following procedures we will be in place for all of our services for the foreseeable future, following the advice from the government and the Church of England, for your health and safety:

Social distancing and Public Health requirements must be met. The two-metre distancing 'rule' applies for public worship. The maximum number that we will be able to accommodate in church will be 40. In St Peter's Centre the number will be 15. To preserve social distancing in church you will be shown to your seat by a Steward. From NEXT SUNDAY you will have to wear a face covering in church.

Certain groups of people may be at increased risk of severe disease from COVID-19, including people who are aged 70 or older, regardless of medical conditions. Individuals who fall within these groups are advised to stay at home as much as possible and, if they do go out, to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside of their household. They should carefully consider the risks associated with indoor gatherings and decide, accordingly, whether to attend public worship at this time. Those who are shielding until 31st July should not attend at this time. We shall be continuing to provide the Pew Sheet services for those who cannot attend, or who prefer not to.

Everyone will have to use the hand sanitiser provided on entry and exit from the building. Also, we will be requesting the names of attendees, and these details will be kept for 21 days to assist NHS Track and Trace if required. It is essential that people do not gather on the church path, at the doorway or in the porch.

Anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend church due to the risk they pose to others. They should self-isolate at home.

To minimise the risk of transmission a disposable service sheet will be provide rather than the usual booklets. Singing will not form part of our worship. There will be no 'passing the peace'. Holy Communion will be in the form of the bread only (except for the celebrant) and hands should be sanitised before receiving. Kneeling at the rail is not permitted. Only the celebrant will prepare the altar and touch the vessels. There can be no servers or Communion Assistants at present. Communion will be brought to you.

The service is much shorter than usual. On Sundays the 'sermon' will be the same as that printed on the pew sheet. After the service, sadly, we will be unable to have our usual coffee time together. Also, people must not stay and chat inside the building. Outside, in the churchyard and in the car park, social distancing rules will still apply.

In an emergency, the disabled toilet in St Peter's Centre will be available. The other toilets are out of use.

The pandemic is far from over and we need to stay alert to save lives! I hope that you will still be able to enjoy worshipping God at St Peter's. Just being together once again will, I know, be a great support – even socially distanced.

(Fr Keith on behalf of the PCC.)

Morning Prayer at 10 am on Sunday

If there is more than one person present, someone may wish to read the parts marked (L), everyone says the rest together. You can say alternate verses in the Psalm and in the Canticles. Please have a Bible to hand. You may wish to light a candle.

(L) O Lord, open our lips

All: and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

- 1 Bless the Lord all you works of the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 2 Bless the Lord you heavens: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 3 Bless the Lord you angels of the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 4 Bless the Lord all people on earth: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 5 O people of God bless the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 6 Bless the Lord you priests of the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 7 Bless the Lord you servants of the Lord: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.
- 8 Bless the Lord all you of upright spirit: ♦
bless the Lord you that are holy and humble in heart.

All Bless the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: ♦
sing his praise and exalt him for ever.

This hymn is said or sung:

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Him serve with fear, His praise forth tell;
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
Without our aid He did us make;
We are His folk, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take.

O enter then His gates with praise;
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? the Lord our God is good;
His mercy is for ever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
The God whom Heaven and earth adore,
From men and from the angel host
Be praise and glory evermore.

(L) The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind:

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen.

(L) God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith,
firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

Pause to call to mind our sins, then we say:

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

All say The Gloria:

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

We now say the collect for Trinity 6 (see previous page):

Read Isaiah 44 v 6 - 8 followed by Psalm 86 v 11 to end concluding with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

Read Romans 8 v 12 - 25

(L) Alleluia, alleluia. The word of the Lord endures for ever. The word of the Lord is the good news announced to you.

All: Alleluia.

Now read Matthew 13 v 24 – 30 & 36 - 43 Here are some thoughts from Revd. Carol:

In both last and this weeks parables we can see that Jesus is clearly speaking to country folk with His use of seeds, weeds and wheat to get His message across. It was something He knew they would understand, although it would appear the disciples didn't and Jesus has to unpack it for them! Before we think about that and its relevance to us today, let's first take a look at the Romans reading.

