

GENESIS 28.10-19PSALM 139.1-11, 139.23-24ROMANS 8.12-25MATTHEW 13.24-30, 13.36-43

19 July 2020 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost - Wheat and the Weed

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

One of my favourite greens is broad beans and I planted some seeds recently, though I had no control other than to prepare the ground, plant the seeds and water them according to the instructions of gardeners with more knowledge and experience than I have.

I have watched eagerly each day for signs of new life to emerge and am delighted to say there are beautiful new healthy plants emerging..... God's amazing creative hand certainly makes my heart sing with anticipation of things to come!

In this weeks' parable from Matthew's gospel, Jesus speaks of a seed smaller than my broad beans and throws in weeds for good measure. The combination of seed and weed offers us an image of a world where good and evil co-exist under God's creative hand.

The disciples didn't understand Jesus' message and I commend them for at least asking the question.

The field was planted with good wheat but the field became spoiled by an enemy who sowed weeds. The sown seed had the potential to be beautiful as it grew and the workers thought they could be rid of the problem weeds by pulling them out immediately, but if they did, they risked pulling up the healthy plants at the same time.

Good plants and weeds can often be difficult to distinguish from each other and sometimes roots can become so entangled that both the good plants and the weeds would be pulled out together.

The tolerant and patient field owner chose to wait until the crop was fully mature and so the workers in turn were forced to be patient and wait.

Now, while there may be some weeds emerge as my broad beans grow, I must have patience for the new plants to grow to a good size and bear fruit. I need to be honest here though, because my vegetable garden is a 'no-dig' garden, made by layering various organic materials - it is a helpful insurance against weeds.

We all have weeds, sin, in our lives, and our insurance, to reduce the weeds, is committing to and living a life of faith. However, it is a policy that requires ongoing renewal, commitment and effort.

As we live out our faith the very best we can, we must not be overly concerned about what we see as sin in others.

Our faith communities are expected to be places of unconditional love and acceptance, the good grain, good people, co-workers with God, but we do get it wrong sometimes as a community and as individuals.

We can easily and wrongly attack or try to fix people or situations and in so doing harm innocent people in our attempts to be rid of what we see as problems or problem people. The current cynical blame game between Australian states around COVID19 spread is an example.

It is God's job to do the weeding, not ours, and we must be patient as we trust that God of creation has things in hand and wants his whole kingdom to have the opportunity to live and to thrive.

That does not mean we should condone violence and injustice, but rather ask of ourselves what our stance is in the struggle between good and evil. We only need look at the environmental damage, ongoing violence and injustices in our world.

Are we passive spectators and self-serving consumers? Or are we wisely and lovingly proactive?

Our responsibility is to pursue justice, to **be** the good seed, the children of God's kingdom, to be good stewards of the environment, to care for and protect the needy and the marginalised. We must consider the consequences of our words and actions, to be patient encouragers for others to have the opportunity of repentance, to come to know Christ.

When Jacob found himself somewhere between Beer-Sheba and Haran, he was in a liminal space, a bit like the current pandemic perhaps where we find ourselves in this 2020 crisis. Both are places of vulnerability that invite a pausing, an opening up to God, to discover the potential that God knows we have, just as Jacob woke from sleep finally **knowing** that God was there, in that place, with him.

And today's psalm is a reminder that God knows us deeply, a reminder that God knows the real me and knows full well who I am, the good and the bad. I know God loves me unconditionally – freeing me to do my best to grow into all that God knows I can be..... I am grateful that God is patient.

We have had to dig deep and nurture patience with ourselves and each other this year and if we move forwards looking for the healthy potential instead of the negatives, there is hope for a better world.

The negatives of our lives are not a measure of what God values in us, though it is our responsibility to nurture healthy habits and make wise choices, to live lives of faith.

We are not invited to make judgements - God's kingdom is the whole world and God the Creator values everything and everyone. Jesus wants us to trust that God has things in hand – yes, angels will separate the weeds from the wheat, but only when the harvest is ready and God will do the judging.

Last week Dave invited us to be like the generous sower and offer unbridled generosity and while some of us are slow learners for varied reasons and circumstances, like the disciples who didn't 'get the message', our invitation is to be a community of patience, generosity and love – to grow together, to offer shelter, to grow God's kingdom here and now.

We have the opportunity daily to accept and renew Jesus' presence in our lives; let's support each other and help others to do the same, with unbridled generosity, patience and love.

Let's grow together to help everyone's heart sing under God's creative hand!

I close with a prayer by Noel Davis.....

Let this be our earnest prayer.

Christ be ever in our minds and at the heart of every thought.

Christ be in our eyes and at the heart of all we see.

Christ be ever in our ears and at the heart of all we hear.

Christ be ever on our lips and at the heart of every word we speak.

Christ be ever in our hearts and at the heart of all our meetings with others.

Christ be in all of us and at the heart of all we do.

Christ be

All in all.¹

Amen

¹ Noel Davis, *HEART GONE WALKABOUT, Poems Prayers Lines and Spaces*, (Thornleigh NSW : Shekinah Creative Ministry Co-Op, 1991), 116