

Sunday 19th July 2020

Call to worship

Generous God, as we meet in your name, teach us your ways that we may walk in your truth. Open our minds that we may discern your truth. Inspire our words that we may proclaim your truth. Transform our lives that we may live your truth.

MP 50 Be still for the glory of the Lord

Verse 1 Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here; come bow before Him now with reverence and fear: in Him no sin is found - we stand on holy ground. Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here.

Verse 2 Be still for the glory of the Lord, Is shining all around: He burns with holy fire, with splendour He is crowned: How awesome is the sight - our radiant King of light!

Be still for the glory of the Lord, Is shining all around.

Verse 3 Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place: He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister His grace - no work too hard for Him. In faith receive from Him.

Be still, for the power of the Lord Is moving in this place.

Prayer and Lord's Prayer.

We come to you, gracious God, acknowledging that our life is filled with both wheat and weeds. Be gentle with us, and help us to help one another as we journey together, that your kingdom may come and your will may be done, here in this place, in our communities and in our lives, now and always. Shine on us, Lord, as the sun shines on wheat in a field. Gladden our hearts with the good news of your love, patience and kindness. Increase in us an appreciation of all that you are as we listen to your word, sing your praise and pray for one another and our world.

Dear God, the giver of all good gifts: your seeds of friendship, kindness and faith we will sow, your plants of trust, hope and understanding we will grow, that all people will know, your love and forgiveness. Gracious God, the giver of all good gifts, when you sow good seeds in our hearts and we turn them to weeds: forgive us. When we pull up the good ideas of others and rob them of their confidence to sow more seeds:

forgive us. When we judge others too quickly and put them in boxes that limit them and us: forgive us. When we can't tell the difference between good and bad in our own ambitions and habits, or allow the boundaries to be blurred: forgive us, and grant us discernment, humility and grace. Lord's Prayer.

Good morning! I have a question for you: What kind of surprises do you think people usually like? (an unexpected gift, maybe a party for them, good news about a friend) what kind of surprises do you think people don't like too much? Taking a test you didn't know about, thinking you did well on an exam and then finding out that you didn't do well on it or maybe like all the holidays we have had to cancel this year. I was asking those questions because I wanted us to think about how there are all sorts of surprises in life, surprises that are both exciting and unwanted. In today's scripture story, Jesus tells the crowds another parable with surprises in it. In the story that Jesus tells, there was a field of grain that some workers had planted. However, it turned out that while the grain grew, so did many weeds, – way more than usual. The weeds were unwanted for – that's for sure! The workers planned to remove the weeds but were not very sure if they should as it would disturb the actual crop but before they acted on their plan, they went to their boss for advice on what they should do. But their boss advised them not to pull up the weeds as it was a certainty that they would also pull up the wheat not just the weeds. He told them just to let them grow with the wheat together. One of the reasons we hear today's story, I think, is to remind us to ask for God's help when we have had to stop and go down another road something we were not expecting to do. And, just like the workers, we too can adjust our plans as we invite God into what we are experiencing and the plans that we have to adjust to. As we do that, we invite God into our feelings about changes in our lives. When we give this to God we can plan for the changes with God at the heart of our lives and react in a way that does less harm and more good for ourselves and for those around us.

Let's pray. Dear God, Thank you that you are with us and willing to help us at all times in our lives. Amen

MP1003 My Jesus my Saviour

Verse 1 My Jesus, my Saviour, Lord, there is none like You. All of my days, I want to praise The wonders of your mighty love. My comfort, my shelter, tower of refuge and strength, let every breath, all that I am, never cease to worship You.

Chorus *Shout to the Lord, all the earth let us sing. Power and majesty, praise to the King. Mountains bow down and the seas will roar at the sound of your name. I sing for joy at the work of Your hands, For ever I'll love You, for ever I'll stand. Nothing compares to the promise I have in You.* **Repeat verse and Chorus.**

Reading Isaiah Ch. 44 Vs. 6- 8

"This is what the LORD says- Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. ⁷Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come- yes, let them foretell what will come. ⁸Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one."

MP 882 Lord of all hopefulness.

