

A LITURGY FOR HOME - PENTECOST VII

When life's circumstances prevent us from attending Church.

THE GATHERING

A candle may be lit as a reminder that God is present in our midst.

THE OPENING ACCLAMATION & COLLECT

Leader Holy God, you are always with us.

People **Open our eyes to your presence.**

Leader God's power working in us.

People **Can do more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to God!**

Leader Let us pray

O God, patient and forbearing, you alone know fully the goodness of what you have made. Strengthen our spirit when we are slow and temper our zeal when we are rash, that in your own good time you may produce in us a rich harvest from the seed you have sown and tended. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

People **Amen.**

A WORD OF SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13:1-9,18-23

Reader A reading from the gospel of Matthew

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 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!"

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION

- This parable - perhaps more than most - resonates deeply with our human fascination with creating groups of "us" and "them". We want to know who is "in" and who is "out," and we want to secure our place in the "in" group, because we never want to have to feel the isolation and the loneliness of being left out or being thrown out. *The Rev. Chrissy Tatum Williamson*
- I for one, cannot think of many people who are truly, fully, unquestionably 'evil.' Most of us, myself most especially included, are a mix of good and bad, upstanding and not so much. How would one come to the conclusion that a precious life falls so short (as to be weed-like even) so as to be 'thrown into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth?' This I do not get. I cannot imagine I ever will. I, for one, prefer to think of this winnowing process as one that happens not once but over a lifetime with God patiently sorting out the good and the bad and yes, my submitting myself to this often painful process in my own heart, my own living, my own living out in public who I am. This may not be where the telling of the parable ends, but it where I always go. *The Rev. Dr. Janet H. Hunt*
- Life is not perfect. Even planting good seed in one's own field does not guarantee an ideal crop. The weeds will still come. No matter how much good we start with, no matter how noble and godly our intentions, no matter how fine the soil and the weather, the outcome is not totally within our control. Evil will spring up with good. *Thomas H. Troeger*
- Who and what were the "weeds" in the mind of Matthean Christians? Were they Gentiles who were infiltrating with their corrosive influences, like pesky, pungent mustard that violated the set boundaries and spread uncontrollably into well-defined Jewish fields? Were they evildoers in general or persecutors of the followers of Jesus, who, in the minds of the latter, should have been already permanently defeated now that the Messiah had come? Why is the evil one still exercising power? *Barbara E. Reid, OP*

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

- √ If we hear this as a parable of grace where God takes the time to sort out the good and the evil within each of us, where and how is God sorting in your life even now? If we are allowed to hear this as an ‘ongoing process’ instead of a once and for all one which will be ours to undergo in the seemingly far distant future, are there ways in which you are experiencing the roots being teased apart within you in these days?
- √ Where can you find the wheat and the weeds in your life?
- √ Why must the wheat and the weeds grow up together and be harvested together?
- √ What does it mean to be “righteous?”
- √ What do you suppose the “kingdom” of heaven looks like?

RESPONSE

Adapted from the Sisters of Mercy

Leader We offer our prayers to you O God of Life, you created all people as one family and call us to live together in harmony and peace; surround us with your love as we face the challenges and tragedies of this present time.

Silence may be kept.

Intercessor In this time of bewilderment and fear, we ask you to give us the courage to take care of one another as Jesus did. For those who are ill, especially those who are frightened and alone, for those who cannot access healthcare, for those who are homeless and lost; Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

In the midst of our sadness and grief, we ask you to give us words to comfort one another. For those who are dying, and for those who have already died from this virus, for those who care for them and for those with no one to care for them. Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

In the midst of our own anxiety, we ask for the courage to support one another as you would. For those who are poor, hungry, and homeless; for those who have lost their employment; those who fear the present and the future; for our government and financial institutions and those who lead them; Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

In the midst of our brokenness, we pray that the peace of the risen Christ may heal the wounds of all victims of injustice, exploitation, prejudice, hatred and racism. We pray for our nation to stand up and do the work of uniting us, not dividing us. Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

In the midst of our struggle to ensure a healthy future for all people, we ask you to give us the hope that surpasses our current understanding. For healthcare workers, spiritual leaders and our faith communities, for artists and poets, for prophets and teachers; Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Silence may be kept

Leader Gathering our prayers and praises together, we are bold to say:

People **Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever. Amen.**

CONCLUDING COLLECTS

Leader Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

People **Amen.**

A Collect for the Elimination of Racism

Leader Good and gracious God, you invite us to recognize and reverence your divine image and likeness in our neighbor. Enable us to see the reality of racism and free us to challenge and uproot it from our society, our world and ourselves. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

People **Amen.**

The Rev. Dr Sam Wells

Leader God of healing and hope, in Jesus you meet us in our places of pain and fear. Look with mercy on those who have contracted the coronavirus, on any who are vulnerable, and on all who feel in danger. Through this time of global concern, by your Holy Spirit bring out the best not the worst in us. Make us more aware of our interdependence on each other, and of the strength that comes from being one body in you. Through Christ our wounded healer.

People **Amen.**

Leader Let us bless the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Leader Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold onto what is good; return no one evil for evil; strengthen the faint hearted; support the weak, and help the suffering; honor all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

People **Amen.**