Paul says we are heirs of God. Ultimately this means we are heirs of Jesus too. So, what does that mean to be heirs of Christ? Well it's not only about inheriting the heavenly Kingdom, but also about our inheritance of God's Kingdom here on earth. However, because we are heirs and know Jesus doesn't make God's Kingdom on earth perfect, but with God's help, our aim should be to work towards making it more perfect.

Also, as Christian's – Jesus' heirs - we are fortunate to have experienced the love of Christ in our lives. We may not think anything of it, but people do notice a difference in the way we speak and the way we react, especially in times of difficulty and challenge. Indeed, I would say that people

who know that we go to church and call ourselves Christian expect us to be different. That said, the world can be, and is a tough place and whether we like it or not, we are part of it and we can and are affected by it – we are not untouchable because we have a faith and are Christian. Indeed, I would say we are more aware of what goes on around us. More aware of the rights, wrongs and injustices against our fellow human beings.

Many aid agencies and humanitarian groups are run by Christian groups. In the UK food banks are not something born out of the latest crisis - there have been churches providing those facilities for years. I suppose what I'm saying is that as God's heirs we probably have a better appreciation of His world and should and do want to do the best we can to improve it, to make it a safe, trouble free and happy place to be. Not only for ourselves but for all of God's creation. This is where we turn to what Jesus is saying in this parable of the weeds.

Often theologians and preachers will use this particular parable to focus on the church – that is the people, not the building! The wheat represents the good, well behaved Christians, the weeds are the ones who have fallen by the wayside, or to put it bluntly, they are the sinners. This is not so.

Yes, Jesus is saying that we are the wheat, but that we are of and in the world – and let's not forget Satan here either – the worldly things and Satan are the weeds. The weeds are ready to take hold, creep in and take over wherever and whenever the opportunity arises. If we are tended to and nurtured and grow in our faith, then we are less likely to allow the weeds to come into our lives. If we do what we can in the world that we live in, in our daily lives, we can make a difference. To give my own analogy, it's a bit like the weeds in the garden, the dandelion, dock leaves, stinging nettles or the dreaded brambles. We can keep pulling them out or digging them up, but unless we get the whole thing out they will come back again at some point. But if we don't try to get rid of them and the weeds are left to their own devices they will take hold and begin to strangle and choke everything that gets in their way. That's what it is like living in the Kingdom on earth. We have to keep pulling and digging at the weeds wherever and whenever we can. If we become complacent – especially where Satan is concerned – he will creep in and begin to choke and contaminate what is good.

God does not expect us to do this on our own. He will help us and Jesus clearly states that God will be the one who sorts it all in the end. In verse 41 He says: 'The Son of Man will send His angels, and they will collect out of His Kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers'. And verse 43: 'Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'

To conclude. We are not perfect, we aren't. We can't make those around us and the world around us perfect either, we can't. But it's not an excuse to just sit back. We can make a difference, both within ourselves and the world by watching out for those things that contaminate and spoil what God has given us. As His heirs we claim His Kingdom here on earth. We have a responsibility to look after what God has given us in the best way we can. So that when He comes to unite heaven and earth again, hopefully there will be a few less weeds for Him to have to take care of. AMEN

Now pause for your own reflections, and then we say the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

We now say together:

All: You have raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of your servant David.

- 1 Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, ♦
who has come to his people and set them free.
- 2 He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, ♦
born of the house of his servant David.
- 3 Through his holy prophets God promised of old ♦
to save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all that hate us,
- 4 To show mercy to our ancestors, ♦
and to remember his holy covenant.
- 5 This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
- 6 Free to worship him without fear, ♦
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.
- 7 And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the
Most High, ♦
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
- 8 To give his people knowledge of salvation ♦
by the forgiveness of all their sins.
- 9 In the tender compassion of our God ♦
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
- 10 To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the
shadow of death, ♦
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

All: You have raised up for us a mighty Saviour,
born of the house of your servant David.

