



*To be transformed
implies letting go
of control for a while
in the hopeful expectation
that something worthwhile
may result.*

—Esther de Waal

**SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
19 JULY 2020**

Invitation to Prayer — Psalm 139:24

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.

Gathering Prayer

You who hem us in before and behind,
we give thanks for your steadfast love.
You raise the sun upon us
lifting us into this new day.
You sustain our bodies with creation's fruit,
her beauty gladdens our hearts.
We pause and bring to mind your recent gifts to us...

For your simple yet abundant grace, we say: *Thank you.*

Fill us with your Spirit, that holy breath
within and between all things
that brings not disease and confusion
but comfort, inspiration, and connection
in this season of distance and anxiety.
Gift us with hope and peace, we pray.
Amen

Scripture Reading—Matthew 13:24–30

This Sunday's Gospel reading is another parable of Jesus. Once again, it attempts to address a question that arose within the community at that time.

Put simply, Matthew's community was made up of Jewish followers of Jesus. The word "Christian" and the separate identity it denotes were not yet part of their vocabulary. Therefore, one of the concerns in Matthew's community was how those who believe Jesus to be the Messiah and wish to live in his way are to relate to Jews who do not? The parable of the weeds among the wheat is one response to this question.

While our context has changed, it can be no less challenging to live with diversity, contradiction and the unresolved nature of many things in life. How do we find peace? What is it to live graciously with others and ourselves?



Prayer for Openness

Open my mind
that I might read between familiar lines.
Open my heart
and illumine truth below the darkened surface.
Open my body
that I might bear the fruit of your Word. Amen

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.'"

Going Deeper

“So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well.”

- When have you made plans recently that didn't turn out as you expected?
- How did the experience leave you? How did you respond?

“In gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.”

- How is this wisdom for a situation in your life right now?
- What might this word mean practically in your circumstance?
- What enables you to find peace within this reality?

God bless our contradictions,
Those parts of us which seem out of character.
Let us be boldly and gladly out of character.
Let us be creatures of paradox and variety:
Creatures of contrast; of light and shade; creatures of faith.
God be our constant. Let us step out of character into the unknown,
To struggle and love and do what we will.
Amen.

—Michael Leunig

We need to rediscover contradiction as a creative force within the soul. ...It is the turbulence and conflict of their inner conversation which brings an integrity of transfiguration and not the mere replacement of one image, surface or system by another which so often passes for change.

—John O'Donohue

You might spend time with one or both of the quotes above.

- What insight do they give about the reality into which the parable speaks?
- What, if anything, do you find helpful here?

Written Reflection and Silent Meditation

You might read the written reflection on the Gospel followed by some moments away from thoughts and images, basking in God's love with and for you.

How to meditate—from the World Community for Christian Meditation

Sit with your back straight and your feet on the floor. Close your eyes lightly. Then interiorly, silently begin to recite a single word — a prayer word or mantra. We recommend the ancient Christian prayer-word “Maranatha.” Say it as four equal syllables: Ma – ra – na – tha.

Breathe normally and give your full attention to the word as you say it, silently, gently, faithfully and — above all — simply. Let go of all thoughts (even good thoughts), images, sensations and other words as they arise. Don't fight your distractions: let them go by saying your word faithfully, gently and attentively, returning to it with intention when your attention wanders.

Prayers of Intercession

Wintering Spirit: may the variety of experiences we encounter each day bring richness and blessing to life—movements from brisk morning air to the warm shelter of our homes, seeing dormant plants next to colourful blooms in the garden, the stillness of night leading to the industrious chatter of birds building nests for this year's brood. May these experiences illumine the diversity and tension you have woven throughout creation and give us hope that we, too, might find harmony and peace. Hear us now as we pray: *Make us one in you.*

For this prolonged season of unknowing and uncertainty, for its toll on our hearts and minds and the strain on relationships and countries... we pray: *Make us one in you.*

For the cry of creation and we her people; increase our longing for reconciliation and wholeness, enable us to live more in tune with this land... we pray: *Make us one in you.*

For those who are cold today—in body for lack of shelter or in heart for lack of love—fill us with your compassion, move us to care... we pray: *Make us one in you.*

For those on our hearts and minds—for those who are celebrating and grateful... for those who are struggling... for ourselves... we pray: *Make us one in you.*

Disciples' Prayer

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.

Blessing

Where can we go from your spirit? Or where can we flee from your presence?

If we take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead us,
and your right hand shall hold us fast.

The love of God, the grace of Jesus Christ and the communion of the Spirit be with us all.