

Morning Worship for the sixth Sunday after Trinity

Preparation

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:
the whole earth is full of his glory.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength;
ascribe to the Lord the honour due to his name.

The whole earth is full of his glory.

The Lord shall give strength to his people;

the Lord shall give his people the blessing of peace.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts:

the whole earth is full of his glory.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,

faithful and unchanging:

**enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love,
that we may truly worship you,**

Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Cast your burden upon the Lord:

And he will sustain you.

Create in us clean hearts O God:

And renew a right spirit within us.

Cast us not away from your presence:

And take not your Holy Spirit from us.

Give us the joy of your saving help:

And sustain us with your life-giving Spirit.

Blessed be the Lord day by day:

The God of our salvation who bears our burdens.

We confess our sins.

God the Father forgives us in Christ

and heals us by the Holy Spirit.

Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,
all slander and malice,

and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

(cf Ephesians 4.30,32)

Come, let us return to the Lord and say:

Lord our God,

in our sin we have avoided your call.

**Our love for you is like a morning cloud,
like the dew that goes away early.**

Have mercy on us;

deliver us from judgement;

bind up our wounds and revive us;

in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May almighty God,

who sent his Son into the world to save sinners,

bring you his pardon and peace,

now and for ever. **Amen.**

Praise

O Lord, open our lips:

And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the Lord:

All praise to his name.

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest,

and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

you are seated at the right hand of the Father:

receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The word of God

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.

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 labour 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. (Romans 8:12–25)

This is the word of the Lord; *thanks be to God*

Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to 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 Jesus 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!’ (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43)

This is the Gospel of the Lord; *Praise to you O Christ*

A reflection by Gordon Gray,

We’ve moved so swiftly, in the Sunday readings, from sowing seeds last week to pulling weeds this Sunday. It’s all part of the cycle of gardening – sowing, weeding, harvest. And at this time of year these activities do tend to come one on top of another.

With all the extra time on my hands I have felt quite smug about how tidy my garden has been this year. I’ve done a lot of hoeing and for most of the summer there have been very few weeds. However, a few hours of rain at this time of year and the weeds shoot up and even though my flowers and vegetables have a head start they are soon entangled with what I think of as weeds, bindweed, sow thistles and the like.

Now I don’t grow a lot of wheat, but I do grow lots of onions and July and early August are critical times for the garden. Traditionally this is a time when I take my eye off things, what with preparing for and clearing up from Carnival, so by the time I get around to lifting onions in early August the onion bed is usually full of weeds. And the trouble is that the weeds quickly become thuggish but I have learnt from past experience that once they reach a certain size pulling out the weeds tends to lift the onions as well resulting in a much poorer harvest than I might like.

So I am most sympathetic with the farmer who orders his servants not to pull the weeds out for fear of damaging the crop. And, just like in the parable, when harvest comes my onions get harvested undamaged and the weeds go on the compost heap. It’s all a matter of timing; my hoe is active throughout the spring and early summer when the weeds are small but once the weeds get a hold it’s better to leave them.

Now I'm well aware that Jesus isn't interested in the tidy border gardens I take such pains to grow, but as the Creator who made them, he does care a great deal about the lives not just of begonias, hostas, and lilies but also of the *bindweed and sow thistles!* All those things that *'toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.'*

But I think this parable is much more than Jesus giving horticultural advice as if he were a first century Monty Don. Mankind has walked this earth for many millennia. For most of that time, and increasingly in the past 50 years, humans have been more than happy to pull out and destroy what they perceive to be weeds to their own detriment. We are suddenly realising that by setting fire to the 'weeds' that comprise the tropical rain forest we are contributing to climate change, pollution, destruction of huge numbers of species whose value to the human race is now unknown – we don't know which species are wheat and which weeds!

We have metaphorically 'set fire' to vast numbers of species of insects that are towards the bottom of the food chain through the widespread use of insecticides such as nicotinoids, and yet we seem surprised that species higher up the food chain are dying out, to say nothing of the decline in bees that are so valuable to farmers and growers throughout the world. I've seen hardly any honey bees this year.

