

**Readings, Collect and Reflection for Sunday 19 July 2020**  
**The Sixth Sunday after Trinity**

**Ps 139.1-11,23,24**

- 1 O Lord, you have searched me out and known me; ♦  
you know my sitting down and my rising up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.
- 2 You mark out my journeys and my resting place ♦  
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 3 For there is not a word on my tongue, ♦  
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.
- 4 You encompass me behind and before ♦  
and lay your hand upon me.
- 5 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, ♦  
so high that I cannot attain it.
- 6 Where can I go then from your spirit? ♦  
Or where can I flee from your presence?
- 7 If I climb up to heaven, you are there; ♦  
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.
- 8 If I take the wings of the morning ♦  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
- 9 Even there your hand shall lead me, ♦  
your right hand hold me fast.
- 10 If I say, 'Surely the darkness will cover me ♦  
and the light around me turn to night,'
- 11 Even darkness is no darkness with you;  
the night is as clear as the day; ♦  
darkness and light to you are both alike.
- 23 Search me out, O God, and know my heart; ♦  
try me and examine my thoughts.
- 24 See if there is any way of wickedness in me ♦  
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Lord, who created and fashioned us,  
who knows us and searches us out,  
who abides with us through light and dark:  
help us to know your presence in this life  
and, in the life to come, still to be with you;  
where you are alive and reign,  
God, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Collect

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 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.

### Romans 8.12-25

So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—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. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 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!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 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. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; 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. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

### Matthew 13.24-30, 36-43

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!

### **Reflection by Peter**

Which would you rather be? A fragrant rose, - or a dandelion? Immediately you can see that the question is biased: we are programmed to favour roses over dandelions, cultivated flowers over weeds. But as soon as you start thinking about wild honeysuckle, or dog roses or primroses things get more complicated.

Now you might just hold on to that beginning as a kind of health warning. In this week's Gospel reading Jesus tells another parable. This one is about the wheat and the weeds. It is quite obvious who are the baddies. Not only is the wheat good in itself, but it was carefully sown, lovingly tended. At night, under cover of darkness, some awful person comes and sows weeds among the wheat. This is deliberate sabotage. So, even if these weeds happen to be lovely wild foxgloves, we have no choice but to want them dead because they are threatening the carefully planted wheat.

I suggested the opening might be a health warning. What I mean is that we very quickly, very easily arrange things into good, on the one hand, - and bad, on the other. And not just other things or other people: we do it with ourselves too. And all too easily we see other people as good, and ourselves as not much good. This is a problem with this kind of parable, because, if we're not careful, we think of ourselves as the weeds, deserving a bad end and other people as the wheat, hoping for a good time in heaven.

But the point of Jesus' parable is not to make a great thing of who is good and who is bad. Jesus' point is that the wise farmer is not all that bothered about the weeds. Weeds happen, he says, what we need to do is wait. Then, at the time of harvest it will be possible to separate weeds and wheat and make sure the wheat goes into the barn where it can do its job

and be food for the coming season. And just as we might have a good bonfire in the garden to clear away the rubbish, so the weeds get burned because there is no point in storing them.

In this present crisis it is not difficult to slip into thinking that it is all a kind of judgement, but that is to miss the central assumption of the parable. True, Jesus talks about 'children of the kingdom' and 'children of the evil one' but the starting point is that we are all children of the one God. We all start with the same possibilities, the same hope. There is much that leads us astray, but even then we are not simply cast off like the weeds, for God 'desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.'

This takes us to our first reading, from Paul's letter to the Romans. This is a unique passage in the New Testament. It has something in common with the Gospel in that Paul contrasts living 'according to the flesh' and 'according to the Spirit' where the first simply ends in death, but the latter leads to eternal life (rather like the weeds and the wheat), but what is unique is the way Paul recognises that this is also true of the whole of creation. Creation itself, he says, 'waits with eager longing'. Creation too is called by the Spirit of God. All the beauty, all the tragedy, all the longing, all the loving and hoping: everything is held in God's good purposes. So, today, take heart - for God has created you and invites you to be fruitful like wheat - and it is God who decides what being fruitful means, not us!