

Simple Prayer, Simple Praise:

Sunday, July 19th, 2020

Opening Acclamation:

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

A reading from the Gospel According to Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

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!

Meditation



Angel of the Plains. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=57551>

Having started a small garden at the beginning of this season of COVID helps to bring this parable to life. I now know what it is like to pull weeds, and to do so carefully so as not to root out the plants I want to save. It is sobering to think that someday God will look over this world and sort between the weeds and the wheat, and to hope that I might be living a life that makes me more wheat than weed.

I believe that is only natural, and not entirely a bad thing. A life of self-examination can only help us to bear better fruit. Taking time to look for the evil in the world, naming it, and working for change, is also important. We are called to reach out to the world and work for justice and peace.

But I am also mindful of the fact that it is God and the angels that handle the sorting, not me—not *us*. Too often I see Christians, some perhaps meaning well, who have begun the sorting process here and now. Determining who is in, who is out. Who is worthy of God's love, who is not. From what I read of Scripture, especially parables like today's, that is not our role. It also fails to account for the redemptive love that God shows us, and that we need to show one another and the world.

As we continue to work on ourselves and fight for justice and peace on this earth, I believe we need to be mindful that we are not called to be the sorters or the burners. We *are* called to translate the love we know in Jesus Christ to all persons, even as we hold them—and ourselves—accountable. That is not the easiest task in the world, to balance love and accountability and not trying to do God's job. But like our Baptismal Covenant says, we are not alone in this. I will—we will—try to do our best... With God's help.

By Rev. Mark Juchter Air Force Chaplain, NWPA

Prayer:

*Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.*

Take a moment now for silent reflection. Think of the people and things that cause you worry or concern; think of the things for which you are grateful. Raise them up in prayer using the words our Savior Christ taught us:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Grace:

*We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.*

Use your parish directory this week as a prayer tool. Pray for five or ten members by name each day. As the sheep know their master's voice, use your own to offer prayer for the members, staff, clergy, and volunteers of your own worship community.



Faith, Hope, and Charity -- Bas relief sculpture of the three theological virtues
<http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=55156>

Each Sunday at 10 a.m., Bishop Sean and other leaders from WNY and NWPA will lead worship via the Zoom platform. Anyone can join the service via phone by calling **646-876-9923 use code 127 336 938**. Those wishing to join by instead of video can use this link: <https://zoom.us/j/127336938> If you are asked for a password, use **lakeerie**.

Simple Prayer, Simple Praise is produced for The Episcopal Dioceses of NWPA and WNY.
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Prayers and pictures from Vanderbilt Library July 2020