



Sunday, 19 July, 2020
Trinity 6

Very slowly, life is beginning to return to some semblance of normality, and it was a great joy to be able to share with worship with many of you over the last couple of weeks. This Sunday sees the first Eucharist to be held at St David's since lockdown began and I am very much looking forward to meeting with that congregation. For the remaining weeks in July a temporary service pattern is being followed, allowing people a choice of Eucharistic or Morning Prayer services. We are not offering an Evensong Service whilst singing is not allowed. For updated information, please visit the websites and Facebook pages of our churches.

The second half of this week sees us celebrating three important figures – two saints, and one not quite so saintly. Their Collects and readings can be found towards the end of this pew sheet.

Sarah.

Collect and Readings for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity

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.

First Reading (Genesis 28: 10 – 19a)

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the LORD stood beside him and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the

west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!” And he was afraid, and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called that place Bethel.

Second Reading (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 labor 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.

Gospel Reading (Matthew 13:24 -30, 36 - 43)

He 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 for the sixth Sunday after Trinity

Rev. Carey Saleh

Vicar of Stourport and Wilden.

My father, who at one time was a hospital chaplain alongside his parish ministry, told the story of a physician entering a children’s ward in an old hospital where the children were suffering from the effects of polio. Looking down the long ward with its small occupants in such suffering, he began to weep, and said in anger, “An enemy has done this!”

I believe Jesus may well have had the same reaction. For there, in what should have been a field of young bodies growing in strength – as per the Maker’s instructions - something else had sprung up uninvited in their midst, affecting their bodies, causing paralysis, encephalitis and respiratory and gastric distress. Poliomyelitis was one of the most worrying diseases amongst children in the first half of the 20th century, sometimes known as “infant paralysis” because it seemed to affect babies and small children particularly. It is spread by a virus which takes over the ability of the host cells to replicate, and so replicates the virus rather than the healthy cell. It is a vicious attack, changing the body’s own ability to recognise itself.

No wonder that physician saw it as an enemy and quoted that line from the parable Jesus told of the wheat and the weeds. There is a word play in Matthew's use of the Greek that isn't as clear in English. The Greek word for weed – *ziz^anion* – when transliterated into Hebrew is *zonin*, a poisonous rye grass which is difficult to distinguish from wheat until the head appears. Remember that in the Law of Leviticus the people of God were told not to mix different seeds to sow in one field. Jewish scholar David Stern explains that in Judaism wheat and *zonin* were not considered to be different seeds but different manifestations of the same seed, which is why they could be sown together. *Zonin*, the rye grass, was a degenerate form of wheat; rather like the polio virus, which appears to harness the body's own cells and replicate like for like, yet insidiously uses that process to produce infection and illness within the body of the sufferer.

In telling the story Jesus gives the farmer a divine compassion. He looks out upon his field where the wheat should be growing tall and strong and plentiful ready to feed the hungry; and sees instead growth of a different kind. It has not obliterated the wheat completely, but it has made it less plentiful, less nourishing. The plant, so like wheat, yet far from being wheat, has choked some of the beauty and life-giving qualities that the wheat should have had. But the farmer doesn't just throw up hands in despair and decide to plough up the field and throw the whole lot out. He has invested in this crop, this field. He will have patience. He will wait. Let them grow together until the harvest.

As human beings perhaps we are a mixture, each of us, of wheat and *zonin*, longing to be all that we could be and yet somehow

clogged in the process of healthy growth. We grow in a direction we had not intended, sometimes inadvertently nurturing *Zonin* because we thought it was wheat. Paul the apostle knew that, struggled with it, argued with himself and his longing to be able to change his own nature, at last reminding us with relief and joy, that it is God's Spirit that touches our Spirit and reminds us of who we really are.

Waiting can be difficult and painful, for the farmer watching the field, the physician watching the progress of a virus, Creation groaning towards that time of transition. But it is not only around us but also within us; and part of our waiting is to allow God to be working within us. As Eugene Peterson's translation of these verses in Romans puts it: *"That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy."*

Jesus was talking to his fellow Jews living under Roman occupation. There were those who wanted revolution, to overthrow the "enemy", to rid their promised land of the weeds that choked their Jewish identity and freedom. There were others who collaborated with the occupying force for their own ends, forsaking their identity as separate people of God. Jesus suggests a third way – of patient, non-violent opposition which nonetheless showed up the enemy for what it was. This third way is neither violent – tearing up the weeds and risking reprisals that would destroy the wheat, nor capitulation so that the wheat becomes weeds too – but a wise regard for allowing the wheat

and the *zonin* to grow side by side until their true nature, their true identity took their natural course. It takes a skilled and compassionate eye to discern the nuances. Putting things - and people - into strict categories based on assumptions isn't always helpful. After all Jesus said of the Roman Centurion – never, even in Israel have I seen such faith as this. And it was a Roman Centurion who stood at the cross and said of Jesus, “Surely this man was the Son of God.”

