# Sunday 19th July

**STF 327**

 1 Jesus is King
 and I will extol him,
 give him the glory,
 and honour his name;
 he reigns on high,
 enthroned in the heavens —
 Word of the Father,
 exalted for us.

 2 We have a hope
 that is steadfast and certain,
 gone through the curtain
 and touching the throne;
 we have a priest
 who is there interceding,
 pouring his grace
 on our lives day by day.

 3 We come to him,
 our Priest and Apostle,
 clothed in his glory
 and bearing his name,
 laying our lives
 with gladness before him —
 filled with his Spirit
 we worship the King:

 4 ‘O Holy One,
 our hearts do adore you;
 thrilled with your goodness
 we give you our praise!’
 Angels in light
 with worship surround him,
 Jesus, our Saviour,
 for ever the same.

Wendy Churchill

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

Merciful God,

you plant each of us like seeds in the same field and together we are nourished and nurtured by the sun.  We sway in the wind and are refreshed by the rain. We are blessed by the knowledge that you want us to grow towards what you call us to be.

When we deprive others of that same opportunity,
**forgive us.**

When we want to uproot those whom we believe do not belong in our part of the field,
**forgive us.**

When we label others as good or bad rather than accept them for who they are,
**forgive us.**

When we are reluctant to acknowledge that we ourselves are a mixture of weeds and wheat,
**forgive us.**

When we are afraid to look into the fields of our own lives to see what is growing there,
**forgive us.**

O God, you know us inside and out, through and through.
**You search us out and lay your hand upon us**.
You know what we are going to say even before we speak.
**So we pray that you will help us to reach out to the uprooted and rejected,**
the lonely and the outcast,
**and to develop and grow the good in ourselves, in others and in the world.  This we pray in Jesus’ name.  Amen**

**Sermon**

It might feel as though we have already looked at a parable about seeds, but there are a number of differences between last week’s parable and this week’s. Both of them are arranged in a similar way, Matthew gives the parable then puts something else in the middle before giving the explanation. Last week we had a sower who seemed to be flinging the word of God around. This week, the sower is named as the Son of Man and the seed which last week was the word of God, is now representing the children of God, with the weeds still being bad.

A few weeks ago, I took my family on a walk that I have been meaning to do for a while. The walk took us along the side of the River Avon heading towards Bristol. The first part of the walk was through a wheat field, where the wheat was still young and green. When you see wheat fields from the road or from a distance, it is almost like a sea of green, you do not notice the weeds, the paths or the bauld spots. Up close you can see everything and it’s not always as picturesque as we might want it to be.

I struggled for a moment with the idea of the weeds being evil having seen that beautiful field. My grandfather always used to be quoted saying that a weed was just a flower in the wrong place. This seems to suggest that there are types of flowers that don’t belong amongst a certain type plant and this idea does not sit easily with me. I have been brought up in a culture that says God’s love is free and for everyone, in our diversity. To put this connotation on this parable seems to go against everything I understand. It almost feels as though it is saying that in order to be God’s children we all have to be the same seed, look the same way. To an extent I could follow this thought, because by our actions and lives we should look very similar, but we are still different people, loved by God all the same. So, I had to go back to the Greek, to look up this word weeds.

Now the word *weeds*, is a newish word so I found an older word, *tares*, for those brought up on the KJV you might recognise this word. This translates as *zizanion* in the Greek, which means *a kind of darnel, resembling wheat, except the grains are black.*  Another way of interpreting this, is a *false grain.* With this image of the weeds being false grains in my mind, I felt more comfortable with this parable.

The weeds that my grandfather talks about, are not being discriminated against, but it is the plants that look almost identical to the seeds sown by the Son of Man, that are the true weeds. As Jesus explains the parable to his disciples, he is letting them in on the reality of living in the world, that there are things in this world that we live in, that are not of God and yet they are not going to be uprooted at first sight. They will exist alongside us. Getting the same amount of food, sunlight and attention as we do, but they are known to be different. God sees what they truly are, even if from a distance they blend in with the rest of the field and at the harvest they will be removed. The image of the righteous shining like the sun (verse 43) is a powerful one. The truth of who we are- children of God- will be seen and known. Which means that although we don’t have to do much weeding, we can’t be using that as an excuse not to own what and who we are. If we say that we are God’s children, we need to act like them, we do not need to be focusing on the false grains but on the Son of Man- the sower, in our own way we need to be shining. Growing the seeds that will fall again to the grain and fill in the spaces that appear in the field, planting a child of God and giving the weeds less space to fill.

