

Sunday 23 July 2023

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity



Holy Island © Graeme Peacock

Sermon © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

Liturgy © 2000 The Archbishops' Council.

Prayers of intercession © Sarah Gura

Bible readings © the publishers of the NRSV translation.

The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration are included at the end.

The hymn can be accessed via a YouTube link. Please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,
<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 [We have a Gospel to proclaim](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son Jesus Christ to save us from our sins, to be our advocate in heaven, and to bring us to eternal life. Therefore, let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, firmly resolved to keep God’s commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

Click [here](#) for the tune of this version of the Gloria ('Cwm Rhondda').

All Glory be to God in Heaven,
Songs of joy and peace we bring,
Thankful hearts and voices raising,
To creation's Lord we sing.
Lord we thank you, Lord we praise you,
Glory be to God our King:
Glory be to God our King.

Lamb of God, who on our shoulders,
Bore the load of this world's sin;
Only Son of God the Father,
You have brought us peace within.
Lord, have mercy, Christ have mercy,
Now your glorious reign begin:
Now your glorious reign begin.

**You O Son of God are Holy,
You we praise with one accord.
None in heav'n or earth is like you,
Only you are Christ the Lord.
With the Father and the Spirit,
Ever worshipped and adored:
Ever worshipped and adored.**

The Collect for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Lord of all power and might,
the author and giver of all good things:
graft in our hearts the love of your name,
increase in us true religion,
nourish us with all goodness,
and of your great mercy keep us in the same;
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.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

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

Isaiah 44:6-8

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans

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.

Romans 8:12–25

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 [When I look into your holiness](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

All Glory to you O Lord.

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' ".'

Jesus left the crowds and went into the house. 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!'

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

Jesus is using parables on the theme of seeds and sowing to explore fruitfulness. We have many permutations. Last week, he taught us the parable of the sower, which explores the loving prodigality of God. Next week we look at the parable of the mustard seeds, which tells us that a small seed can lead to a big difference. Today we have a parable about different kinds of seed. Or do we?

Let's look closely at today's parable. Jesus starts with a vision of incompetent angels, so there's something fishy going on here. Two kinds of seed are sown necessitating a process of weeding; but the angels need to be held back in case they harvest that which is good at the same time as weeding that which is bad. Angels are divine beings who do the bidding of God the Almighty: they neither need to eat nor sleep, are supernatural in strength and knowledge, yet Jesus is suggesting that they cannot be trusted with the 'sorting process' that underpins eternal judgement. The reason is obvious: things can change, so they should not respond to a snapshot in time. In other words, let's see how the seeds develop.

In the context of the Middle East, I think it's clear that the weed being sown here is dandelion, a weed that closely resembles wheat when it starts to grow. Later, when

the seed grows to fruition, only then is it clear what is truly growing—good wheat or unwanted weed. Jesus here is therefore warning that the Gospel is being hindered by something that looks very similar to the real thing but is not the real thing—it's a harmless placebo, or a wolf in sheep's clothing. That Jesus needs to warn us implies that it works.

We now look at the parable itself and, straightaway, we realise it's possible to misread it if we don't pay attention to the way Jesus tells the parable. Most interpretations think in terms of souls ... and Jesus does indeed say, '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*', implying the bad seed are not children of light. But the person sowing the seeds is Jesus himself and in every other planting parable the seed is the Gospel. How can Jesus plant a soul? He can't; he plants *in* souls.

We conclude that Jesus is deliberately blurring the boundaries: he's equating the Gospel with the soul that contains and houses it. In the other parables, the point is the sower or the quality of the soil, or it's the size of the plant, or its the number of plants. He's talking about souls that grow to become Christlike. In this parable, saying there are two kinds of Gospel: there is the true Gospel that so grows into a soul that the soul becomes part of the Gospel. And there is a seed that looks like the Gospel but, when planted in a soul, yields something that does not look like the Gospel. Let's be frank: who have two forms of the Gospel, two seeds: we have the true Gospel sown by Jesus himself and a nasty lookalike sown by the powers of evil who is here called the 'enemy'. And both Gospels so take over a soul that those souls *become* their seed.

When read in this light, the interpretation of the parable becomes really interesting. Why would the enemy plant a different Gospel? We're saying that out there is a message claiming to be Christianity that is not Christian. It may preaching self before God, teaching health and wealth, advocating betterment of self rather than utter transformation of souls and social structures.

The real Gospel (the 'wheat' in the parable) is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: a seed that proclaims Jesus as Lord, proclaims that he is the Christ, that following him leads to God. But it's *Gospel*—its good news and describes both the joys of salvation but also the route to that salvation. It has commitments too: it teaches the requirement for holiness of life for self and the Kingdom of God for our neighbours.

The Gospel we follow reflects the God we follow. That's why, in the first reading, Isaiah warns us against false Gods—because a false God, a false Gospel points in the wrong direction, anywhere but true, anything but God. And today's reading from Romans reminds us that true Christians are 'heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ', so again there's an image of children who ultimately come from a seed. *And*

to become a child of light, the Gospel we need is that which comes from the Lord Jesus.

The angels in this parable, then, are looking for evidence of spiritualities that more like Jesus or less like Jesus. This parable therefore represents Jesus talking about the growth of his disciples and the Kingdom as inspired by the Gospel.

I suppose the obvious question, then, is, which kind of seed are we? Are we the darnel, the fake wheat, the weed; or are we good seed?

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

In the power of the spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

Lord we thank you that we are gathered here together in your presence to worship and magnify your holy name. We thank you for your everlasting and steadfast love. We pray that we be kind and gracious to one another. Help us Lord to live as you commanded loving one another.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

We pray for your blessing on all the churches throughout the world. We ask you Lord that your Holy Spirit continue to minister to all the Christians in this difficult time. We bring before you our own churches, that we all be able to come back and worship together. Hold in your hands all those who continue to suffer persecution because of their faith.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Creator of all, we bring before you the world and its sufferings. Help us to look after your beautiful creation. We pray for all those in governments making difficult decisions in this difficult time. We bring before you our own communities asking for your love to be felt within them. Lord be with all those who are in difficult predicaments, those who are lonely, hungry, wet and cold. We bring the whole world into your hands Father, may your light shine through the darkness.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

We pray for ourselves, our families, and friends. We bring before all those who are suffering in body, mind, or spirit. In the silence of our hearts we pray for ... We also pray for all those who are working hard to care for them. May your love be their comfort.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Father we bring before you all those who died recently ... May they rest in eternal peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

All Hear our prayer

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 [When I look into your holiness](#) (click on this link to hear the hymn)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below

The Dismissal

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and
be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you
and give you his peace;

and the blessing of God the Almighty:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

be with you now and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 [Wine of the Kingdom](#) (please click on this link to hear the hymn)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ.

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

Father, you made the world and love your creation.
You gave your Son Jesus Christ to be our Saviour.
His dying and rising have set us free from sin and death.
And so we gladly thank you,
with saints and angels praising you, and saying,

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:
Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**All Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

**All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Lord God, whose Son is the true vine and the source of life,
ever giving himself that the world may live:
may we so receive within ourselves
the power of his death and passion
that, in his saving cup,
we may share his glory and be made perfect in his love;
for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out
in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.