Our prayers today are written by the Fr Keith:

Loving Father, as the Pandemic continues across the world, we pray for ourselves and our sisters and brothers in Christ, that we may all keep faith and be good examples of responsible behaviour to others. We pray for church leaders that they may support those in positions of power and authority, in making the right decisions for the common good. Be with all of the local clergy as they begin to open churches for public worship once again, and strengthen those who are still worshipping at home at this time.

Lord in Your mercy – Hear our prayer.

Loving Father, we pray for people in those parts of the world that have been forgotten in the Pandemic. We remember the peoples of Syria, Yemen, Libya and other areas of conflict. We bring before you all refugees and asylum seekers, those suffering hunger and those drinking contaminated water. Strengthen all who are working to bring relief and humanitarian aid in those places. Guide the leaders of the nations to continue to seek justice and peace for all, and not just get caught up with the needs of their own people.

Lord in Your mercy – Hear our prayer.

Loving Father, we give thanks for all those who have volunteered to help their neighbours in our own community. We pray that even when the current crisis is over, we may have our eyes and ears open to the needs of others around us, and be willing to make sacrifices of our time and money to help them.

Lord in Your mercy – Hear our prayer.

Loving Father, we continue to pray for all who are sick and suffering at this time, may they find healing, comfort and hope through the gift of your love and that peace which passes our understanding. May all those who care for the sick know your presence ever with them in what they do.

Lord in Your mercy – Hear our prayer.

Loving Father, we pray for the souls of all the faithful departed, those who have died recently and those whose anniversary occurs at this time. We also pray for the bereaved that they may find the strength to go on, trusting in the promise of resurrection given to us in your Son, Jesus Christ.

Lord in Your mercy – Hear our prayer.

Loving Father, in the week ahead help us to reflect your love, compassion and forgiveness to all who we meet. May we be willing to give as well as to receive, that we may play our part in helping to establish your Kingdom here on earth.

All: Merciful father accept these prayers for the sake your Son our saviour Jesus Christ.

As Jesus taught us, so we pray: Our Father in heaven....

This hymn may be said or sung:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

Chorus:
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels, descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Chorus

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

Chorus

Let us pray:

(L) Creator God,
you made us all in your image:
may we discern you in all that we see,
and serve you in all that we do;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All: May the God of all grace,
who called us to his eternal glory in Christ Jesus,
establish, strengthen and settle us in the faith;
and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us and all
who we love, today and always. Amen.

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy
of God, rest in peace, and rise with Christ in glory. Amen.

READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK – TRINITY 7

1 Kings 3 v 5 - 12; Romans 8 v 26 - end;
Matthew 13 v 31 – 33, 44 - 52

HAPPY BIRTHDAY THIS WEEK TO:

JUDI HUCKLE (22nd)

There is a free national phone line 'Daily Hope' that offers
music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship
services. Available 24 hours a day on **0800 804 8044**

CARE AND SHARE

Our initiative to help those who may be short on food
supplies in the current crisis. Food is being left outside
church for people to take for themselves, or to share with
others who they know are in need. If you would like to
donate any tins, packets, UHT milk etc. please leave it on
the doorstep of the Rectory. Thank you.

DON'T FORGET OUR ST PETER'S PRAYER CHAIN

If you would like emergency prayer for yourself or
somebody else please phone: 01252 322292 or 01252
323037 – this is a confidential service.

COLLECT FOR ST MARY MAGDALENE (22nd)

Almighty God,
whose Son restored Mary Magdalene to health
of mind and body
and called her to be a witness to his resurrection:
forgive our sins and heal us by your grace,
that we may serve you in the power of his risen life;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

COLLECT FOR ST JAMES THE APOSTLE (25TH)

Merciful God,
whose holy apostle Saint James,
leaving his father and all that he had,
was obedient to the calling of your Son Jesus Christ
and followed him even to death:
help us, forsaking the false attractions of the world,
to be ready at all times to answer your call without delay;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Evening Prayer for this week

O Lord open our lips,
and our mouth shall show forth your praise.

