

Shellrock Benefice Service Sheet for Trinity 6, July 19th 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 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.

Readings

Genesis 28 10-19a; Psalm 139, 1-11, 22-23; and Psalm 86, 11-17; Romans 8, 12-25; Matt 13, 24-30, 36-43

A Reflection

The gospel passage for this morning continues from last week and with the metaphor of seed sowing. It is a parable which only appears in Matthew; the parable of the wheat and the weeds. Whereas last week all the seed which the sower sowed was good seed sown by a good sower, today we have two different seeds sown by different sowers who are polar opposites from each other. One is good and sows the wheat; the other is evil and sets out to try and destroy the good wheat by sowing weeds which are liable to choke the good harvest.

Jesus clearly acknowledges the reality of evil and is describing the dual sides of human nature which is present in all of us: the capacity to be good and creative as well as to be extremely wicked and destructive. We see the noble and the crass in each person. Each of us is a mixture of wheat and weeds, of good and bad, of potentially fruitful and potentially destructive. The apostle Paul understands this duality very well indeed when he says, to paraphrase, *I do not do what I want to do, but I do the very thing that I hate* (Romans 7; 15)

There are temptations down the path almost everywhere we look. For example: turning a blind eye when we know perfectly well that something is wrong; an absence of courage when we see or hear something that is a lie or unkind and we just let it go rather than take the risk of speaking out. The organisation Alcoholics Anonymous with its 12 steps programme draws attention to the two sides that exist in all who come to them for help. The fourth of its 12 steps requires taking a fearless moral inventory sorting out the wheat from the weeds within.

I have included the two psalms which are set for the day particularly because the first, Psalm 139 fits so well with this gospel passage. The psalm starts "Lord, you have searched me out and known me". Sitting and pondering on these words I find I want to reject them. I say to myself "I don't want the Lord to be searching my soul and I would certainly prefer to be seen as lily-white and productive". But I also know that Jesus recognises the frailties that we are all subject to and despite seeing our faults and weaknesses He accepts and loves us, each one of us. It is noteworthy isn't it that when Jesus discovers people who have behaved badly, like a good parent who loves unconditionally, he doesn't reject ; he says "*go your way and sin no more*".

Suggestions for prayer with a response: "*O Lord, Hear our Prayer*"

For thanks that we are able to re-enter our churches for prayer and to start services

For all people known to us who are ill at this time, especially those in the benefice

For guidance from the Holy Spirit as we move ahead and plan for the future

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever Amen

Blessing

The love of God enfold us, the power of Christ protect us, and the leading of the Spirit guide us. And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen