



# KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

## Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

10am – Sunday 19 July 2020

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Music to prepare us for worship

*“Nun bitten wir den Heiligen Geist” (Now be with us Holy Spirit) Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748)*

*“Jesu meine Lebens Leben” (Jesu life of my life) Friedrich Wilhelm Zachau (1663-1712)*

*“Komm heiliger Geist, Herre Gott” (Come Holy Ghost, Lord God) BuxWV 199, Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)*

### The bell sounds, then quietness

### Welcome

### Call to worship

Kia noho a Ihowa ki a koutou. May God be with you.

**Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.**

We come to worship God,

**who has loved us all our days,**

who knows us better than we know ourselves,

**whose presence never leaves us,**

whose love for us never ceases.

**This is our God.**

We worship God together

### Hymn

(tune Ode to Joy, CH4 120) CH4 118 - Ruth Duck

1 Womb of life and source of being,  
home of every restless heart,  
in your arms the worlds awakened;  
you have loved us from the start.  
We, your children, gather round you  
at the table you prepare.  
Sharing stories, tears, and laughter,  
we are nurtured by your care.

2 Word in flesh, our brother Jesus,  
born to bring us second birth,  
you have come to stand beside us,  
knowing weakness, knowing earth.  
Priest who shares our human  
struggles,  
Life of Life, and Death of death,  
risen Christ, come stand among us,  
send the Spirit by your breath.

3 Brooding Spirit, move among us;  
be our partner, be our friend.  
When our memory fails, remind us  
whose we are, what we intend.  
Labour with us, aid the birthing  
of the new world yet to be,  
free from status and division,  
free for love and unity.

## **Prayer, assurance of forgiveness –**

E te whanau, in Christ we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

Kia tau te rangimarie o te Karaiti ki runga i a koutou. May the peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

## **Children**

## **Prayer for Illumination**

## **Readings – Listen for God's Word to us ...**

### **Romans 8:12-25**

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 labor 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.

*Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church* **Thanks be to God**

### **Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

He 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.'" 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!

*This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ Praise to Christ the Word*

## Hymn

(tune St Anne, CH4 161) CH4 343 - Delores Dufner

1 The reign of God, like farmer's field,  
bears weeds along the wheat;  
the good and bad are intertwined  
till harvest is complete.

2 Like mustard tree, the reign of God  
from tiny seed will spread,  
till birds of every feather come  
to nest, and there be fed.

3 Though hidden now, the reign of  
God  
may, yet unnoticed, grow:  
from deep within it rises up,  
like yeast in swelling dough.

4 The reign of God is come in Christ;  
the reign of God is near.  
Ablaze among us, kindling hearts,  
the reign of God is here!

## Reflection "The Divine Gardener"

Are we genuine followers of Jesus or we pretending to follow?

The scholar Matt Skinner highlights how more than any other gospel, Matthew portrays Jesus asking who are true followers and who are counterfeit; who are authentic and who are fake. In terms of the parable today, who are weeds and who are wheat?

The question is there in the story of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22. People are invited to the wedding banquet and refuse to attend, so the king sends out for others to be invited. These people turn up but there is a man there who is not wearing the proper wedding clothes. The guest has not properly prepared for the invitation he has received. So he's tied up and cast into the darkness. So the question is - who are the properly prepared? It will be revealed at the end, at the time of judgement.

The question is there in the story of the bridesmaids in Matthew 25. Ten bridesmaids await a bridegroom; five have brought enough oil for their lamps for the wait, while another five need to purchase more oil after the arrival is delayed. The five bridesmaids who are prepared for the bridegroom's arrival are rewarded, while the five who are not prepared are disowned. So the question is - who are the bridesmaids that have been prepared? It will be revealed at the end, at the time of judgement.

The question is there in the story of the sheep and goats also in Matthew 25. The shepherd welcomes those who give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, hospitality to the stranger, clothes to the naked, and visit those who are in prison or sick, whereas the righteous say ... when did we ever see you like that? It will be revealed at the end, at the time of judgement.

The question is there in Jesus' criticism of the religious leaders of the time in Matthew 23. They burdened people with oppressive rules and kept people from enjoying the fullness of life that God promised. So who

are they, these religious leaders that get it so wrong? It will be revealed at the end, at the time of judgement.

In the meantime, before the end, how can we decide who are wheat and who are weeds?

Is Peter a weed? He must be. He was told he was going to deny Jesus at a crucial moment, so you would think, he would be ready for that moment. But no, the moment came and three times he denied Jesus.

And what about all those times he spoke inappropriately, talked too much, acted impulsively, tried to persuade Jesus to avoid suffering, the time Jesus said to him – “Get behind me Satan.” Well, Peter must be a weed. Yet at the end, beyond resurrection, there was Peter, with the risen Christ.