Verse 1 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy, whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy, Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray, Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Verse 2 Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith, whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe, be there at our labours, and give us, we pray, Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Verse 3 Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace, your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace, be there at our homing, and give us, we pray, Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Verse 4 Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm, whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm, be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray, your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Prayers of intercession

We pray for those who long for peace, in their hearts, homes, communities, nations. Lord, root out violence and strengthen those who are afraid. We pray for our churches locally and worldwide, especially where there is division. Lord, root out all that divides us and inspire appreciation of our differences. We pray for those living with inner tensions, those tempted to misuse their power or needs. Lord, root out corruption and abuse and protect those who are vulnerable. We pray for those who are struggling with illness, those who are coping with loss. Lord, root out all that drains hope and breaks spirits. We pray for those who look to destroy the lives and welfare of others. Lord, root out all misguided motives and extremism. We pray for the time when we will all be brought safely under your roof. Lord, root out all within us that hinders our journey. We thank you, Lord, for the power of stories that challenge us and help us understand new truths, giving us new insights into your love for all creation. Help us to celebrate that love and to tell others, that we might all be brought together into the barn of your everlasting kingdom and rejoice.

Reading Mathew 13 24-30, 36-43

In many situations, we would like to do what the farm hands in this story are ready to do: pull up the weeds, get rid of the bad and do right now. But that is not how Jesus tells the parable. The farmer does not permit them to do this. Maybe we need to look at our actions and thoughts like the farmer and look deeply into the story. Let's look at the weeds first. Some gardeners will be wondering at the farmer's answer to wait and let the weeds grow with the grain. This is surely no way to run a farm. But the weeds that have grown up in the wheat field are really grass that looks very much like wheat. Choosing one from another in the early stages of growing is just about impossible. While the plants ripen the roots of weeds and wheat join and become almost inseparable. Yet they must be removed at some stage. If not the flour made from the wheat will be ruined by the weeds, as it is a bit poisonous. The way forward is to harvest the plants, and by then the weeds or grasses are a different colour and can be separated therefore that is the proper time. This brings us to something the landowner says. "Let both of them grow together until the harvest." This may make sense to us in the context of growing wheat in a field where there are weeds. Where it bothers us is when it is in the context in our world, where we want to get rid of the bad, or at least expect God to do so. Just who are the weeds in the wheat field of the world? These are the plants we want to yank out by the roots. How often have we heard this? "They should just lock them up and throw away the key." There are times when we see this as the obvious answer. We want the wheat field of the world to flourish with the good grain and not be spoiled by the weeds. There are often questions asked such as why doesn't God do something about these people? Or where was God when they committed their terrible crimes? The parable does not deny that there are weeds in the wheat we know that there is not freedom from evil. The weeds are obvious around the world. The landowner knows what's happened — "An enemy has done this!" (v. 28). Yes, the world is a terribly broken place. We know that we would like the world to be as one with God at the helm. But the farmer says "Let both grow together until the harvest." This is hard to understand. And it looks like the farmer is resigned to letting his field of healthy grain be a field in which the weeds will just have to grow although he does not like to see it like this.

The second part is about the farmer saying the word Let, as in "Let both grow together until the harvest." The meaning of let, is allowing or permitting. Another way of looking at the word is to "pardon" or "forgive." "Let both grow together until the harvest" carries in the original language a sense of forgiveness toward the malicious enemy. If so, we must believe we have not the right to judge what that others do. And two wrongs do not make a right. Attacking and destroying the people is irresponsible. Doing so only adds to the harm. Instead, our response is to be forgiveness, and a willingness to trust in the purposes of God. You and I, well, I am sure sometimes we are wheat and sometimes we are weeds. St. Augustine, makes the same point when he says: "There is this difference between people and real grain and real weeds, for what was grain in the field is grain and what were weeds

are weeds. But in the Lord's field, which is the church, at times what was grain turns into weeds and at times what were weeds turn into grain and no one knows what they will be tomorrow. God gives us all choices, to do right, or to do wrong. The most convincing entry in this record is the story of Jesus. Risen from the dead, he forgives the disciples who let him down, and sends them out spreading his forgiveness to anybody who needs it, which is to say everybody. It is clear from this parable, clearer still from the cross, that forgiveness and forbearance are God's way of working with a broken world. Now indeed the harvest happens, an abundance of wheat is gathered in, enough to make landowner and farm hands rejoice together. The weeds in the field were a way of preventing this true harvest. The seed was good, and it bore, through adversity, a fruitful harvest. And so the parable ends on a note of brilliant triumph about that harvest: "the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (v. 43). Evil is real, but it is not ultimate. It never has the last word. Amen

MP 631 Tell out my soul

Verse 1 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice; to me the promise of his word; In God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Verse 2 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name! Make known His might, the deeds His arm has done; His mercy sure, from age to age the same; His holy Name, the Lord, the Mighty One.

Verse 3 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might! Powers and dominions lay their glory by. Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight, the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Verse 4 Tell out, my soul, the glories of His word! Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure. Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord to children's children and for evermore!

Benediction

May all that you do and say tell out the story of God's love for his world.

And may you all here and in the community be blessed moment by moment and day by day.

Amen.