O God make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

- 1 The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom then shall I fear? ♦
The Lord is the strength of my life;
of whom then shall I be afraid?
- 2 Though a host encamp against me,
my heart shall not be afraid, ♦
and though there rise up war against me,
yet will I put my trust in him.
- 3 One thing have I asked of the Lord
and that alone I seek: ♦
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
- 4 To behold the fair beauty of the Lord ♦
and to seek his will in his temple.
- 5 For in the day of trouble
he shall hide me in his shelter; ♦
in the secret place of his dwelling shall he hide me
and set me high upon a rock.
- 6 Therefore will I offer in his dwelling an oblation
with great gladness; ♦
I will sing and make music to the Lord.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

This hymn may be said or sung:

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing,
Always, only for my King.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

That this evening may be holy, good and peaceful,
we pray with one heart and mind:

Silence is kept.

As our evening prayer rises before you, O God,
so may your mercy come down upon us
to cleanse our hearts
and set us free to sing your praise
now and for ever. Amen.

*A Psalm is said: Mon 127; Tue 135; Wed (Mary
Magdalene) 63; Thurs 138; Fri 145; Sat (James the
Apostle) 94, ending with:*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever.
Amen.

*Two Scripture Readings now follow (see below). Between
the two readings we say:*

All God's love was revealed among us
so that we might live through Jesus.

- 1 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; ♦
everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
- 2 Whoever does not love does not know God, ♦
for God is love.
- 3 In this the love of God was revealed among us, ♦
that God sent his only Son into the world,
so that we might live through him.
- 4 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved
us, and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.
- 5 Beloved, since God loved us so much, ♦
we ought also to love one another.
- 6 For if we love one another, God abides in us, ♦
and God's love will be perfected in us.

All Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

All God's love was revealed among us
so that we might live through Jesus.

Readings:

Monday: Ezekiel 10 v 1 – 19; 2 Cor 6 v 1 to 7 v 1
Tuesday: Ezekiel 11 v 14 - end; 2 Cor. 7 v 2 - end
Wednesday: Zephaniah 3 v 14 – end; Mark 15 v 40 - 16 v 7
Thursday: Ezekiel 12 v 17 - end; 2 Cor 8 v 16 – 9 v 5
Friday: Ezekiel 13 v 1 - 16; 2 Corinthians 9 v 6 - end
Saturday: Jeremiah 26 v 1 – 15; Mark 1 v 14 - 20

Gospel Canticle: The Magnificat (The Song of Mary)

All: You have looked with favour on your lowly servant,
from this day all generations will call her blessed.

- 1) My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit
rejoices in God my Saviour; he has looked with favour on
his lowly servant.
- 2) From this day all generations will call me blessed; the
Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his
name.
- 3) He has mercy on those who fear him, from generation
to generation.
- 4) He has shown strength with his arm and has scattered
the proud in their conceit.
- 5) Casting down the mighty from their thrones and lifting
up the lowly.
- 6) He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the
rich away empty.

7) He has come to the aid of his servant Israel, to remember his promise of mercy.

8) The promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now and shall be for ever. Amen.

All: You have looked with favour on your lowly servant, from this day all generations will call her blessed.

Prayers of thanksgiving are made for the day that is ending. Intercessions are offered for the church, the world and for individuals, the sick and the departed.

Our Father, who art in heaven ...

The Collect for this week (see first page)

O God our protector,
by whose mercy the world turns safely into darkness
and returns again to light:
we give into your hands our unfinished tasks,
our unsolved problems,
and our unfulfilled hopes;
for you alone are our sure defence
and bring us lasting peace
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lighten our darkness, Lord, we pray, and in your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night, for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

May the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

SERMON FROM BISHOP ANDREW

Hello, everyone, and today I'd like to preach from our Gospel reading this morning in Matthew chapter 13, and the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds.

