

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Please read through these passages slowly and reflectively before reading my sermon.

Isa 44:6-8

Psalm 86:11-17

Romans 8:12-25

**Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

In writing and reading, speaking and listening, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Today we are given another parable, another Godly play gold box: a precious gift given to us before we were even born, that sometimes is easy to open and sometimes we have to wait with, to see how it is going to open to us today.

Being willing to wait lies at the heart of today's parable too.

And don't we need to remember what a gift the ability to wait well is, as we live through these challenging times of change and uncertainty for so many, when much as we would like to know timescales and plans, even those we are given have to be provisional.

If there is no other prayer to take from today, perhaps it is for the grace to find gifts in the waiting itself.

So how might Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds open to us today?

The telling of the story has a number of elements:

Someone sows good seed is sown in the field

While everyone is asleep an unseen enemy came and sowed weeds

Everything grew, the wheat beginning to bear grain, and the weeds becoming identifiable.

The workers are dismayed – it is as if they are aggrieved on the householder's behalf – "we know you sowed good seed, you did

what you could for a good harvest – let's get rid of what seems to be spoiling it"

The householder who sowed the good seeds is unruffled, calm and won't be bounced into immediate emergency action.

"Don't pull out the weeds because you may pull up some good plants too: wait for full growth and the harvest and then the reapers can get rid of the weeds first and gather all that is fruitful into the barns"

I wonder which bit of the story you notice or react too most strongly?

Anyone who has walked past my garden recently may not be surprised if I say that my favourite bit of the story is the conversation between the householder and his workers!

When they ask him if they should go out and gather the weeds he replies:

"No for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest and at harvest time I will tell the reapers: 'Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned but gather the wheat into my barn"

The householder's primary concern is for every good seed to be preserved to be fully fruitful, not mistakenly destroyed by an overzealous weeding party. He will tolerate the apparent imperfections of his field for a future good.

At first maybe we wonder about this - here is a the recklessly generous gardener again – now even letting his soil nourish what he didn't plant.

Are we even happy about it? I imagine those of you who are more assiduous gardeners than me will be keen to pull up weeds as soon as you see them to give space to what you have chosen to grow.

So what is going on here?

The householder insists that a judgement on each individual plant is only to be made when it has come into its full growth, so that every fruitful plant is fully harvested. Nothing that is good is lost.

Nothing that is good is lost: that is the priority, that is his focus.

He is more concerned to nurture the fruitful plants than to spend energy on the weeds.

Only at the end will the sorting come.

When Jesus explains the parable, according to Matthew, he says that the good plants are the "children of the kingdom" and the weeds are the "children of the evil one", later he talks of the causes of sin, evildoers – in other words all that opposes God's will. At the end, all that opposes God's will is to be overcome.

So why, I wonder does the householder let the wheat and the weeds grow together before that?

I can't help remembering that Jesus begins his whole ministry with a call: Repent, the kingdom of God has drawn near....

His whole ministry is framed with the opportunity for all who have ears to hear to listen and respond to his invitation to turn back to the Creator who saw the Creation and saw that it was good. This is the invitation to remember that we are all made as God's beloved children of the kingdom, and that Jesus shows us, and makes for us the way to return to growing as children of the kingdom into fruitfulness, however far we might have drifted and become more like those pesky weeds.

Throughout his ministry Jesus' focus is on drawing people towards him, to find their goodness, their way of growing into the fruitful plant from God's good seed: giving the time and the space to respond and leave behind all the ways they oppose God's will, and all that causes them to.

The householder's reason for not letting his workers weed immediately is because they may destroy what is still to become fruitful. Jesus offers hope to all who listen to him that whatever their

life so far looks like, they have the potential and the opportunity to flourish as the beloved of God they were sown to be.

The one set of characters that are not identified in the parable's explanation are the workers.

Who are they?

I wonder how often we step into their role in the story: in our judgement of others' behaviour or in our own self-judgement?

How often do we focus on the weeds rather than looking for the fruitful growth?

How often do we trust that God will deal with the weeds if we keep our eyes on what he wants us to grow into as his beloved children?

How often do we accept with gratitude Jesus' invitation to turn back from the things which impede our fruitfulness and flourishing and with his help rediscover ourselves as God's good seed and children of the kingdom where all respond with joy to God's good desires for us and all creation, where God desires the whole creation to shine like the sun? (when I first typed that sentence I typed "shine like the Son" which is right too!)

Perhaps our prayer this week might be for God to help us see what is of God's sowing in our own lives, and in the people and world around us;

and to guide us as his workers in nurturing the growth of all that is of the Kingdom in us, all that is of the Kingdom in all creation.

Amen.