

**The Methodist Church
Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit**

**Worship at Home
week beginning 23rd July 2023
with Lister Baynes**

Trusting in God in all circumstances

Welcome

Let us come together and worship God
as creator and sustainer of all things,
and our constant companion in all things.

Prayer of approach and adoration

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 [this morning]
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.

Stf 137 New every morning is the love

New every morning is the love
our wakening and uprising prove;
through sleep and darkness safely brought,
restored to life and power and thought.

New mercies, each returning day,
hover around us while we pray;
new perils past, new sins forgiven,
new thoughts of God, new hopes of heaven.

If on our daily course our mind
be set to hallow all we find,
new treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.

Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,
as more of heaven in each we see;
some softening gleam of love and prayer
shall dawn on every cross and care.

The trivial round, the common task,
will furnish all we ought to ask:
room to deny ourselves; a road
to bring us daily nearer God.

Prepare us, Lord, in your dear love,
for perfect rest with you above;
and help us, this and every day,
to live more nearly as we pray.

John Keble (1792 – 1866)

Prayer of Praise and thanksgiving

Loving God, who permits wheat and weeds to
grow together,
allowing light and nurture to both,
we thank you for your patience and forbearance
with your fallen and faltering children.
We do not notice the things within us that
choke our spiritual growth, shutting out your
light,
yet we are quick to spot them in others.
We thank you for your slowness to condemn us,
praising you for your unmerited mercy and grace,
for all are sinners and have fallen short.

Amen.

Prayer of confession

Lord, I confess to you this morning
that I'm not very patient with the weeds in my
life.

I try to yank them out, without thinking of any
harm that may cause, to me or others.
Sometimes, I'm so frightened that those tangles
will overcome me that I try to ignore them,
pretending they're not there.

Please forgive me, Lord,
and help me to trust you to show me your way.

Amen.

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 yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Reading

Matthew 13: 24 – 30, 36 -43

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

The Parable of the weeds explained.

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” ³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Reflection

Wheat and weeds



We continue the farming theme this week with Jesus’s parable of the wheat and the weeds. Last week we focussed on the Sower and the seed; today we look at the crop and the harvest. Jesus gives an explanation to each parable, which is unusual. Of the 55 parables Jesus told, only three have explanations. These two and the parable of the fishing net in the same chapter. It’s worth noting that the explanation is only given to the disciples when the crowd has dispersed, and some have questioned why. It seems that Jesus was running an in-service training session, long before they became an accepted method of training. The disciples would later be commissioned to teach others after Jesus ascended into heaven, and Jesus realised that they needed a fuller understanding of his teaching in order to do so.

Back to the field! Weeds got a mention in last week’s parable, thistles to be specific. We’ve all seen them. Barely a day goes by without me noticing a new thistle sprouting forth in some part of the garden or another. And that’s just the thistles! To them can be added a whole host of other species of weeds that are a continual source of annoyance sprouting as they do everywhere. During one of the Covid lock downs I was determined to have a weed-free zone in our garden, but it didn’t happen! The weeds won!

It was inevitable then that some of the seeds sown ended up in weedy patches. But the difference this week is that the weeds occurred as a result of a deliberate act of sabotage by someone who had such a strong dislike for the farmer that he wanted to get at him. I’m intrigued to know where the enemy got the weed seed from – they certainly don’t stock it at our local garden centre I’m pleased to say! However, the enemy accessed his weed seeds is not important, but it reminds us of the lengths that some individuals or groups of people will go to

access materials that will bring harm to those with whom they don't agree. News of a bomb explosion or of multiple stabbings can seem to be a constant in the news.

But it's not just physical violence and conflict. We are becoming used to stories of the more powerful using their power to inflict misery upon ordinary people seeking to live their lives in an honest and upright way.

I'm sure I'm not alone in sometimes wondering what the world, God's wonderful creation, is coming to when I see the news day by day. 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 we hear 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.

It's also worth remembering that the farmer in the parable is not just any farmer, it is God himself, and in him we can put our trust. Let us be confident in the knowledge that light always overcomes darkness and to demonstrate our confidence by living the life of goodness that Jesus showed.

Amen.

StF 123 Come, ye thankful people come,

Come, you thankful people, come,
raise the song of harvest home;
Fruit and crops are gathered in,
safe before storms begin;
God our Maker will provide
for our needs to be supplied;
come with all his people, come,
raise the song of harvest home.

All the world is God's own field,
harvests for his praise to yield;
wheat and weeds together sown,
here for joy or sorrow grown;
first the blade, and then the ear,
then the full corn shall appear -
Lord of harvest, grant that we
wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come,
and shall bring his harvest home;
he himself on that great day
worthless things shall take away;
give His angels charge at last
In the fire the weeds to cast;
but the fruitful ears to store
In his care for evermore.

Even so, Lord, quickly come,
bring Thy final harvest home;
Gather all your people in,
free from sorrow, free from sin,
there together purified,
ever thankful at your side,
come, with all your angels come,
bring that glorious harvest home.

Henry Alford (1810 - 1871)

Prayers for others

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.

StF 255 The Kingdom of God

The kingdom Of God Is justice and joy;
for Jesus restores what sin would destroy.
God's power and glory In Jesus we know;
and here and hereafter the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God is mercy and grace;
the captives are freed, the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed God's banquet to
share;
and hope Is awakened In place of despair.

The kingdom of God Is challenge and choice:
believe the good news, repent and rejoice!

His love for us sinners brought Christ to his cross:
our crisis of judgement for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom Is come, the gift and the goal;
in Jesus begun, in heaven made whole.
the heirs of the kingdom shall answer his call;
and all things cry glory to God all in all.

Bryn Rees (1911 – 1983)

Sending our prayer

Almighty God,
you are the creator and sustainer of all things
and we put our trust in you.
Be with us in the days ahead,
in all our joys and challenges.
Help us to remember that all things are yours
and nothing can take us out of your hands.
In Jesus' name.

Amen.