Some years' back, I was privileged to travel to Malawi, to attend the consecration of a new bishop in the football stadium of the city of Msuzu. The service itself was long, hot and joyous, complete with singing, drumming, dancing and the bringing up of gifts to the new bishop from congregations all around his Diocese – among them a fridge freezer and four live goats, whose bleating added to the excitement of the occasion. But it was on the journey home that I witnessed something of the more troubling side of the culture: because as we drove through woodland and some beautiful open countryside, we kept on coming across unattended fires, some of them dangerously out of control; and when I asked one of our Malawian friends about it, he said that the fires may well have been started deliberately as an act of revenge against a competitor, a boss, a neighbour or even a member of the arsonist's own family.

There are plenty of other ways to take revenge against someone who's hurt us, of course, and the parable in this morning's gospel reading tells us of one of them – an activity that was so common at the time that it constituted a criminal offence in Roman Law. There is a particular weed called darnel, which has long, thin roots that bind themselves to the roots of other plants nearby; in the early stages it looks just like wheat, and even an experienced farmer can't tell the difference. But while wheat is good and nutritious, darnel is poisonous, leading to dizziness and sickness for anyone unfortunate enough to eat it. So that one of the most maddening ways to take revenge on a fellow human being was to walk into their field at dead of night and to sow darnel seeds in amongst the wheat.

What would happen, though, once a landowner got to hear that his field had been contaminated? How could he get the wheat clear of the weeds? Well, it was tempting to try to sort it out at once, of course, to teach his workers to become highly skilled at distinguishing wheat from darnel and to pick out every weed they could find. But that wasn't a very clever idea – because for every little darnel plant they collected, as they tramped through the fields, there would be damage to a dozen stalks of wheat. Much better to be a little patient, and to allow the two to grow side by side for a while. For by harvest time it would become obvious what was wheat and what was darnel: - so that the wheat could be safely gathered in before the weeds were pulled up and burnt.

Now there was plenty of impatience around in Jesus' day, and indeed among Jesus' followers. At one extreme end of the spectrum were the so-called Sicarii or dagger men, a splinter group from the party of the Zealots, who would carry a small dagger under their cloaks and stick it into Roman soldiers or Jewish collaborators in crowded places, blending into the crowd afterwards to escape detection. But for every member of this shadowy cloak-and-dagger operation, there were thousands of ordinary men and women who sympathised with the view of the Zealots that national independence – and, more broadly, the Kingdom of God – would only be achieved through violence. And we see echoes of that view in the gospels, of course, not least in the populist uprising in John chapter 6 where Jesus only narrowly escaped a forceful attempt to make him king, and in the various occasions where his disciples themselves – at least one of whom was a Zealot - brought into this narrative.

And so in a series of agricultural parables, the parable of the sower, the parable of the mustard seed, and this parable of the wheat and the weeds among them, Jesus confronted that wrong kind of impatience head on. It's true that Jesus was instigating a revolution – in retrospect, by far the most globally significant revolutions of all time – a point made forcefully in this great book I'm reading at the moment, Tom Holland's 'Dominion: the Making of the Western Mind'. But in Jesus' teaching the means were always as important as the ends, if wheat were not be damaged alongside the weeds.

Along with the wrong kind of *impatience*, of course, Jesus spoke elsewhere of the wrong kind of *patience*. If the Sicarii were at one end of the spectrum, the Sadducees were at the other. Rich, influential, the guardians of the Jerusalem Temple, they were patient all right, doing all they could to avoid upsetting the status quo that served them so well; but it was a wrong kind of patience. They were the winners in the Jewish hierarchy, the aristocrats for whom continuing peace with the Roman authorities was the number one priority, if a healthy line of personal revenue were to be maintained through profits from the money changers and the sellers of sacrificial lambs and doves.

