

# Weekly Newsletter for the The Parish of the Up Holland and Dalton



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## Welcome to the Parish of Up Holland Dalton

### Thought for today....

*This article is taken from 'thisischurch.com'*

For many people the presence of evil and especially suffering in the world, is a real obstacle to faith. Whilst there is so much goodness, there is also much which simply cannot be explained given that we believe in a God who is good. Why does God allow the innocent and weak to suffer when those who exploit and treat life with such little dignity seem to get away with it? This is all before we go into the difficult question of

disasters inflicted upon us by nature itself. Why does God allow goodness to be trampled upon and bad people to succeed?

Each of us have moments when we wish that bad people could get the just rewards for their evil behaviour. Yet in the parable today Jesus tells us that this is exactly what we must not do. As we look around at evil in the world we are called upon to do nothing but wait. Through this parable Jesus teaches us that evil must exist alongside good in the world, until the day of judgement, at which time it will be God who is the judge, not us.



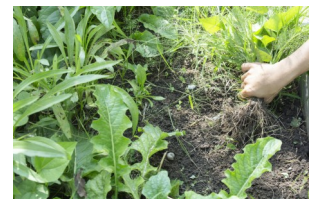
Jesus tells this parable of the wheat and the tares, good and bad growing side by side in the field. Those people who heard this parable would have understood it very easily. The most basic staple diet in Palestine was of course bread,

so wheat was critical. The weed growing with the wheat was poisonous, a kind of ryegrass known as darnel, and often translated as tares. In the early stages of development it looked just like wheat, except the grains are black, it could only be distinguished from wheat later as the ear appeared. When harvested the wheat was taken and the tares left behind to be cut and used as fuel. Darnel has to be removed because it is mildly toxic and will ruin the flour, any surviving black grains were removed by hand after threshing. Critically, it was not removed in the fields whilst the wheat was growing because the roots of the weed were strong and wrapped around

the wheat, to remove the weed would just as likely kill the wheat.

So in our reading today from Matthew, Jesus indicates that just as the wheat and the weeds must be left to grow together, so too the separation of good from bad is not something which we should engage in doing now. It should be left for the final harvest, God's harvest at the end of time.

Accepting this presence of evil is as hard for us to understand as Christians as it would be for keen gardeners to simply try and ignore weeds in their gardens. Can you imagine keen gardeners who would stand by and watch weeds playing havoc with their plants? They want to go out and spray and cut and hoe, weeds are annoying. Just as gardeners want to attack weeds, so we can become impatient to judge fellow human beings and want to see them removed. Hence this is a difficult parable and a disappointing parable for the moral crusaders and those of us who want to go around making judgemental statements!



It is very hard to understand how we can be expected to live side by side with evil people in God's field. There is a fear that our tolerance might be regarded as moral indifference, and the good seed will become overwhelmed. We want to remind God that too many weeds might choke the harvest. Yet God does not want us to be his religious police to go around judging others of evil and punishing them. We have seen this happen often in crusades and inquisitions, attacks on infidels and witches. God tells us that evil must exist alongside good until the day of judgement, at which time God will be the judge.



**Sunday Worship for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity will be available from Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July on our website: [www.uphollanddalton.org.uk](http://www.uphollanddalton.org.uk) Please tell family and friends.**

## Thought for today.... *(continued)*

So what are we to do ? To sit back and watch ? No, in the meantime whilst we are not allowed to pluck, we are encouraged to plant. In the midst of a very mixed up world we are called upon to be markedly different, to do good instead of evil. That is how a difference is made to the quality of the harvest.

Consider the Prayer of St Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

In the words of the hymn, we are to be channels of God's grace, to bring blessing to our world where there is evil, to be those who do not walk by on the other side, to show love where there is bitterness. None of us has any idea why God allows weeds in his field, or why evil is allowed to exist in God's world, yet Jesus is very clear and assures us that evil is not of God, but is the enemy of God. This is quite an important lesson for us to hear today, it is a very important lesson for those who see it as a sign of God's punishment when bad things happen.

One of the important lessons from the parable today is that we must have patience. Patience in the face of situations that seem bad to us, like good people dying before time patience in the face of our desire to make judgements about others and to act on those judgements. We leave the judgement for God to make and we must concentrate on doing what he asks us to do - which is producing his fruits in our lives, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self control.