Whatever “the enemy” appears to be doing, God’s Spirit of life and hope is always at work bringing about healing and transformation. These things take time and compassion as the farmer in the parable understood. As a physician and a chemist and a scientist and an artist and a parent all know – transformation needs skilled and dedicated care with an openness to an outcome we might not have expected.

A vaccine was found for polio.

Other viruses have since come to plague and alarm us, sowing both fear and suffering, but also compassion, courage and new insights into how we can change and transform beyond those old norms we had not previously questioned. Our grief and anger may cry “An enemy has done this!” - but alongside it and within all that drains life from us we might also be able to say with wonder and surprise along with Jacob, who dreamed of angels streaming between heaven and earth: “God is here, in this place, and I didn’t know it!”

Amen.

Collect and Readings for Mary Magdalene(July 22nd)

Almighty God,
whose Son restored Mary Magdalene
to health of mind and body
and called her to be a witness to his resurrection;
forgive our sins and heal us by your grace;
that we may serve you in the power of his risen life;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

First Reading (Song of Solomon 3: 1- 4)

Upon my bed at night
I sought him whom my soul loves;
I sought him, but found him not;
I called him, but he gave no answer.
“I will rise now and go about the city,
in the streets and in the squares;
I will seek him whom my soul loves.”
I sought him, but found him not.
The sentinels found me, as they went about in the city.
“Have you seen him whom my soul loves?”
Scarcely had I passed them, when I found him whom my soul
loves. I held him, and would not let him go

until I brought him into my mother's house,
and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

Second Reading (2 Corinthians 5: 14 – 17)

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

Gospel (John 20: 1 – 2, 11 – 18)

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them,

“They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.”

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni!” (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Collect and Readings for James The Apostle. (July 25th)

Merciful God,
whose holy apostle Saint James,
leaving his father and all that he had,

was obedient to the calling of your Son Jesus Christ
and followed him even to death;
help us, forsaking the false attractions of the world,
to be ready at all times to answer your call without delay;
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.

First Reading (Jeremiah 45: 1 – 5)

The word that the prophet Jeremiah spoke to Baruch son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a scroll at the dictation of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: You said, “Woe is me! The LORD has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.” Thus you shall say to him, “Thus says the LORD: I am going to break down what I have built, and pluck up what I have planted—that is, the whole land. And you, do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them; for I am going to bring disaster upon all flesh, says the LORD; but I will give you your life as a prize of war in every place to which you may go.”

Second Reading (Acts 11:27 – 12:2)

At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius. The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea; this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword.

Gospel (Matthew 20:20 – 28)

Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favour of him. And he said to her, “What do you want?” She said to him, “Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.” But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left, this is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.”

When the ten heard it, they were angry with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

Special Verse for July 24th

Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday to you.
Happy Birthday, dear Phil,
Happy Birthday to you!

Services

There will be a BCP Holy Communion at St John’s on Tuesday 21 July and a Common Worship Eucharist at St Michael’s on Thursday 23 July.

On Sunday 26 July, there will be the following services:

- 9.30am Eucharist at St Clement’s
- 10.30am Eucharist at St John’s
- 10.30am Morning Prayer at St Michael’s

Important Numbers

Childline	0800 1111
Samaritans	116 123
Domestic Violence Hotline	0808 2000 247
The Survivors Trust	0808 801 0181
Mind	0300 123 3393
Age UK	0800 169 6565

Resources

A reminder of our online presence. Please especially keep an eye on these this week for news about services and church opening.

St John’s Website www.stjohninbedwardine.co.uk

St Michael’s Website stmichaels.westworcesterchurches.org.uk

St John’s Facebook www.facebook.com/stjohninbedwardine

St Michael’s Facebook www.facebook.com/stmichaelsdinesgreen

St Clement’s Website Please see A Church Near You

St Clement’s Facebook St Clements Church Worcester