And the same Jesus who so consistently rejected the cloak-and-dagger approach of the Sicarii and their sympathisers was equally critical of the complacent greed of the Sadducees. The day when he took a whip and chased out the money changers from the Temple, for example, risking the whole comfortable stability on which their position in society was founded, was every Sadducees' nightmare. It's no wonder, a few days' later, that we find them adding their respectable voices to the mobs baying for Jesus' blood.

And again there's a series of parables, this time more urban than agricultural, that reject a wrong kind of patience: the persistent widow harrying the apathetic judge until she gets her justice; the friend at midnight, banging on his neighbour's door. The call to patience must never be an excuse for inaction, is the message here, for simply keeping the powerful in power in a structure that is fundamentally unjust. For while Jesus' revolution was never to be advanced by violent means, a revolution it was and remains: indeed a revolution of justice and joy that involves the whole of creation in St. Paul's magnificent vision in our epistle reading today – a creation which, he says, will be *'set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God'*.

Now these past few months are times when we've been reminded of the need for patience as we've submitted to an extraordinary series of restrictions on our normal way of life so as to stem the deadly progress of the Coronavirus. For some of us that has involved the testing of our relationships at close hand, with our homes doubling up as our offices, our schools, our churches and our holiday destinations, and with the economic uncertainties simply adding to the sense of underlying crisis. For others of us, we've been isolating and isolated, and that has taken considerable patience in itself. Our Church life has similarly been affected as never before, and even now our clergy and church councils are needing to make difficult decisions about the speed at which we return to some kind of normality. And then, of course, there have been many hospital patients too, with that very phrase 'hospital patient' often more of an aspiration than a reality.

Our children or grandchildren, if we have them, have equally been facing many challenges of their own, with the closure of their playgroups and schools and the cancellation of the exams they were due to sit:

and again that's involved considerable patience on their part and ours. Today's parable, in particular, would encourage us to adopt an agricultural approach more than an urban one at this point – to see this as a season in their lives and one from which they will learn and grow – rather than rushing in where angels fear to tread, and trying to sort out their problems for them or keep their noses to the grindstone, doing damage to the wheat – perhaps their fragile mental health - in the process.

Of course there *are* things that need to sorting out straight away too – not letting the sun go down on our anger, for one thing, as St. Paul memorably puts it in his letter to the Ephesians. But while that's true of the little ups and downs that all of us will have faced over the past few months, there are bigger things, Jesus taught, that take time. Building trust takes time. Real friendships take time. Growing in faith takes time. Educating a child takes time. Building God's Kingdom takes time. The man who built his house upon the sand had it up in no time. But what went up easily, collapsed easily. And the same will be true whenever we try to cut corners in our lives, whenever we fail to exercise this divine gift of patience.

But here we need to be a little careful: careful to ensure that by avoiding the world of the Zealots we don't drift into the world of the Sadducees instead. For this extraordinary time has done more than test our patience. It has also confronted our complacency. The *Black Lives Matter* movement, in particular, has raised some really significant questions about white middle-class privilege in the USA and across the West: about the ways in which Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities face unspoken assumptions and prejudices that continue hold them back from achieving their fullest potential as human beings made in God's image. Here in the Diocese we're setting up a Racial Justice Focus Group to see where that's happening in our churches and what we can do about: because Jesus' revolution should always be advanced by peaceful means, but a revolution is it and remains, a revolution of justice and joy.

And so let's pray today for a right patience and a right impatience in our life and our ministry as a church. Let's be impatient about anything that divides us or gets in the way of others finding their rightful place within our church family: gossip, grumbling, unfriendliness, prejudice. But let's be patient with one another, with our families, with the many who come across our path, with the leadership of the church, with our desire for church growth and the coming of God's Kingdom. For if we are to have a secure and joyful future as individuals and church communities, that won't happen at the click of a switch or with the wave of a magic wand. It'll happen as the wheat is allowed to grow bit by bit, probably – realistically with some weeds thrown in there as well (because there's no such thing as a perfect church) - and as we come daily before the Lord of the Harvest with a willingness to plough and to sow, to nurture and to reap, for the blessing of His world and the glory of His name. Amen.