

Traditional Home service Sunday 19th July Trinity 6

OPENING PRAYER

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.

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Lord our God,
in our sin we have avoided your call.
Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.
Have mercy on us;
deliver us from judgement;
bind up our wounds and revive us;
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*see page 2*)

READINGS - Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

TALK (*see page 3*)

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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*see page 2*)

CONCLUSION

God the Holy Trinity make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side, and guide you in truth and peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

525 Samuel John Stone.

THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION

Is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
She is His new creation
By water and the word;
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride,
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation—
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses
With every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, 'How long?'
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

'Mid toil, and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forever more;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blessed,
And the great church victorious
Shall be the church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won:
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee.

Michael Perry.

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O GOD BEYOND ALL PRAISING,

We worship You today,
And sing the love amazing
That songs cannot repay;
For we can only wonder
At every gift you send,
At blessings without number
And mercies without end:
We lift our hearts before You
And wait upon Your word,
We honour and adore You,
Our great and mighty Lord.

Then hear, O gracious Saviour,
Accept the love we bring,
That we who know Your favour
May serve You as our King;
And whether our tomorrows
Be filled with good or ill,
We'll triumph through our sorrows
And rise to bless You still:
To marvel at Your beauty
And glory in Your ways,
And make a joyful duty
Our sacrifice of praise!

O God beyond all praising,
We call upon your name,
Give light unto the darkness
of every evil's claim,
And if this world be shaken,
if the night is filled with dread,
Be side us in our grieving,
by you we shall be lead.
Take your children into glory,
to joy that will not cease.
O may our song of sorrow
become a song of peace.

Sermon notes - 19th July
Revd Dawn Airey
Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

Good morning, we're looking at the parable of the weeds and the wheat.

So the farmer sows good seed in good land, but an enemy comes and sows weeds, bad stuff. And the question asked is how come there's bad stuff. So they say well we'll take the weeds away, problem solved, and the master says no don't do that because you'll uproot the wheat too, let them grow together and at harvest time, they'll be separated and the weeds/evil dealt with.

Jesus tells lots of stories, some of which are really stark, this is one of them, not to scare us, but to invite us into a greater encounter with Him. This morning I want to think about the 'problem of evil'.

The problem of evil.

In v 36-43 Jesus explains what his story means and on many levels I love that the key thing I want explaining is the very thing he leaves as a mystery! He doesn't explain why the weeds/evil itself exists or why it is allowed to exist alongside us. And why would taking away the weeds damage the wheat? Why would removing evil be damaging to those who love Jesus? It's a huge question for us and one I'm sure some have been thinking through in our current season. This pandemic I would suggest has its source ultimately in the work of evil. Of course we can say that humans created the conditions for it to come into being, but however it came about it is here to destroy, and so is rooted in evil.

The why questions may not really have satisfactory answers but, when we look at the Bible as a whole, it does give us some responses which we'll look at in no particular order - we're going to look at just 5 of those responses:

a) Firstly, Isaiah 55: 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways are not your ways'. Now some will say that's not very helpful because it says we have to live with a mystery. It's frustrating that we want to understand more but there is a limit to our understanding. Tom Wright said, 'if I was God I wouldn't have the world like this'. Human beings have a tendency to think we're very clever, perhaps too clever for God! But the truth is

we don't get to run the world. In the film 'Bruce Almighty' Bruce is given the chance to run the world having complained to God that He wasn't doing a great job, and Bruce hilariously discovers that he can't do it. The way God chooses to deal with evil it is to get his hands dirty and to enter the mess and suffering of humanity in the form of Jesus. God's answer to evil - is Jesus.

b) Secondly, evil has a limit. This parable makes two things clear; note the weeds don't destroy the wheat but have to be allowed to grow up with it, evil won't destroy God's people but co-exist. And secondly, there is a future when evil won't be allowed to exist at all. So evil still has a limit.

