

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 19 July 2020
Trinity 6**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. Last week, we were exploring how our lives are like a field. God's word lands in good earth, as well as the inattentive parts of our lives. And, this week, we are continuing with the farming theme. Jesus shares a second parable with the crowd and his disciples. It is one about the weeds of the fields.

It speaks to us in two ways. Firstly, it invites us to think of the opposition that the disciples would face. The ones who will refuse to listen to them, to God's word, and will persecute them for following Jesus. What should they do about them? And, secondly, it reminds us that, if our daily lives are like a field, where are our weeds? What should we do about them?

I pray that you will be inspired and refreshed by God's loving words; words filled with guidance for this season of our lives.

God bless,

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Weeds

PREPARING OURSELVES

Take a moment to be still in God's presence, and feel his love. If you are indoors, you may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love, here, in your room. You may also wish to have a cross in your palm, or on the table, and a bowl of water ready for the time of confession.

Lord, as I sit and wait in silence,
I place my hopes and dreams,
my fears and concerns,
into your safe and loving hands.
Pour your love into me,
and fill me with your peace;
in Jesus' name,
I pray. **Amen.**

LETTING GO

If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets, with things that you wish you had not said, done or been, or burdens you're struggling to carry, offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And then, reflect on the opening words of this well-known hymn.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways!
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence praise,
in deeper reverence praise.

If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and make the sign of the cross on your palm.



*Feel God's forgiveness. You are his beloved child, nothing can separate you from his love or suppress his deep desire for you to love him too.
Feel his love for you. Lean on him.*

PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER (The Collect)

*Across our villages and the worldwide Church,
this prayer is being said today. Add your voice to this earthly circle
of prayer to our loving Father.*

Merciful God,
you have prepared for those who love you
such good things as pass our understanding:
pour into our hearts such love toward you
that we, loving you in all things and above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

This is a beautiful prayer of invitation. It invites us to centre our lives, to focus ourselves on God's love, and give thanks for his loving presence. It is an invitation to be mindful of his love. In silence, contemplate - what this prayer is saying to you. Recall the times when God's love has exceeded all that you desire - when he has held you safe.

What should be your response to God's love?



Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee:
how great thou art, how great thou art.

Karl Boberg (1859-1940)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

What should we do with the weeds?

Jesus 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!

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

This parable reminds me of the fields of linseed that are growing between Mears Ashby and Sywell. As I walk through the fields, I can see weeds of various kinds flourishing amongst the linseed plants - rising above them, sheltering beneath them.

It's tempting to step off the path and pull up the weeds. And yet - if I did, I would - perhaps - do more harm than good to the linseed plants by trampling on them and/or uprooting them with the weeds. In nature, weeds can be a good thing. On a recent walk, I saw a bumble bee enjoying the little purple flowers on one of the weeds. So, maybe, Jesus is right to say that the weeds should be allowed to flourish.

And what are the weeds in Jesus' parable? Well - for the disciples, they are the ones who will refuse to listen to God's offer of salvation, and - instead - will turn on them.

It reminds us that there are bad people in our world today; some who seek to do harm to others.



What does God want us to do about them? First, he wants us to trust in his justice. Nothing escapes his notice. In the fullness of God's time, evil will receive its own just rewards. Second, he is inviting us to pray about what God wants us to do. How can our love and loving actions ease the pain and suffering, the injustice and intolerance we see? How can we be his voice in the world today?

A Prayer of Response

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, may I bring love,
where there is offence, may I bring pardon,
where there is discord, may I bring healing,
where there is doubt, may I bring faith,
where there is despair, may I bring hope,
where there is darkness, may I bring light,
where there is sadness, may I bring joy.
Lord, it is in caring for others,
that I receive. **Amen.**



Based on the Prayer of St. Francis

Also, the parable is a symbol of our daily lives. If your life is the field in Jesus' parable, where is God's love flourishing in you and in what you do? What aspects of your life feel like they are in need of God's healing love? Offer them to him. Remember - all of us struggle with one or more of his Spirit's fruit. We can only become the people he would love us to be through the power of his love.

Sometimes, God uses our weaknesses, our failures and our struggles to bless the lives of others. He takes our weeds and offers them as a source of inspiration to those who feel like they are worthless. Simon Peter is a great example of this. He fails time and time again yet Jesus picks him up, dusts him off and sets him back on the road to becoming one of the Church's early leaders. He does not give up on him. Or, reject him. If his weeds (his weaknesses) could be used to spread God's love, I wonder, how might God use yours? How is he already using them?

A Prayer of Offering

Father, I place into your hands
my friends and family.

Father, I place into your hands
the things that trouble me.

Father, place into your hands
the person I would be,
for I know I always can trust you.



Jenny Hewer (b. 1945)
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OUR PRAYERS

Here are some prayers on this Sunday's theme. Feel free to use one or more of these prayers, and to add your own.

Heavenly Father, thank you for loving me even when I feel unlovable, and for putting up with my mistakes. I know you forgive me.

Thank you for everything about me that reflects your love, and for all the many blessings in my life.

Help me to recognise my weaknesses - here I am, Lord, transform me through the power of your love. *Silence.*

Father, hear my prayer.

Father, there are bad people in our world who like to harm others, who love to put themselves first in everything.

Lord, help me to trust that you notice their failings and can transform their lives through the power of your love.

No one is irredeemable. May your will for them be done. I pray for...

Father, hear my prayer.

Father, life can be a real struggle when we are sick, bereaved, lonely or worried about the future. You notice our pain. You feel our sadness. Lord, reach out in love to all who are suffering, speak words of healing and hope to them. I pray for...

Father, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and yearnings, praise and thanksgivings.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be 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, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

Lord, bless and guide me,
whatever I do, whether at home or outside.
Go before me, watch over me,
and keep me, and my loved ones, safe in your love. **Amen.**