There may be good reason for this. How can we root out the bad weeds in the world, when each one of us can recognise in ourselves that there is a conflict between good and bad. In truth we are all 'part weed, part wheat'. We must hope and pray that God works in us to make us more 'wheat like.' The good news is that God does this and the Bible is filled with people we might have considered weeds, but God did not give up on them.

Moses was a murderer, King David a murderer and an adulterer, the apostle Paul surely a murderer, he who

looked on as Stephen was stoned to death and rounded the Christians up to be put to the sword.. Who would believe that such weeds could come to be so fruitful ?

The life of Jesus teaches us to be careful about making too many assumptions about who is a weed and who is good wheat. Jesus reserved his strongest criticism for those who were considered really holy, and instead he treated with compassion the very weeds who were openly condemned. Jesus loved weeds and spent time with them, the thieves, prostitutes and the ones thought to be sinners.

This is difficult for us, however Jesus tells us not to rush to judgement, but rather to let it be, let it go, forgive. Evil is to be dealt with through letting it be, permitting it, forgiving it. This does not mean that there will not be a time when evil is dealt with, but that will be God's time, not ours, God's judgement and not ours. It is only God who looks and sees what is a human heart.

This story is about grace, about God giving time. We might become frustrated and wanting God to act more quickly to address the evil and suffering in the world. Yet we must also recognise how committed God is in dealing with the problems of this world. One look at the cross will show us the depth of God's commitment. On the cross, evil may seem to triumph over good, but finally, the cross tells us, God's love overcomes and God's goodness will triumph over evil.

In the meantime there is much that we can do. We must avoid the temptation to pluck and instead work hard to plant. Let us all spend much more time nourishing the wheat, encouraging the good things which we see all round us. Our newspapers are chock full of so much bad stuff, yet we must recognise that newspapers are only full of bad news because we have an appetite for it. Our moral outrage and calling for justice is usually nothing more than self righteous hypocrisy. Our newspapers would never have reached the depths to which they have sunk if we had not provided a market for the dirt which they have provided on a daily basis.

As Christians we have to have to get beyond this human appetite for evil and see the much greater good which lies all round us. Darkness is eliminated not by cursing it, but by lighting a candle. So Christians must be those determined to bring God goodness to overcome evil in the world.

*Charles Royden*

## Meditation

I am going to be easier on myself and others. I will stop being so demanding of perfection in myself and others. I know that I make mistakes and I have just as many faults as everybody else. I will look right past the ridiculous behaviour of others and see beyond the things I am inclined to criticise. I will seek out things which I can affirm in myself and others and I will try to grow goodness in myself and people around me. I will stop trying to change people and make them more like me and I will find peace of mind in acceptance.

*This meditation is also from [thisischurch.com](http://thisischurch.com)*

## PostScript: Watching the weeds

*Provided by Roots on the web*

*A reflection on living in a world that, right now, seems to have more weeds than wheat  
(Matthew 13.24-30,36-43)*



It's hard not to feel like we are lost in a forest of bad news at the moment. Just one glance at the headlines and we are propelled into the chaos of our new Covid-19 world order: ongoing loss and sadness for many, many families; the possibility of a coronavirus resurgence in the winter; confusion about masks; recession; and the impending disaster of the virus rampaging through already war-torn countries. And that's all before you get to the non-Covid articles on the American election, the underside of British gymnastics, and the murky world of Jeffery Epstein

and his associates – to name just a few of the unsettling, sad, and bad stories we've been confronted with just today. It feels like goodness and light is being smothered by something much darker, or to use the imagery in Matthew's parable, it's as if someone has come into a field of wheat and sowed weeds everywhere. A field turned into a muddle, healthy wheat lost in a sea of wild, uncontrollable weeds.

It goes without saying that all of the news stories mentioned above are very important and must be reported on. We need to know what's happening in our world. We need a Press that finds out, explains and critiques. But trying to process all that is happening, trying to reach for something other than despair, trying to work out how to respond to the weeds that are choking the world is difficult to say the least.