c) Thirdly, this along with many other parables make it clear that God's kingdom is here but it's not fully here yet - there's a future when it will be here in its entirety. When I first became a Christian I think I probably assumed - everything's going to be ok now, God's going to sort everything out. But experience shows us it's not really like that, and Jesus makes it clear we still face the storms. One of the reasons we face what we face in this life, is because God's kingdom isn't fully here yet. There's an element of waiting, of patience, which is frustrating and counter cultural. But do we really want God to rule the world directly and immediately, so that everything **we** think and do is instantly judged and punished?! If the price of God stepping in and stopping things like genocide, this virus, were that he would also have to deal with every other evil impulse, action, including those inside of us, would we be prepared to pay that price? If we ask God to intervene on special occasions, do we really think He can do that when we want Him to and then back off again for the rest of the time?

d) Fourthly, God didn't create evil, but He did create beings - both human and angelic with the capacity to choose freely. In Isaiah 14 there's a hint that the devil was an angelic being who chose to rebel against God, and was thrown out of heaven as a result. The Adam and Eve narrative in Genesis makes clear that evil therefore can invade where it wants and just like the angelic beings, Adam and Eve also had a choice, human beings have a choice, and we know much suffering,

much evil is at the hands of human beings who have rebelled against God and so act in ways that cause tremendous suffering. In the news recently, as an example, has been a question mark over workers rights, pay and practices in some of our factories. But we have to be equally careful that we don't try to make a direct, one to one, link between sin and suffering. So I've heard some ask, did God cause this virus as a judgement. Jesus's teaching causes me to shy away from this type of thinking, in John 9 the blind man at the pool of Siloam was healed, but ahead of this the people around him asked Jesus was he blind because of his or his parents sin, and Jesus was really clear that neither was the case. This parable makes clear that the time for judgement is 'at the end of the age', thereby giving more time for people to turn to Him.

e)Fifthly, lastly, there's something about how it shapes us: There's something about that question of why would taking away the weeds damage the wheat, in v29? I think its something to do with the transformation hardship can bring when we're in God's hands. Romans 5 talks about how suffering produces perseverance, which produces character and takes us to hope. It takes us to Jesus AND makes us more like Jesus. Suffering forms us into the best people. I've met so many people who through what they suffered became the most amazing, inspiring people to be around. Did those people want that thing to happen, or would they choose for it to happen again knowing the benefit achieved as a result - no of course not, but the redeeming feature of following Jesus in the midst of it somehow has made them more like Jesus - their priorities have been re-arranged, they have been more formed into Christ likeness. Even in extreme situations, like Corrie Ten Boom in a concentration camp, she was clearly living for a different world, and many others in extreme circumstances were formed into people who are most like Jesus. In the New Testament letters they went through hideous things, lost homes, jobs, persecuted, and yet they are able to say that they 'glory in their suffering', they understood they were being got ready for eternity, becoming the type of people suited for heaven, God is at work in these situations, redeeming. And there's something deep within us that loves

someone coming through suffering, think of the stories on x-factor for example, they show these stories because deep within us we love someone coming through adversity and doing something different with their life as a result. And if we were to analyse the films we watch, those who write them apply story theory because its so compelling. What I mean by that is that the central figures we love are those whose character changes, so they start with an essential flaw that through difficult circumstances is changed, the redeeming feature being that their suffering makes them a better person.

So the bible gives a number of responses to the problem of evil, we've briefly looked at 5: -We have limited understanding but God's answer is to come into the mess in the form of Jesus and fight evil on our behalf.

-evil has a limit

-The impact of God's kingdom not being fully here yet

-God didn't create evil but created beings with the freedom to choose and lastly,

-in God's hands, suffering's redeeming feature is that it shapes us to be more like Jesus

PRAYER time:

I'd like to pray for us this morning: We will all be different people as we come out of this pandemic, we would have been further shaped to be like Jesus, there will be stories to tell of what God has done. But many may also feel a bit battered by this virus, or something else that has caused you great pain. Today's passage may feel like a stark message - I would suggest its an invitation to encounter Jesus. I love that hidden within this parable is a deep desire in the heart of God to enable those who love the Lord to grow into all that He has given for us to grow in to, to protect us, to be patient with us, to give us time. Maybe today some of us need to confess, I don't understand why that thing happened, I'm angry, I feel lost, but I choose you Lord, heal that wound in me.