**Sunday Morning Resources 19th July**

**Sixth Sunday after Trinity**

Readings

Gen. 28:10-19a

Romans 8:12-25

**Matt 13:24-30, 36-43**

Second reading in this Matthew 13 series; Key word **Waiting** in a world of wheat and weeds.

Why doesn’t God do something? One of the most frequently asked questions of Christian leaders in our communities. Tragedies happen; horrific accidents devastate lives; bullies force their own plans on people and seem to get away with it. These parables are not a direct answer to that question, and we know don’t we, that no answer can be given…. We can point to natural disasters, to the greediness of some who deprive others of life.

 These parables show us that God’s sovereign rule over the world is not straight forward. God gave humanity freedom of choice. Would we want our every thought and action; our choices, to be judged in the scales of his absolute holiness? These parables are all about waiting and waiting is what we find difficult. The farmer waits for harvest-time, the birds wait for small fruits to ripen on trees and bushes; the baker must wait for the yeast to grow in the dough before baking. This is what the kingdom of God is like. Jesus followers did not want to wait. If the kingdom was present where Jesus was and coming to birth in what he was doing, then they wanted the whole think straight away. In the parable the servants want to go straight away into the cornfield and root out the weeds. The farmer stops them because he could see that they were likely to pull up wheat as well.

In this parable the field is the world -this baffling blend of beauty and brokenness which one day will be sifted which is an encouragement. It won’t be a matter of introducing a good kingdom that was not there before, but of collecting out of God’s world ‘all causes of sin and evildoers’

So at the heart of the parable of wheat and weeds is patience; not just of servants who have to wait and watch, but also the patience of God himself. God did not and does not enjoy the sight of a cornfield with weeds all over the place. The God of compassion would not want to declare harvest when both wheat and weeds are destroyed together. We who live between Calvary and Easter know that God did indeed act suddenly and dramatically at that moment, putting the world to rights and what we are now awaiting is the outworking of those events. We wait with patience, not like ones in a darkened room but like ones who carry the light within them.

I love a good sunset. There have been some stunning ones lately; the most amazing colours being painted across the sky. We are aware of those countries where the sun is so strong and bright that people must wear coverings over their heads, seek out shady corners. Being in Jaipur in 42 degrees centigrade was quite a trial, in fact at times it was unbearable even in the late afternoon.

 When Jesus spoke of people shining like the sun in the kingdom of their father maybe that is the kind of the effect he had in mind, not just an attractive glow on the horizon. It may be in God’s new world his true children will themselves be sources of light strong and bright, causing those who seek darkness to be challenged by the revealing light or to shrink into the shadows. This is about reflecting and embodying the love and glory of God himself: which after all is what humanity were created for.

 We are designed to be God-reflectors, part of being made in God’s image. Since we are all different God intends that each of us should reflect a different facet of his glory. Quoting Tom Wright ‘When God’s great human harvest is complete, we won’t be like hundreds of identical bundles of wheat; we will be as different as the flowers and shrubs in a well- stocked garden, only more so.

But we must not dismiss the truth of God’s judgement, remembering that it is not only large scale and obvious wickedness that will face this judgement. There are stern words in the gospels about all of us being judged for our thoughts and actions. We must be careful and allow ourselves to be challenged about who we think the wheat and weeds are. It is up to God to make that judgement and God delegates that judgement to the ‘son of man’ Jesus; the one who had been sowing the good seed. Jesus was warning his disciples then and us now, though what they and we hope for will come, God’s judgement might not be as straight forward as they thought, and we might think today. We need to think it through in the light of Jesus himself and what he is doing. We take note of the last words of this parable; ‘If you have ears, then hear!

**Hymns**

Brother, sister let me serve you.

Christ’s is the world in which we move

Come ye thankful people come.

God is working his purpose out.

Lord of all hopefulness.

**Prayers.**

Loving God, we pray for all those in the world,

Who knowingly take the path of evil-

Those who follow a life of crime,

Those who cheat and deceive, who exploit their fellow human beings,

Who wound in body or mind, who kill and destroy,

Open their eyes to the reality of your judgement,

Their minds to the damage caused by their actions,

And their hearts to the transforming power of your grace.

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Loving God,

We pray for all who are indifferent to you

Those who have not heard the challenge of the Gospel,

Or who have not considered the claims of Christ for themselves.

Open their ears to the message of Christ,

Their spirits to the reality of your presence,

And their lives to the joy of knowing you.

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Loving God,

We pray for those who seek to serve you,

But who find faith threatened-

Those who face pain and suffering,

Those overwhelmed by sudden calamity,

Those confused by apparent injustice,

And those whose convictions have been undermined

By the experience of life.

Assure them of your continuing purpose,

Your enduring love,

And your final triumph.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer,

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen**

**Children’s/young People’s Activity:**

Newspaper Weeds

Looking at a range of newspapers invite the young people to cut out stories and make 2 piles -one with Wheat(good) news and the other with weeds (bad news) Discuss how we’re called to live in the world and need to recognise there are weeds all around.

Give each child a sticky note and a pen and ask them to draw or write a prayer about the weed situations in their own lives. Fix their prayers to the side of a Jenga block. They can then use their blocks to build a tower. Remind everyone that the master did not want the weeds removed by the workers until the harvest. In the same way we live in a world among the weeds. Taking them out is not our responsibility and would make the tower unstable. So instead we pray for situations and people.