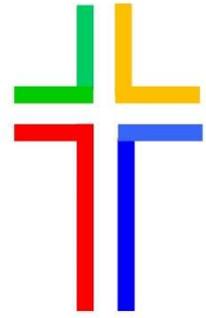


# Week St Mary Methodist Church – Sunday 19 July



We returned to meeting at Chapel for our morning service last Sunday with 16 of us gathered. Everything went as intended. Of course, it was a little different with spaced out chairs and no hymns but we had a great time with some lovely music. This Sunday Rev Linda will lead a short service of Holy Communion; this will also of necessity be a bit different, but it is a further step along our journey. Please do not feel any pressure to attend; our fellowship will continue through these weekly service sheets.

## PRAYER

Lord, be with us and other congregations as we take these first tentative steps towards returning to our normal worship. We know that you are with us and support us in all we

do. We pray that this time apart will have given us opportunity for reflection, a greater determination to do your will, and a stronger desire to be disciples of Jesus. **Amen**

**READING FOR TODAY** Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (NIV)

### The parable of the weeds

<sup>24</sup> Jesus told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed ears, then the weeds also appeared.

<sup>27</sup> 'The owner's servants came to him and said, "Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?"

<sup>28</sup> "An enemy did this," he replied.

'The servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?"

<sup>29</sup> "No," he answered, "because while you are pulling up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

### The parable of the weeds explained

<sup>36</sup> Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.'

<sup>37</sup> He answered, 'The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

<sup>40</sup> 'As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. <sup>42</sup> They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

## REFLECTION

When Jesus told parables he often included a twist, an unexpected aspect, something that his hearers would remember. Think of the endings of the Prodigal Son, or the Good Samaritan, neither were outcomes that the listeners were expecting. In this parable the unexpected aspect is that the owner of field told his servants to let the weeds grow amongst the wheat. That can't have sounded like good agricultural practice to his audience, or to his disciples when he explained later. The

servants wanted to pull up the weeds, but Jesus said that God's way is to leave them to grow alongside the good crop. We might reflect on why that might be. Are we, as the servants, able to distinguish between the weeds and the wheat; or are we a bit like a jobbing gardener who pulls up the prize dahlias along with the weeds. We need to leave separating the weeds and the crop to the expert, God, and not expect our judgement to be as reliable as his.

There is also the possibility that the weeds will turn into beautiful flowers. We walked through a lovely wild-flower garden on the sea front at Penzance last week, full of all sorts of plants, which in other places might have been regarded as weeds. It's never too late to repent and reject the evil one; what may have started as nuisance weeds in the field might one day become a flower to be prized or a useful plant to be harvested. God knows that and so judgement is left until the harvest at the end of the age.

And when weeds get out of hand in my vegetable plot I can convince myself it is God-sanctioned!

### **PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Jesus likened God's earthly Kingdom to a field.

Lord, we pray for all those who are responsible for the field, those who are leaders in this world, those who look after the health and welfare of others.

Lord, we pray for the servants who look after the field and tend to the crops, those in Christian churches across the world, those who look to spread your message and encourage all to know your love.

Lord, we pray for the weeds, those who are constantly tempted to do wrong, those who find it difficult to trust you, those who with the right guidance might turn out to be a flower rather than a weed.

Lord, we pray for ourselves in our little corner of the field and ask that you help us to grow in the way you want us to.

We ask these prayers in Jesus name. Amen

### **HYMN H&P 139, StF 255**

The kingdom of God  
is justice and joy;  
for Jesus restores  
what sin would destroy.  
God's power and glory  
in Jesus we know  
and here and hereafter  
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God  
is mercy and grace;  
the captives are freed,  
the sinners find place,  
the outcast are welcomed  
God's banquet to share;  
and hope is awakened  
in place of despair.

The kingdom of God  
is challenge and choice:  
believe the good news,  
repent and rejoice!  
His love for us sinners  
brought Christ to his cross:  
our crisis of judgement  
for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come,  
the gift and the goal;  
in Jesus begun,  
in heaven made whole.  
The heirs of the kingdom  
shall answer his call  
and all things cry 'Glory!'  
to God all in all.

### **THE GRACE**

**The Grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us now and for evermore. Amen.

*"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap,  
but by the seeds that you plant."  
— Robert Louis Stevenson*