Were the disciples weeds? They must be. They argued among themselves about who was the greatest when the message of Jesus was about servanthood. Although Jesus tried to explain what the reign of God was about, they never quite grasped it. At crucial moments they spoke of faith and following and at other moments they completely misunderstood. And at the critical moment, they fled. Surely they were weeds. Yet at the end, beyond resurrection, there they were, with the risen Christ.

Jesus is questioning our capacity to judge. But he is not questioning our need to discern. This parable does not promote naïve tolerance. There is no pretending here, no sweeping of evil under the rug, no imagining we are a field of niceness with small lapses. This parable takes evil seriously.

As Debie Thomas says, evil is real, noxious and among us. Evil is insidious, intentional, and dangerous. Evil in the parable is not a mistake. It's not an accident or an unfortunate fluke. The weeds Jesus describes are intentionally sown into the field by a real enemy whose motivations are loveless and sinister. Moreover, the literal weeds are not harmless — they're poisonous. They mimic the look and colour of nourishing grain, but they're fake, and their seeds can cause illness and even death if consumed in large quantities.

As Debie says, we are, like the field in the parable, both mixed and messy. Each of us individually, our faith communities corporately, and our world in its entirety, contain wheat and weed, good and evil, the fruitful and the poisonous. We are each at the same time both sinner and saint.

But all that is said in an atmosphere of hope. The parable proclaims and Paul writes in Romans, evil is doomed. In the fullness of time, it will end. Jesus says “At harvest time, I'll instruct my reapers to collect, bundle, and burn the weeds.” And again: “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.” Evil is real and evil is doomed.

It is in that fierce hope that we engage as a congregation, among ourselves and with the wider community. Because discernment is tough, it's important we keep conversing around questions of life and theology, practice and behaviour, witness and mission. The deepest longings we share with all humankind and with creation itself find their expression among us, and call forth our discernment.

How can we be the real deal, live as genuine followers of Jesus? How are we to live out the reign of God here and now? How do we help each other live out that reign? How do we express our fundamental identity as children of God? The parable calls for patience - patient hoping, patient praying, patient conversing, patient engaging, patient action. We need to accept the timing of God rather than to be driven by our impatient judgement as if we know what is weed and what is wheat.

Barbara Brown Taylor says bluntly, that the business of discernment is much harder than we think it is: “Turn us loose with a machete and there is no telling what we will chop down and what we will spare.”

Yes, we can give expression to our identity as children of God, seeking to discern what is of God and what is not of God. And at the same time we can avoid categorising people as weeds or wheat, knowing that is the work of the divine gardener, not our work.

**Art** - *Sower and the Devil*, ceramic. 1923, Albin Egger-Lienz

## Hymn

(tune Abbots Leigh) CH4 615 - Timothy Rees

1 Holy Spirit, ever living  
as the Church's very life;  
Holy Spirit, ever striving  
through her in a ceaseless strife;  
Holy Spirit, ever forming  
in the Church the mind of Christ;  
you we praise with endless worship  
for your fruit and gifts unpriced.

2 Holy Spirit, ever working  
through the Church's ministry;  
quickening, strengthening, and  
absolving,  
setting captive sinners free;  
Holy Spirit, ever binding  
age to age and soul to soul  
in a fellowship unending,  
you we worship and extol.

## We are sent

### Prayer for others and the Lord's Prayer

*Anglican prayer book*

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.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the  
glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.

E tō mātou Matua i te rangi  
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.  
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.  
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai  
ki runga ki te whenua,  
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.  
Hōmai ki a mātou āiane  
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.  
Murua ō mātou hara,  
Me mātou hoki e muru nei  
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.  
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia  
whakawaia;  
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te  
kino:  
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha,  
me te korōria, Āke āke āke. Āmine.

### An aspect of mission

## Hymn

(tune St Peter, CH4 461) CH4 624 - John Oxenham

1 In Christ there is no east or west,  
in him no south or north,  
but one great fellowship of love  
throughout the whole wide earth.

2 In Christ shall true hearts  
everywhere  
their high communion find,  
his service is the golden cord  
close-binding human kind.

3 Come, brothers, sisters of the faith,  
whate'er your race may be:  
whoever does my Father's will  
is surely kin to me.

4 In Christ now meet both east and  
west,  
in him meet south and north,  
all Christ-like souls are one in him,  
throughout the whole wide earth.

**Dedication of offering** – *Please place your offerings in the offering bags held out for you at the door as you leave. Please do this as soon as you are able.*

## Blessing

Music for our leaving "*Praeludium und Fuga*" in G major BuxWV147, Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

*In relation to your monetary offering, you may:*

- *Make regular automatic payments (which are tax deductible) - contact Helen Thew at [plannedgiving@knoxchurch.net](mailto:plannedgiving@knoxchurch.net)*
- *Give online to the Church's bank account at 03 0903 0016425 00 - our charity number for tax rebate purposes is #CC52318.*

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