

## **Romans 8:12-25**

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— <sup>13</sup> for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ <sup>16</sup> it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. <sup>18</sup> I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; <sup>20</sup> for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; <sup>23</sup> and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup> For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

## **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

<sup>24</sup> Jesus put before the crowd another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup> but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. <sup>26</sup> So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. <sup>27</sup> 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?" <sup>28</sup> He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" <sup>29</sup> But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup> 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."

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus 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.' <sup>37</sup> He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; <sup>38</sup> the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup> Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

<sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, <sup>42</sup> and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

## **REFLECTION for the 6th Sunday of Trinity**     19<sup>th</sup> July 2020

It is good to be coming out of lockdown but how much has our patience been tried as we endure the pandemic. We are still in a state of not knowing what tomorrow might bring, in terms of local spikes, area lockdowns or second waves of the virus. There is also the added considerations of what we can do safely, when and where to put on a face mask, who we can meet and how many can be in one place at a time.

This has left us concerned to do the right thing, worried for ourselves and for others, some with feelings of isolation and depression and some having been sick with the virus leaving them feeling the effects for some while after the main sickness, and some people mourning those who have died.

Now I don't want to downplay any of what I have just said but I am comforted when I read in Paul's epistle to the Romans verse eighteen where he says "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us".

Paul himself was a man not unfamiliar with hardships and suffering as we are told in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 he was flogged and beaten at different times, was in difficult situations through shipwreck, in danger from bandits as well as from non-believers and even false believers as well as being hungry and thirsty and suffering sleepless nights. He suffered greatly, so the belief that God's glory was to come must have been enough to keep him going through adversity.

Thoughts of the glory to be revealed to us, reminds me of a visit to relations in New Hampshire USA. We were taken on a walk. On the walk we soon entered a wooded area and a small path wound this way and that around and through the trees and the bushes. The path took a rise and we started walking uphill. It got quite steep as we left the trees behind us.

We soon came upon a large rounded rock formation which we clambered up. As we stood on the top, the view that we had been promised was amazing. There stretched out in front and around us was a view of the rolling countryside for miles and miles. Little towns and villages dotted from near to the far horizon.

We go through life not seeing all that is around us that God has provided. We struggle through difficulties and it often seems that life is an uphill struggle. Eventually we will come to see ourselves and creation as God wants it to be.

The suffering now will be far outweighed by the glory that is going to be unveiled to us and for us.

When we become fully children of God then creation itself will change and be set free from decay. So hard to imagine but the promise is there. We cannot see this at the moment but we hope for it in the future. But until then we wait in patience. And patience is at the heart of our gospel reading.

Today we have the parable of the weeds. Good seed is sown by a farmer in his field wanting to grow a crop of wheat. However he was devastated to see weeds growing up with the wheat. These had been planted by an enemy. The good seed is sown by the Son of Man into the field which is the world. The seeds are the people some good and some evil. Some hearing the word and some choosing not to.

So the wheat and the weeds grow up together. The question is, should these weeds be rooted out as soon as they are seen? The answer is no, and Jesus explains to his disciples that you might uproot some good plants at the same time. Only when both have fully grown then the weeds should be pulled up first and discarded then the wheat can be harvested and be gathered into the barn.

The answer in this parable doesn't make easy reading. Surely it would be better to remove the weeds as soon as you see them. But God's rule over this world and the coming of his kingdom is hard for us to understand.

Yet would we be really happy if God did control everything in an obvious way. If everyone's thoughts and actions brought an instant judgement by God with punishment as He sees fit. We

know that we do and say wrong things. Would we not want time to repent and say sorry to God? To turn away from any evil that we do.

We also know that some people in prison for serious crimes can turn to God. Repent of their crimes and lead a new life following Christ. Some even serve the church as vicars.

So the price of God not stepping in to judge every minor misdemeanour is that some horrific evils can take place. Can we really ask God to intervene when we want him to and to take a back seat at other times?

The parable is about waiting, which is something we all find difficult. The farmer waits for the harvest, watching the weeds grow up with the wheat. All the while worrying what damage the weeds will do to the crop and how they will take the goodness of the soil away from the crop. We must wait. Watching evil have its day and wait for God's kingdom.

The servants in the reading had wanted to go out straight away and root out the weeds but the master restrains them telling them that things are more complicated than they first imagine.

Patience is called for. The servants' patience, our patience and even showing God's patience as he waits for the harvest time not wanting to destroy any wheat while watching the evil have its day.

God's kingdom is coming slowly. Through the life and work of Jesus and then of all his followers.

Jesus wasn't just waiting for the kingdom but was working for it every day. Being compassionate, facing evil. Challenging those who would not do things in God's way. Unnecessary rules or the exploitation of wealth and position at the expense of others.

We know that God was at work when Jesus was on the cross and he rose from the dead.

We must have patience waiting for the coming of God's kingdom fully into creation but all the while, like Jesus, we should be living a right life, doing what He would have us do for ourselves and for others. And identifying evil and facing and challenging it wherever we see it.

I would like to end with the words of the song 'In Christ alone'.

In Christ alone my hope is found,  
He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,  
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!  
My Comforter, my All in All,  
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

## **Prayer pointers**

We give thanks to God that we are able to return to gathered worship in our churches this Sunday and we pray for all on our ministry team who have made this possible and who have provided online worship during lockdown. We thank God that during lockdown our worship has been a place of abundance – an abundance of new skills learned to bring imaginative and challenging services to our congregations.

We pray for all those who selflessly give of themselves to help those on the margins of society. We hold before God the Good Shepherd Mission to the Homeless, to which members of our congregations contribute, as it faces difficult choices for the future and we give thanks for their care and concern for the homeless over many years. May we be caring congregations

who, like the Good Samaritan, are not afraid to take a risk to reach out to the poor and needy.

We pray for an end to gun and knife violence on our streets. As lockdown has eased so the crime rate has increased. We pray for the soul of Dean Edwards who was killed last Sunday in a shooting in Penge. We pray for the police who have the difficult task of solving crimes and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Continue to pray for governments across the world as difficult decisions have to be made to deal with the Covid19 pandemic. We pray for the leaders of cities and countries still in lockdown. Especially today we hold before God the local leaders of Leicester in our own country and Melbourne in Australia where there has been an increase in the number of cases.

Continue to pray for all those who have lost their jobs as more businesses in the past week have closed or entered administration. We pray for those with families to support and who are going to find it difficult to cope without employment. We hold before God those who work to help the unemployed especially local work clubs, Job Centres and foodbanks.