We have metaphorically 'set fire' to this planet by polluting the oceans resulting in a massive decline in sea creatures, all potential food to other creatures in the food chain. We don't know which species are wheat and which are weeds.

Only now are we beginning to realise that all living creatures in our environment are inter-related and we should not, willy-nilly, allow any to be eradicated whether we call them wheat or weeds; and what we call weeds some other creature may think of as wheat. This simple lesson had we only understood the warning was taught the world 2,000 years ago.

Jesus' words are to: "Wait. It is not harvest time yet. Let wheat and weeds grow together. One will not be tainted by the other. And at the time of the harvest it will all be sorted out." Indeed, maybe this is a reminder that all living things from the smallest to the largest are vital to this wonderful, complex inter-related world in which we live.

Our faith

Let us declare our faith in God Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession led by Barbara Morton

Everlasting God, we join together in praying to you for the needs the church, the world, our communities and ourselves, trusting in your love which reaches out from before the foundation of the world. Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Dear Lord, whenever we start to get offended by our perceptions of unfairness towards ourselves, give us the grace to repent and demonstrate instead your love. Guard the Church against self-righteousness and all rules and limits which you would not own, but keep always before us the rule of love.

We pray for all clergy, especially Joy, Stephen and Gordon here in Eaton Bray, and for our Bishops, that they will be enabled to lead us through this very difficult time. May it prove to be a time of blessing for the future.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Creator God, we pray for your world. Forgive us when we are ungrateful when spiritual blindness prevents us from appreciating the wonder of your creation and the endless cycle of nature. Forgive us for taking without giving; reaping without sowing. We pray for the

farmers of the world many of whom still use those methods described by Jesus and we especially pray that they may be treated with fairness for their labours. We especially remember those who work with the land in countries suffering so badly from climate change. Help us all to moderate our use of finite resources and embrace ways of renewing our planet.

We pray for our government and all the agencies who are working so hard to help our nation through this time. Strengthen those key workers and give them the awareness that they are greatly appreciated for their courage.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Father God, we thank you for the love we share with our families and our friends. We recognise that they may have faults and they love us in spite of ours. Help us to be flexible and adaptable in all of our relationships and also capable of accepting constructive criticism. Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Loving God and Lord of life, we pray for the gift of courage to face up to and cope with illness especially during the Covid-19 Pandemic. We pray for it for ourselves, and for those whose names are on our prayer chain, and those who may be known only to one person. We think of them now in a moment of silence.

We thank you for those who through their courage have come through illness and for those facing the reality that there is little time left at the end of their earthly journey.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, give us ears to hear and minds to understand the message of immortality for the children of your kingdom so that we may look forward with patience and confidence to that time when we will join you in the peace of eternity. We especially pray for any we know who have recently died and are on that journey to you.

Lord in your mercy: **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, we thank you for the opportunity of being together in prayer. As we look forward to the week to come, we pray for an awareness of your love and support in all we do.

May the love of our good and generous God guide and protect us; may the hope of the gospel sustain us and bring us joy; when we are lost or lonely; when the road ahead seems hard, or

when the darkness gathers,
may the light and peace of Christ be ours.

Merciful Father,

Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

A prayer for the coronavirus pandemic

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

We join together with Christians throughout the world in the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**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, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Conclusion

The Collect for the day

Merciful God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as pass our understanding: pour into our hearts such love toward you that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power.

For you have created all things,
and by your will they have their being.

You are worthy, O Lamb, for you were slain,
and by your blood you ransomed us for God.

From every tribe and language and nation,
**you have made us to be a kingdom and priests
serving our God.**

To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
**be blessing and honour and glory and might
for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 4.11;5.9b,10,11)**

*We end with the words of the Grace, an ancient Christian prayer of
fellowship, remembering that although we are not together in person,
nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ Jesus
our Lord.*

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all evermore. Amen.**

*Please let us know if you want us to pray for you either individually or
if you would like to be included on the Prayer Chain.
(admin@stmaryseatonbray.org.uk)*

Reverend Joy Cousans; Reverend Stephen Burge

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