

## Worship at Home 19th July 2020

A short act of worship for use in people's homes, provided by Mrs Rosie Greenhalgh.

### Call to worship Psalm 86 vv 11-13a (NRSVA)

Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth;  
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, and I will glorify your name for ever. For great is your steadfast love towards me;

### Hymn Now thank we all our God (*Singing the Faith 81*) Martin Rinkart (1586-1649) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltfKjxkXhMk> (*Apologies for the first few seconds of Aled Jones!*)

1. Now thank we all our God,  
with hearts and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things has done,  
in whom this world rejoices;  
who from our mothers' arms  
has blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.
2. O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us;
- and keep us in his grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills  
in this world and the next.
3. All praise and thanks to God  
the Father now be given,  
the Son, and him who reigns  
with them in highest heaven,  
the one eternal God,  
whom earth and heaven adore,  
for thus it was, is now,  
and shall be evermore.

### Prayer of Adoration, Thanksgiving & Confession (*drawing on Psalm 86*)

Almighty God, I come to praise and thank you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Faithful God, I come to thank you for guiding me through this perplexing time; for your loving presence with me during the dark days when the threat of coronavirus has so changed the way I live. In the day of my trouble I call on you, for you will answer me; you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me. For great is your steadfast love towards me.

Bounteous God, I praise you for the countless gifts of love showered on me over the last months. For the sacrificial service of the key workers who have helped me through. For contact with the friends and family I love most, by phone and internet as well as in person. I come to put myself into your hands, so that you may lead me safely out into a world which is opening up again. Preserve my life, for I am devoted to you; save your servant who trusts in you. Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant.

Gracious God, forgive me for the despair I sometimes feel; for my fear of a future where things will be different. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. Forgive me for the times when I focus on my own difficulties and forget to look outward in love of my neighbour and my God. For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you. Help me always to trust in you so that my heart may be ever joyful and my spirit cheered by your blessed peace, which passes all understanding.

Almighty God, I come to praise and thank you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer

Read Matthew 13 vv 24-30, 36-43 <https://www.biblegateway.com/audio/suchet/nivuk/Matt.13>

*The relevant verses are found between 3:27-4:24 minutes and 5:15-6:18 minutes.*

## **<sup>1</sup>The parable of the weeds** *(also known as the parable of the wheat and the tares)*

Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed ears, then the weeds also appeared.

'The owner's servants came to him and said, "Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?" "An enemy did this," he replied. 'The servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?"

"No," he answered, "because while you are pulling up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

### **The parable of the weeds explained**

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.'

He answered, 'The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

'As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

### **Reflection**

During this time of coronavirus, our hearts have been lifted by the news of many good and unselfish deeds. Yet at the same time, we hear of increased domestic violence, of greater child abuse, and of those who have set up scams to defraud other people. We believe that God is wholly good, yet in our world both good and evil are always present. Why does God allow evil to persist? Why does God not destroy violence, oppression, greed, natural disasters, cancer, coronavirus, and all the other things which spoil our world? People have always asked this question, and Jesus told the Parable of the Weeds to help us understand why it must be so.

This parable is one of seven parables in Matthew 13 which tell us what the kingdom of heaven is like. And it's also one of the few parables where we have an explanation from Jesus himself. A man sows good seed in his field, but only when the wheat sprouts and forms ears, is it discovered that there are weeds (or tares) among the wheat. It's thought that the weed Jesus meant was the bearded darnel, a species of rye-grass which looks very similar to wheat until the ear appears, at which point the difference is clear. Darnel grows plentifully in Syria and Palestine.

Roman law prohibited sowing darnel among the wheat of an enemy, for it is impossible to detect until after its roots have become entwined with those of the wheat. It deprives the wheat of nutrients, so that only the strongest of the wheat survives and crop yield is severely reduced; but because the roots are entwined, darnel cannot be got rid of without destroying the crop entirely.

When the man in the story realises that an enemy has deliberately spoiled his field, he gives instructions to his servants that the darnel is to be left until harvest, in order to save what he can of the wheat crop. Once the crop is gathered, the weeds can be got rid of and only the wheat will be stored in the barn. Jesus' hearers know about agriculture and there are no real surprises for them in the story. But what does it mean? How can this parable be a picture of God's kingdom?

Well, the disciples ask that very question as soon as they are alone with Jesus, and Jesus tells them two important things. First, that the evil in this world does not come from God, but from an enemy whom Jesus calls the evil one, the devil. Belief in a personal devil may be unfashionable in today's church, yet evil is certainly in this world and Jesus tells us this is not by the will of God. At the end of all things, at the harvest, God will completely eradicate evil from our world.

Second, Jesus tells his disciples that God allows evil to persist because it is the only way that goodness can grow here. Evil is so intertwined with the good in our communities that it cannot be destroyed now, but has to be left until the time of the end, until the harvest is ready to be gathered in. Evil is permitted so that good may grow. You and I know that good and evil are entwined in our own nature. Do you remember the rhyme about the little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead: *When she was good she was very, very good, and when she was bad she was horrid.* I feel that's a good description of me. Perhaps it strikes a chord with you too?