But, perhaps the rest of Matthew's story about the weedy wheat field communicates a deeper truth about the current sea of bad news. On viewing the state of his field, the farmer avoids a hasty reaction. He doesn't tear into the field ripping up the weeds desperately looking for wheat. He recognises that the wheat and the weeds have to coexist for a while. He can see that his field is altered, but it will need to remain in its altered state until the harvest. Presumably, the farmer realises he will need to tend the wheat and the weeds for a while.



It's tempting for us to look for good news stories at the moment in order to somehow cover up the bad, to try to look only at the wheat, to try not to see the weeds at all. It's equally problematic to fail to see any wheat and feel overwhelmed by the wild, uncontrollable weeds. But, like the farmer, maybe we need to respond by looking carefully at the whole field, viewing all of the weeds, trying to spot the still growing wheat while praying passionately for the eventual harvest.

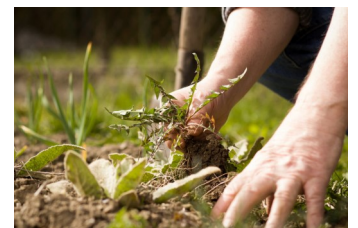


**Talk...**

- together about the weeds and wheat you can see at the moment.
- about how you feel about living with both wheat and weeds.

### Prayer ideas

If you have a garden, go outside and pull up as many weeds as you can find. Alternatively, find a patch of earth in a park, playground or public field and hunt out a few weeds. Take the weeds home/bring them into the house and lay them on a table. Decide together which 'weedy' issues you want to pray about and as you pray look at and handle the weeds.



Find out what the three most common weeds are. Try learning their names and drawing them. Stick one of your drawings up somewhere in the house and each time you pass your picture pray for a 'weedy' issue affecting the world.



Write the word WHEAT down the side of a sheet of paper and together try to think of things that bring hope into the world that begin with each letter in the word WHEAT. For example: Workers in the NHS.

Find a pack of playing cards, spread them out face down on a table. Let red cards represent 'weeds' and black cards 'wheat'. Take it in turns to turn over a card. Depending on the colour discuss something you regard as either a 'wheat' or a 'weed'. After each discussion pray this prayer: 'Lord God, help us to trust you with the harvest.'



*Fiona Dorman is Bristol Cathedral schools liaison officer and an education consultant.*



# Bible Study

***Even though restrictions are being lifted, many of us still have additional time on our own, why not try giving some time to reading and studying the Bible?***

*These notes are provided to help guide you in studying the Bible passages for this Sunday alone or with others, at home or a group chat using the Internet.*

## **A Prayer to begin**

Lord, sometimes we are just so impatient, wanting to get on with our lives, wanting everything better. But we know, our ways are not your ways. We come to you today rejoicing in the knowledge that you can transform our lives and the lives of those around us – starting exactly where we are. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

*Now read the text.....*

## **Read the text**

*Consider different ways to read the text. If there's more than just you, try sharing parts between different readers, even if you are on your own, try reading the scripture out loud, try reading different versions.*

The passages to read are:

- Isaiah 44.6-8
- Romans 8.12-17
- Matthew 13.24-30,36-43

*Take your time and re-read them, if you wish to.*

*Here are some notes to help you understand the passage a little more.....*

## **Old Testament: Isaiah 44.6-8**

This passage declares the greatness and power of God.

Isaiah stresses God's status as the only true God to a people surrounded by those who worship pantheons of gods, saying: 'There is no other.' The passage is thought to date from after the exile; things are not as Israel would wish, but God tells them not to be afraid of what will happen because their God is the 'rock'. This would remind them of their experiences of God's provision in the wilderness (Exodus 17.5-6), but it was also a common way of speaking of God or gods (e.g. Deuteronomy 32.4,15,18,30-31,37).