We are called to fill the field, the world, with the word of God, making more children of God- not making identical replicas of ourselves but replicas of what the Son of Man sows and just as importantly not ourselves judging who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ but allowing God to sort that bit out, allowing us to shine in the light of God’s word. Let anyone with ears hear.

**STF 412**

 1 See how great a flame aspires,
 kindled by a spark of grace!
 Jesu's love the nations fires,
 sets the kingdoms on a blaze.
 To bring fire on earth he came;
 kindled in some hearts it is:
 O that all might catch the flame,
 all partake the glorious bliss!

 2 When he first the work begun,
 small and feeble was his day:
 now the word does swiftly run,
 now it wins its widening way;
 more and more it spreads and grows
 ever mighty to prevail;
 sin's strongholds it now o'erthrows,
 shakes the trembling gates of hell.

 3 Heirs of God, your Saviour praise!
 He the door has opened wide;
 he has given the word of grace,
 Jesu's word is glorified;
 Jesus, mighty to redeem,
 he alone the work has wrought;
 worthy is the work of him,
 him who spoke a world from nought.

 4 Saw you not the cloud arise,
 little as a human hand?
 Now it spreads along the skies,
 hangs o'er all the thirsty land:
 lo, the promise of a shower
 drops already from above;
 but the Lord will shortly pour
 all the Spirit of his love!

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

**Intercessions**

In this time offer to God:

* those who are living in abusive relationships
* those innocent and the victims
* those who control and hold tightly to power
* those who watch helplessly
* those who are able to step in and save

Lord’s Prayer

**STF 518**

 1 Father, hear the prayer we offer:
 not for ease that prayer shall be,
 but for strength that we may ever
 live our lives courageously.

 2 Not for ever in green pastures
 do we ask our way to be;
 but the steep and rugged pathway
 may we tread rejoicingly.

 3 Not for ever by still waters
 would we idly rest and stay;
 but would strike the living fountains
 from the rocks along our way.

 4 Be our strength in hours of weakness,
 in our wanderings be our guide;
 through endeavour, failure, danger,
 Father, be there at our side.

Love Maria Willis (1824–1908)

Go now with your hope set on Christ. As children of God, let the Spirit of God lead you and let your righteousness shine like the sun until darkness and light are one.
And wherever you go, whether you scale the heavens or plunge to the depths, may God’s presence be inescapably with you; May Christ Jesus welcome you into his inheritance; And may the Holy Spirit assure you that you are God’s children.
We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
    ***In the name of Christ. Amen.***

19th July Walk

**May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
   be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.**

As you walk can you spot any places that are untidy?

* What makes these places seem untidy? Do others see it in this way?
* Are there signs of life in these places?
* What is the difference between untidy and uninhabitable?

**Read Matthew 13:36-43**

**36**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.” **37**He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; **38**the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, **39**and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40**Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **41**The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, **42**and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43**Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

This is the explanation of the parable Jesus told a little earlier in this chapter. Jesus is taking the time to explain this parable to his disciples, not something he does very often. It feels similar to the parable of the sower, however, here there is only one type of ground and it is after the sower has sown his seed, that someone comes in the night to sow weeds. This means that the crops and the weeds grow together in the same place, getting the same nutrients, care and attention. It is only at harvest time that the weeds and the crop get separated.

* Can you recognise the weeds and the wheat in life around you?
* Do you feel there are more weeds than wheat?
* What sort of things, might help the wheat to grow stronger and produce more grains?
* How do you shine like the sun?

Take some time to pray about the things that invade your thoughts and ask God to help you understand their place in the world, but not to be let them block you from being who you truly are, a loved and blessed child of God.

**Activity**

**Take some time to write down the things that distract you from seeing God.**

**Here are a couple of examples:**

**Pettiness**

**Discrimination**

**Lies**

**Now throw this paper away (recycle it) and as you do recognise that these things are in the world, but they are not going to stop you from shining like the sun!**