

## Sunday 19 July 2020 Sixth Sunday after Trinity

**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.

**FIRST READING** (*Alternative readings*) Either **Wisdom of Solomon 12:13. 16-19**. There is not any god besides you, Lord, whose care is for all people, to whom you should prove that you have not judged unjustly; for your strength is the source of righteousness, and your sovereignty over all causes you to spare all. For you show your strength when people doubt the completeness of your power, and you rebuke any insolence among those who know it. Although you are sovereign in strength, you judge with mildness, and with great forbearance you govern us; for you have power to act whenever you choose. Through such works you have taught your people that the righteous must be kind, and you have filled your children with good hope, because you give repentance for sins.

**Or Isaiah 44:6-8**. Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let them proclaim it, let them declare and set it forth before me. Who has announced from of old the things to come? Let them tell us what is yet to be. Do not fear, or be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? You are my witnesses! Is there any god besides me? There is no other rock; I know not one.

**PSALM 86:11-17** *R* You, Lord, are gracious and full of compassion. Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; knit my heart to you that I may fear your name. I will thank you, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and glorify your name for evermore. For great is your love towards me; you have delivered me from the nethermost Pit. *R* The arrogant rise up against me, O God, and a violent band seeks my life; they have not set you before their eyes. But you, O Lord, are gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and full of kindness and truth. *R* Turn to me and have mercy upon me; give your strength to your servant; and save the child of your handmaid. Show me a sign of your favour, so that those who hate me may see it and be ashamed; because you, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me. *R*

**SECOND READING Romans 8:12-25**. 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.

**GOSPEL Matthew 13:24-30. 36-43**. Jesus put before the crowd 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 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.” 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!”

**POST COMMUNION** God of our pilgrimage, you have led us to the living water: refresh and sustain us as we go forward on our journey, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Sunday Homily 19 JULY 2020 SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

#### ***“The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man” Matthew 13:37***

You can walk into some school classrooms and find a model of attentiveness, application and industry, with an atmosphere of good humour and comradeship. The teacher is respected, the rules obeyed and the examination results confirm what a good school it is. But you can walk into another classroom in the same school and discover a bedlam of noise, disturbance and an undercurrent of violence which holds no promise of success for students or the school.

The difference is in the conditions under which the young people come to the school. Within each of these classrooms we would find sincere young people, keen to learn, and others who care not one jot for education, even among students whose background and advantages predispose them to self-confidence and the desire to learn. We would find others whose poverty and lack of stability can undermine their potential and self-respect, ill preparing them for the demands of school, against which they rebel.

If we were school inspectors, how should we deal with the troublemakers? Close the school? That would be unfair to the industrious children. Weed out the nuisances? But perhaps external circumstances beyond their control are to blame for their attitudes. Perhaps we should wait until they are at the end of their education to examine their overall results, to allow for greater inspiration and the effects of a healthy, optimistic environment on their growth and ability to change; and then permit their own actions to determine their futures.

There has been much discussion about this parable and to whom it applies. It would be easiest to believe that it is the world in general. It could refer to those people in Israel who would not accept Jesus as the Messiah. But others suggest that it actually refers to us, the members of Christ’s own Church.

In his explanation of the parable, Jesus says that it is the Son of Man “who sows the good seed” and “the field is the world”. But those whom Jesus draws into membership of his Church gather in his name and it is amongst these, his chosen, that the weeds are sown by the evil one. There has always been evil in the world at large and it was partly to overcome such evil that Jesus came in the first place. But as this Gospel was written when the Church was in its early stages of development it may be a warning. Just because the teaching of Jesus is the perfect model to be followed, some of its adherents are not perfect, just like the errant children in school.

It would be wonderful to think that the influence of Jesus would instantly transform his followers to mirror him in every way, but life is not like that and neither are people. Spiritual opportunity, like education, can transform its participants but also may be abused; a good influence can turn rotten and can poison the whole. Even in the best surroundings, some good people change, becoming like weeds in a field of good grain. Jesus warns us against assuming that all people in his field of activity are wholesome. It is his word, his influence, his life which must guide us, or we may end up collected together with the weeds and dealt with accordingly.

However, our next question might be, “Can a bad seed change its nature?” We need to watch out for and guard against the bad influences even where trustworthiness might be assumed. But what about those children whose disadvantaged start in life disturbs their behaviour? Or those church members who have been swayed by other influences? What about the possibility of change, for naughty children, for developing churches, and for us?

It is important to heed Jesus’ warning because our eternal life depends upon it. But it is crucial that we do not become paralysed by fear. Jesus never gave up on anyone; indeed, just before his own death he forgave a criminal and promised him a place in heaven – not sometime in the future or at “the end of the age”, but that very day. Leaving behind our evil ways is an opportunity we can take up every single day. Forgiveness by God is complete for those who repent.

So perhaps, then, the answer to our question is “no”: a seed cannot change its own character, but God can, by his gifts and the promises which he makes clear through Jesus, promises which he keeps.