

19/7/20 Trinity 6 (week 18)

Hello to you all. I was pleased by the news this week that from next Friday, everyone will have to wear face coverings in shops. This is a relief and it probably is with lots of us too as those of us who have been shielding for the last almost five months, are anxious about going to the shops and places where people are not following the rules. It has been a real worry for me and knowing that everyone will wear a mask – though many won't and will find ways of avoiding it - has given me more confidence when I do have to go out.

Confidence is reassurance, if knowing what we are going into. The reading from Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 sees Jesus telling another parable which is about God's kingdom, judgement and end times to inspire confidence and hope in those who love him for what lies ahead. Such a lot packed into a short story! But that's the beauty of what Jesus did by making his message clear for those who really listened to what he was saying, "Let anyone with ears listen."

In this parable the farmer had sowed good seed (God's children) in the field (God) but in the night the enemy (the devil) came and sowed weeds (the devil's children) amongst the good seed so when it began to grow, the weeds came up with it also. The servants first reaction was to ask if they should pull up the weeds but the farmer tells them to let them both grow together to preserve the crop as uprooting the weeds risked pulling up the wheat. When the reapers (the angels) gathered in the harvest then the two could be separated and the weeds bundled up and destroyed in the fire.

The weed that the enemy would have sown would have been 'darnel' and the illustration Jesus used would have made it clear why he used this particular example. Weeds amongst the crop was a real curse to the farmer as both roots would grow so intertwined that it was impossible to uproot one without the other and could only be done when fully grown then distinguishable. Darnel was poisonous and caused sickness and the fact that someone sowed it on the farmer's field may have been a regular occurrence if someone wanted to harm the farmer. But the underlying meaning was clear to those who listened and understood.

Jesus is teaching that there will always be those in the world who want to infiltrate and destroy all that is good so it was important to always be aware of the temptations and the evil around us. The servants judged by their first impression and would have ruined the crop only for the farmer

telling them to wait. Good and bad have lived alongside each other in our world since the beginning but in the end days, the harvest time when Jesus returns, He will be the final judge who will separate the wheat and the weeds. All will be judged upon the whole of their life, not just part of it, the good with the bad, high and low points which happen. It is easy for us to judge others on what we initially see but Jesus warns us against this. For those of us who have done Alpha courses, there are stories of people such as hardened criminals, who have found Jesus through a Christian course in prison and have genuinely turned their life around and done lots of good with it. That person may have been written off and judged there and then but God waits and his grace can change weeds. Of course, it also happens the other way round so, everyone's life is viewed as a whole. It is not up to us to judge on what we immediately see, our first impressions unless we know the whole story, which Jesus does.

The evil which lives amongst us seem to escape justice and live off ill-gotten gains which seems unjust but judgement awaits, and in God's kingdom the balance will be redressed. But for now, we will continue to live, good alongside evil, and be aware, keeping our hope and faith firmly planted in God always.

Amen

With Love and Prayers

Rev Tracey xx