## **New Testament: Romans 8.12-17**

Paul continues to work with the tension between living according to the flesh or the Spirit. However, he moves on to declare that believers are adopted as children of God, and in what is probably an echo of Jesus' words also found in the later compiled Gospels (e.g. Mark 14.36) he says that we can call God Abba – 'father' (see also Galatians 4.6). However, interwoven with the honour of being children and joint heirs with Christ of God, and the glory awaiting us, is the theme of suffering (vv.18,22-23). This suffering is not restricted to believers suffering with Christ (v.17), but is experienced by the whole of creation. The work of God in Christ is then set on a cosmic stage as Paul describes creation eagerly awaiting the fulfilment of God's work as it looks forward to release from slavery to decay. What precisely these verses mean has been much debated, especially in light of recent discussions about the environment. At face value, they imply that Christ's redemptive event affects all living things and not just humans. What is clear is that the term 'creation' (vv.20-21) refers to non-human creation, and that its fate seems bound up, in a positive sense, with the work of God in Christ. Creation, pictured as a woman in labour, may be groaning but it has hope for a good outcome.

## **Gospel: Matthew 13.24-30,36-43**

In this parable, told to the crowds, the sown seeds are of two sorts: the food crop wheat, and non-food weeds. The weed is probably darnel, common in wheat fields, which looks similar to wheat until the seed heads form. However, it has deeper roots than wheat; consequently, pulling it up at an early stage risked pulling up the wheat with it. Later, when the separation is easier, the weeds would normally have been gathered and used as fuel, as the story indicates.

The reading then jumps to the disciples asking for an explanation of the parable. Jesus portrays himself as the sower, the 'Son of Man' (Matthew often records Jesus speaking of himself in this thirdperson way, e.g. 8.20 and 10.23). This seed is the 'children of the kingdom' being sown in the field of the world, accompanied by the sowing of the children of the evil one. Thus, Jesus explains the continuing presence of evil despite the advent of the kingdom – it is the result of ongoing enemy action. However, the story continues to promise the eradication of evil at 'the end of the age', which is again portrayed as a time of

*Continues on next page.....*

# Bible Study

harvest (cf. Bible notes for 14 June, Proper 6). This time, the angels go to collect sin out of the kingdom, in contrast to Matthew 24.30-31 where they gather up the elect. This highlights the need not to press the parable for more information than it is designed to communicate – images mean different things in different parables!

The 'causes of sin' (v.41) can also be translated as 'that which causes stumbling' (cf. Matthew 18.6-9). The 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' motif is found mainly in Matthew (but cf. Luke 13.28) as an expression characterising responses to a negative end-time judgement. It has been variously suggested to denote anguish, fear or anger.

## **The links between the lectionary readings**

These passages all have something to say about the power of God and God's action in the world. They also all testify to the ongoing presence of evil and suffering. Jesus preaches that the kingdom is near, and Paul says that believers are now children of God, but both describe situations where the kingdom of God coexists with other incompatible elements that still cause 'stumbling'. This is a fact of our existence; only at the end of time can we anticipate the eradication of evil and the final fulfilment of the promises of God.

## **Allow God time to speak to you.....**

The Bible is God's Word and if you give time and space to God he will speak to you in and through the scriptures.....

Look at one of the passages.....let your eyes wander over the text.....is there a sentence, phrase or word that stands out.....what are you thinking?.....what is God saying to you.....

## **Prayers of Response**

Lord God, we pray for our world and its people.  
So many different cultures, colours, languages  
– but we are all your children, all special in our own right.  
Whatever our gender, race, colour or creed, we all belong to you.  
We all need your love.

We pray that we might learn to live in harmony with each other,  
to recognise that even someone halfway around the world is still  
our neighbour in your sight. Far or near, we all belong to you.  
We all need your love.

With today's technology we have access to news from afar,  
almost before it happens. Help us not to become blasé about  
the situations we see, but to pray and care faithfully for all concerned.  
In war or peace, we all belong to you.  
We all need your love.

We pray for those near and dear to us: protect them, wrap them  
in your loving arms, and in sorrow and in joy, be with them.  
Near or far, we all belong to you.  
We all need your love. Amen.

## **Final Prayer**

Lord, thank you that I have been able  
to spend time with you today.  
I have felt myself grow stronger  
as I have been blessed with your presence.  
Send me out to spread your love,  
in your precious name. Amen.

## **Live your faith**

Offer to do some weeding in a friend's/elderly neighbour's/the church's garden. Make each weed you pull up part of your prayer that God will help you embrace the wheat in your life, and reject weeds. .

# The Parish of Up Holland & Dalton

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