

THE UPPER ALDE BENEFICE

The Sixteenth Sunday of the Year (Trinity 6)

It's another parable about growth that the lectionary brings to our attention this week.

“The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ His slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ He replied, ‘No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, “First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.”””

God's kingdom will be 'harvested' from among the good which exists side-by-side with the bad. Palestinian farmers were plagued by weeds that were very difficult to distinguish from good grain. The two would often grow together and become so intertwined that it was impossible to separate them without ripping both weed and plant from the ground. Our Lord teaches his impatient followers that the Lord of the harvest is more concerned with the growth of the wheat than with the elimination of the weeds. The time for separation and burning will come in God's own time; our concern should be that of our own faithfulness.

We often approach religion as a deadly serious business; we lose the spirit of joy and the sense of hope that are part of the promise of the Risen Christ. We become so concerned about pulling out the weeds that we forget to harvest the grain; we become so focused on the evil and abuses that surround us and 'threaten' us that we fail to realize and celebrate the healing and life-giving presence of God in our very midst; we become so intent on upbraiding and punishing sinners that our own lives become mired in gloom and despair. This has been particularly true of the last few weeks after we have come out of the initial stages of lockdown but are now facing forecasts of even worse effects of the virus in the autumn and winter. The Lord of the harvest is more concerned about the growth of the good wheat than the elimination of the weeds. The task of judging sinners belongs to God; to us belongs the work of compassion and reconciliation.

Prayer for the week

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.

Thought for the week

How many Anglicans does it take to change a light bulb?
One to change the light bulb and nine to say how much they preferred the old one.