

Sunday, Trinity 6

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.

OR

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.

Readings

Psalm

- 11 Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth;
knit my heart to you, that I may fear your name.
- 12 I will thank you, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
and glorify your name for evermore;
- 13 For great is your steadfast love towards me,
for you have delivered my soul from the depths of
the grave.
- 14 O God, the proud rise up against me
and a ruthless horde seek after my life;
they have not set you before their eyes.
- 15 But you, Lord, are gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger and full of kindness and truth.
- 16 Turn to me and have mercy upon me;
give your strength to your servant
and save the child of your handmaid.
- 17 Show me a token of your favour, that those who hate
me may see it and be ashamed;
because you, O Lord, have helped and comforted
me.

Psalm 86

Epistle

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved.

Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8:12-25

Gospel

He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?” He answered, “An enemy has done this.” The slaves said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” But he replied, “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.” ’

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.’ He answered, ‘The one

who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Sermon on Sunday, Trinity 6

Last Sunday was the first Eucharist here for over four months. We were an intimate, though socially distanced, congregation. One phrase from the mass resonated clearly with me – “bursting from the tomb” – that brought the isolation of lockdown to a symbolic end for me. Just as Jesus burst out of the tomb, so have we burst from our bubbles of *singular* isolation. (Our expanded bubbles may only embrace our next door neighbours, but we are now able to fulfill more fully the human essential of being-with others anew.)

Lockdown should have brought a new awareness of our world and our interaction with it. However, I am not sure whether the hard-won insights have stayed with us now that we have burst

forth. Social distancing is a case in point. We all know that we can pass on this virus, don't we? And yet when it comes to crowding together in the ways we used to, for instance, the indiscriminate invasion of one another's space like those scrums at the bar – images of which were on the news so frequently. When we were told we could all go out to the pub, we left the new knowledge of appropriate behaviour at home, as we would leave unnecessary baggage in the storage locker.

Gladly, we are more circumspect here in church, we are aware of what we have learned in our self-isolation and applied it in the new freedom we have been granted by the government. The Church's more conservative breaking out of singular isolation should be applauded as we are showing that all life matters as we are being cautious in our social distance

measures, giving space to our neighbours, and perhaps even sharing our bubble with other loved ones.

However, there is a lot of confusion about the direction our lives will take after the discombobulation of the past four months. It struck me, almost as strongly as the bursting from the tomb did last week, that an ad for an automobile expresses the very real disarray people feel today, for the climax of the ad blasts a tune from the band King Crimson, “Twenty first century schizoid man.”

I ask, why is this part of the lyric the high point of the ad, because that lyrical phrase blasting out makes me recall the pain of the song and of the time in which it came to fruition. The three verses juxtapose images against one another, with “Twenty first century schizoid man” as the last in

each stanza. It makes me wonder about the confusion of this period of corona virus.

The parable of the wheat and the tares which we read this morning could speak to our situation, don't you think?

I want to be able to understand this parable here and now in our own time, in terms which make sense to us as twenty-first century people, schizoid or not.

Here are the words to the song:

Cat's foot iron claw
Neurosurgeons scream for more
At paranoia's poison door
Twenty first century schizoid man

Blood rack, barbed wire
Politicians' funeral pyre
Innocents raped with napalm fire
Twenty first century schizoid man

Death seed blind man's greed
Poets starving, children bleed
Nothing he's got he really needs
Twenty first century schizoid man

I don't want to affirm the black picture of humanity that that song depicts, but I do wish to highlight the deep division we have in our minds when we go out into the world. Lockdown, I think, has taught us that we are very much linked one with another, like the wheat and the tares in the field. We are bound together because it is so difficult to determine who is what. I ask myself: Am I wheat or am I a tare?

As we develop we cannot be separated from one another. However, harvest is coming. Harvest is the time when we must determine who is who, what we are in our essence. Clearly, the poisonous tares must be eradicated, the good wheat will be

taken into storage – eventually to make the bread we all require for life.

The wheat once scattered through the fields, once so confused with the tares, that wheat has been gathered together, perhaps stored for a time but it has been ground into the finest flour for our lives, some of the best wheat finds its way onto the altar to become the bread of heaven: it is the flesh we confess nourishes us because it is the presence of Christ here and now in physical reality, in that bread.

That is far away from this moment – the moment now, when we notice that the crop is mixed, when we see tares amongst the wheat. What are we to do? Do we tear the weeds from amongst the wheat now? No, we are told, do not weed out those tares because we might ruin what should become the harvest. Doesn't this go

against our grain? Surely we enjoy sorting things out, especially when we think we are on the winning side.

The injunction to leave everything in the fields until harvest should give us pause for thought in our judgement about tares and wheat. This injunction should allow us to be tolerant of all, because we are all being allowed to come to fruition, to become our ownmost possibility. Wheat or tares – and really, we have to ask ourselves, who is what, when we look carefully at our lives, when we inspect the whole of our lives, what we remember and what we have forgotten?

That is the moment of the harvest we await, when tares and wheat are separated, when chaff and wheat are winnowed apart, when the tares and the chaff are consigned to the devouring fire and the wheat is

taken into storage for the benefit of another generation. Will we remember the chaff, or will we be nourished by that fine wheat which was saved for the future?

Re-evaluations of people are tricky: those we thought the founders of our way of life can be assessed radically differently by different generations – tares or wheat? We won't know until that final harvest when all of us are separated into what we fundamentally are. We hope to be judged as wheat, but in our lives we are growing with the tares. But who is who?

The parable of the wheat and tares should give us pause in this schizoid period of the twenty first century. We must become whole again. Let us be wheat for the future harvest.

Amen