

Matthew 13. 24-30, 36-43

PRAYER

Father may these spoken words be faithful to the written word and lead us into the living word, Jesus Christ our Lord - Amen

SERMON

I live in a new build house so all I have is a patch of grass so I spent time this spring creating beds planting plants and digging a small bed all by myself I'm not a gardener I'm afraid I plant things and it's up to them if they live or die.

To understand the reading we have to understand some of the references. The Son of Man is a reference to **Daniel 7:13**: "I saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven...to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom." This passage introduces the messiah who will receive eternal authority, ie Jesus. People believed that Jesus would return after his death. We live between the coming of the kingdom through Jesus Christ and the end times the final events of human kind when the kingdom of God comes with judgement and Jesus returns.

Our gospel reading this morning is another parable in a series of parables about the kingdom of God and as Jesus was speaking to a largely agricultural community, he uses a farming illustration. A farmer had taken great care to sow good grain but in the night an enemy had come and sown weeds in the fields. This was only discovered once the plants began to grow.

The weeds were probably darnel, a poisonous plant related to wheat and virtually indistinguishable from wheat until the ears form. A light infestation of darnel could be removed with gentle weeding but it is hard to see weed from wheat. It's just an amorphous mass. If the darnel was established its roots intertwined and tangled with that of the wheat making weeding impossible – the crop was pulled up with the weed. A deliberate act by an enemy of revenge or sabotage by sowing darnel was punishable by Roman Law.

The farmer decides to leave the crop to grow, good weed and poisonous weeds alike, a world of good and bad intertwined with one another. This state of affairs was to continue until the harvest, when finally the wheat would be separated from the weeds. Then poisonous bad darnel would be burnt. Only the good wheat would remain. It's a sort of imagery the people of that time would understand, but for us perhaps it needs an explanation of what this means for us 2026.

2000 years ago people living in the Roman occupied state of Isreal lived in a turbulent world where violence and oppression caused much suffering. People through no fault of their own were attacked, abused, killed, bereaved made homeless. In 2026 We live in a turbulent world where, violence abounds, , genocide happens again and again wars rage - Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, Syria and in the last few years Ukraine, Beirut and the world seems to have forgotten the continuing, starvation, lack of medical support shelter and suffering of the people of Gaza. People through no fault of their own are attacked, abused, killed, bereaved made homeless and stateless. We live in a world of callousness and poison where random acts of violence can affect us all young and old, even in this country.

Jesus Christ came into our world two thousand years ago. Those of us who believe in him and try to live our lives by his values caring for others, loving our neighbour as we would wish to be loved, rub shoulders with those who are self centred and self seeking. We coexist with evil people, who to poison our world. Like the field in the parable the poisonous people are virtually indistinguishable from us, just ordinary men and women going about their daily lives until an atrocity occurs.

Here in Whitchurch we may never suffer the violence people in the middle east and Ukraine have suffered, but poison and evil still surrounds us –, the person who steals from others, the person who mocks us, the person who mercilessly bullies another Those who inflict misery upon others for the sheer joy of the power they possess. I am sure we have all at some point in our lives have encountered those situations.

A small number of poisonous people can be removed from a situation, but just as it is hard to see weed from wheat sometimes it is hard to see good people from bad. It's just an amorphous mass of people. The present age is one in which human society (and even the church - who has had its share of child abuse allegations) is a mixture of those who follow evil ways and those who follow Christ. It is very hard and confusing when we see those poisonous people prosper and those following Christ suffer. But Jesus said this situation **will** come to an end. The life we live is only a temporary situation. Come the end of the age, when the final judgement is upon us there will be a clear demarcation between those who strive for good in Jesus' name and those who do not. Those who follow evil will be exposed for what they are and receive a dreadful punishment. Those who follow Christ will be blessed lifted high and inherit the kingdom of God.

We live between the coming of the kingdom through Jesus Christ and the end times the final events of human kind when the kingdom of God comes with judgement. We live in a flawed world where evil and good co-exist Where people are bowed down by hunger and are refugees from violence and others seek to support them with money, aid, time and effort – doctors and nurses giving up their holidays to perform operations in Africa. Our own food bank is a just a small example of what we can do to make a huge difference in someone's world in Whitchurch. We can stand up for those who are bowed down, by bullying, depression, personal situations. We can help them practically and hold them in prayer. The church has a history of speaking for those who have no voice, and of social justice issues. Indeed our social services are based on the work begun by Josephine Butler and others in the nineteenth century.

As the wind blows the good wheat and the poisonous darnel all you can see is an amorphous mass. Sometimes in our world all we can see is an amorphous mass of people. Sometimes the poisonous evil seems to be overwhelming and choking the good. But each and every one of us by small acts of kindness, by helping those who cannot help themselves, by not joining in the world view of power and bullying by standing up for those who are oppressed, physically, mentally, spiritually, we are ensuring that crop of goodness is not overwhelmed or choked. Every day and in every way, we have to stand tall and stand proud for Jesus Christ, following his teaching and his values so come the end of times, come the judgement day, there is a good crop of goodness in us to be harvested

AMEN

Reverend Beverley Jameson