

19th July 2026. 7th Sunday after Trinity.

Prayer for today: Lord of all power and might, the author and giver of all good things: graft in our hearts the love of your name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with goodness, and of your great mercy keep us in the same; 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. Amen.

Please pray for James Mc Garley and Polly Marino, who will be married here next Saturday.

Among those who are sick we pray for Rosemary Belshaw, Will Sadler, Brenda Clark, Elizabeth Wood, Nigel Baty-Symes Andrew McKendrick, Kate Marris, Maureen Stevens, Prue and Nancy, Ned Ryan, Daniel Bosman, Suzie Dent, Nick Cook, Christina Baldwin, Lorraine Dodd, Kathleen Lee, Carol McKendrick, Stuart Bell, Maggie Bennett, Elizabeth Sambell, and Heather Loughead.

Among those who have died we remember Elaine Caird and Leo Pyle, and also Jimmy Common, Mildred Flatman, Flo Tate, Isobel Smith, Margaret Moffatt and Elizabeth Lindsay Oliver, whose year's mind is about this time.

Readings:

Genesis 28: 10-19

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down

to sleep. ¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it stood the Lord, and he said: 'I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.'

¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, 'Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it.' ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.'

¹⁸ Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel.

Psalm 139:1-11, 22-23

You have searched me, Lord,

and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise;

you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³ You discern my going out and my lying down;

you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue
you, Lord, know it completely.
⁵ You hem me in behind and before,
and you lay your hand upon me.
⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.
⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast.
¹¹ If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,’
²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

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 ears, 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 up 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.”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.

Thoughts on today’s readings

The poisonous weed which features in today’s parable is darnel, which is rarely seen in the corn fields of our age, but would have been familiar to those to whom this parable was told. It’s a wild grass, difficult to distinguish in the early stages of its growth from the corn, but its seeds are infected with toxic fungi, causing illness in those who eat them. It would in practice have been difficult to

weed it out without uprooting the corn; at harvest it would have to be separated out before threshing could begin.

The parable addresses an enigma: how is it that, in the same field, good seed and poisonous seed grow side by side? How is it that in the same community of believers, in the same family, so to speak, there should be good and evil side by side? It is only when the fruit of the harvest appears that it is clear which is which. In the account Jesus gives this is the work of an enemy, and in the explanation given privately to the disciples, this enemy is identified as the devil. On the face of it, then, here is Jesus warning his disciples against the dangers of his group of followers, his Church if you like, tearing itself apart hunting out those who have been judged to have no place in their ranks. The assurance is given: the harvest will happen regardless of the activities of the evil one: the word has not been silenced, or robbed of its power. God remains Lord of the harvest, and will in his own time and in accordance with his own will gather in from his field. His alone is judgement, and he will pronounce judgement at the end. The role of the people of God is to be true: to be fruitful; their calling is to be witnesses to God, to shine with his light, to be food and light for the soul of God’s world, not to preside over a tribunal. If you read on in St. Matthew’s Gospel, there are

accounts, as in chapter 18, of how members of Christ's fellowship should deal with those with whom they have a grievance, with those who have sinned.

It does all sound a bit predetermined, cut and dried, literally. Are we all corn or dandelion from the moment the seed is sown? Is there no possibility of change? I have met men who spent years in our prisons for crimes of violence, whose behaviour was terrifying and horrible, and yet who were found by Jesus Christ and who have truly changed, going back to try to save their fellow-prisoners, giving their witness to churches and to others of what God has done for them. Surely there were many deeds and actions in my youth of which I am not proud: I needed to be changed before I could be any use to anyone as a friend, never mind as a husband, a father, a servant of Jesus Christ.

And yet...over the years I have had people ask me whether people I have come across in times of crisis or illness or at the end of life turn to religion as a comfort (or is that a crutch?). Perhaps that says more about the opinions those people hold on this subject than anything else.

I have to say that this is something I rarely encounter. When you know your time is short, when life is stripped away to its basics, why would you bother with something you don't have any confidence in, something you think is worthless, something you have seen as rubbish? I think people are more honest in some ways than we give them credit for.

But on the other hand I have come across so many people who for many and different reasons had fallen away from the practice of their faith who yet have that identity and that belief at the heart of who they are. With them I have been able to engage. They are the ones who have, sometimes to the incomprehension and disbelief of their nearest and dearest, invited God back into their lives and into their hearts, and found that peace which the world cannot comprehend, much less provide.

The wars which have poisoned our world since the dawn of the 20th century demonstrate how diligently we apply our resources and talents to creating hell on earth, and children and the defenceless have suffered and been destroyed along with the best and brightest of our young people. Perhaps it's time we trusted in the justice and judgement of Jesus Christ.

