

Greatham, Empshott and Hawkley with Priors Dean

Prayers at Home

19th July 2020

Hymn

Lord, enthroned in heav'nly splendor,
first-begotten from the dead,
Thou alone, our strong Defender,
liftest up Thy people's head.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Jesus, true and living Bread!

Prince of Life, for us Thou livest,
by Thy body souls are healed;
Prince of Peace, Thy peace Thou givest,
by Thy blood is pardon sealed.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Word of God in flesh revealed.

Great High Priest of our profession,
through the oil Thou ent'redst in;
by Thy mighty intercession
grace and mercy Thou dost win.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Only sacrifice for sin.

Life-imparting heav'nly Manna,
stricken Rock, with streaming side,
heav'n and earth with loud hosanna
worship Thee, the Lamb who died.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Ris'n, ascended, glorified!

Words: G. H. Bourne (1840-1925) Tune: St Helen G.C. Martin (1844-1916)

Introduction

We had our first service last Sunday at Greatham which began with young Finlay ringing a bell to call us to worship, and then Isla lighting the Easter candle. As they did their tasks, little Alexa watched with a real sense of wonder in her eyes at what was happening.

A lot has happened in the last three months – for example, little Alexa has learnt to walk and in returning to church as a toddler instead of a baby she is beginning to pick up that sense of wonder which is one of God's greatest gifts to humanity. It's good to be back even though the practicalities of services are very different. Nonetheless – the light of Christ still shines and we are called to worship.

Psalm 139:1-11 (Order of Service only)

O Lord, you have searched me out and known me;
you know my sitting down and my rising up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You mark out my journeys and my resting place
and are acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word on my tongue,
but you, O Lord, know it altogether.
You encompass me behind and before
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go then from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I climb up to heaven, you are there;
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.
If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
Even there your hand shall lead me,
your right hand hold me fast.
If I say, 'Surely the darkness will cover me
and the light around me turn to night,'
Even darkness is no darkness with you;
the night is as clear as the day;
darkness and light to you are both alike.

Reading Matt 13:23-30,36-43

Another parable he put forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Reflection by Marjorie Arnold

Jesus used parables to teach – He used illustrations from the things around Him – which the people listening would understand – in this case farming – sowing seeds. In this beneficent farming illustrations work well. Although probably different farming methods! I was born and grew up in Manchester so these farming pictures never meant very much to me until I moved to Kent.

Jesus often told parables - stories with a meaning - usually a fairly general meaning – there’s no need to dig around to find a meaning for every single detail.

To my mind one of the things we learn from this story of wheat and weeds is the difference between the way God works and the way we work. God is content to let the wheat and the weeds grow up together and only separate them at the harvest time. I suspect we would want to weed as we went along – to give the wheat more space to grow. The thing is that God, as creator, knows what is best for the crop.

In the same way we want God to do something about the problems in the world – how often have we said – why doesn’t God do something? Why is God seemingly silent about some things? Why doesn’t He step in and stop the violent protests, the wars and Covid 19?

This parable doesn’t give a direct answer to that question but it gives some clues and we get an indication of how God sees things and about God’s patience – the parable is about waiting – the difficult bit!

The farmer (God) waits for the harvest time. The disciples didn’t want to wait – they wanted the Kingdom Now – at once. They wanted to go into the fields and root out the weeds but in doing that they were very likely to pull up some wheat as well.

We get a sense of God’s compassion – delaying the judgement – so that one more person could be saved – and one more – and one more.

The final verses make it clear that at harvest time – the end of time as we know it – there will be some sort of reckoning. But we can’t judge other people - who is in and who is out – only God knows and we can trust Him to be just and fair. Our only responsibility is to follow Jesus and to trust God – and encourage others to do the same.

Our prayers this week are by Jacq Burrell who is to be married at Priors Dean.

Prayers

Let us pray

God of love and of us all, Jesus has shown us that your ways are not our ways. We seek answers when sometimes we need to wait. We are coming to terms with many changes in our routines and with these changes come both fears and opportunities. When our certainties are challenged may we remain patient and centred in you who are the harvest of all our hopes. When the way forward seems hidden may we find you as the source of our strength.

Lord open our hearts and hear our prayers.

God of peace and of us all, you have searched us out and you know each one of us better than we know ourselves. Teach us this truth kindly for we can be harsh towards ourselves and as we judge ourselves we often judge others. You alone know the difference between the tares and the wheat.

Lord open our hearts and hear our prayers.

God of truth and of us all, you have searched us out and you know us. May we pray to you with open hearts and any fears and anxieties be turned outward to face the light. You know how we are made and you have a role for each one of us in bearing the truth of your Kingdom to the world. May we travel through our days gently and carry you with us as we go.

Lord open our hearts and hear our prayers.

God of hope and of us all, we bring to you all those in need of you-the sick, the lonely, the desperate and those who ask for rest. May the words of Jesus sustain them in their weariness and may we be the means to deliver his presence.

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our saviour Jesus Chris. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that 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

Do please read the Church News each week to see how things develop. If you are wanting to come to church, and it is safe for you to do so, please ring or email me first to ensure there is a place.

Let's pray for God's blessing.

God of the harvest help us to grow and to share.

God of the Kingdom help us to live and to love.

May God who us Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless us now and always.

Amen.