The Holy Spirit is working to produce his fruit in us, but all the time evil, or the devil, is pulling in the opposite direction, enticing us to selfishness and greed. It is a source of great hope to me that when this life is over, Christ will send his angels to weed out of me all the remaining evil, all that causes me to sin, and will burn up that evil in his great furnace so that it is never seen again. But all the grain, the fruit, that God in his goodness has produced in me, will be kept for ever; all that is best about me and about you will survive for eternal life.

At the end of the age the futility of evil's opposition to God will become clear, and those who have delighted in evil will realise, to their deep regret, how little of lasting value they have produced. Evil will be destroyed, but good will remain eternally. I pray that at the final harvest you and I will prove to be full ears of wheat ready to be stored in God's barn. Let us resolve to follow the promptings of the Spirit today and every day, so that he may produce good grain in us.

Praise the Lord that ... *at the end of the age, the Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear. Amen.*

**Hymn** Come, you thankful people, come (*Singing the Faith* 123) Henry Alford (1810-1871)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3n7IUCdqAM>

1. Come, you thankful people, come,  
raise the song of harvest home!  
Fruit and crops are gathered in  
safe before the storms begin.  
God our maker will provide  
for our needs to be supplied;  
come, with all his people, come,  
raise the song of harvest home!
2. All the world is God's own field,  
harvests for his praise to yield;  
wheat and weeds together sown,  
here for joy or sorrow grown;  
first the blade, and then the ear,  
then the full corn shall appear -  
Lord of harvest, grant that we  
wholesome grain and pure may be.
3. For the Lord our God shall come,  
and shall bring his harvest home;  
he himself on that great day.  
worthless things shall take away;  
give his angels charge at last  
in the fire the weeds to cast,  
but the fruitful ears to store  
in his care for evermore.
4. Even so, Lord, quickly come -  
bring your final harvest home!  
Gather all your people in  
free from sorrow, free from sin,  
there together purified,  
ever thankful at your side -  
come, with all your angels, come,  
bring that glorious harvest home!

## Prayer of Intercession

I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart, because you are all goodness, and you permit evil in this world only so that goodness may increase. From the cruel death of Jesus Christ you brought great good to all humankind; help me to trust that you will also bring good from this coronavirus crisis. I draw hope from your promise that in the end evil will be destroyed and good prevail. Lord, pour in your goodness and love: **deliver us from evil.**

I pray for all suffering from coronavirus, at home and in hospital, and for their doctors and carers.. I pray for residents and workers in care homes, in fear of Covid-19...

I pray your blessing on all who are bereaved...

Lord, even as restrictions are eased in Europe, there is news of Covid-19 taking hold in India, in South America and in Africa. Help me to remember neighbours across the world who, because of poverty, overcrowding and fewer hospitals, will suffer more from this virus than I have.

Lord, pour in your goodness and love: **deliver us from evil.**

I pray for all in the UK who feel like second class citizens: for the homeless and the jobless; for single parents; for the LGBTQ community; for Jews afraid of growing anti-semitism.

I thank you for the Black Lives Matter campaign, which draws my attention to the feelings of my black brothers and sisters. May all Christians know in their hearts, and show in their lives, their oneness in Christ. Lord, pour in your goodness and love: **deliver us from evil.**

I pray for my family and friends, that they may know your faithfulness and your steadfast love ...

I pray for myself, that you will give me ears to hear what you are saying to me through your Holy Spirit and show me how I may serve you in the coming week...

Lord, pour in your goodness and love: **deliver us from evil.** In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

**Hymn** Lord, you call us to your service (*Singing the Faith* 664) Marjorie Dobson (b. 1940) <sup>2</sup>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TsMP5iyXXQ> to the tune 'Angel voices, ever singing'

*N.B. There is a line of introduction before you start singing. You will need the words below.*

1. Lord, you call us to your service,  
each in our own way.  
Some to caring, loving, healing  
some to preach, or pray;  
some to work with quiet learning,  
truth discerning, day by day
2. Life for us is always changing  
in the work we share.  
Christian love adds new dimensions  
to the way we care.  
For we know that you could lead us,  
as you need us, anywhere.
3. Seeing life from your perspective  
makes your challenge plain,  
as your heart is grieving over  
those who live in pain.  
Teach us how, by our compassion,  
you may fashion hope again.
4. Lord, we set our human limits  
on the work we do.  
Send us your directing Spirit,  
pour your power through,  
that we may be free in living,  
and in giving all for you.

## Blessing

Go out into your small part of God's field to use your time and your gifts in his service, that you may produce good grain. And the blessing of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and all those you love, now and for ever. **Amen.**

## Acknowledgements

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