

(Order of service for worship at home)

**Virtual Service for the
Linton Team of Churches
The 6th Sunday after Trinity
2020**

Please join us in worshipping 'together' wherever you are on Sundays at 10 am. However, if you can't use this material then, you can of course use it at any other time. If you are joining in this service as a group please designate one person as the leader reading the normal print with everyone joining in the text in bold type,

Grace, mercy and peace
From God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ
Be with us all. **Amen**

Hymn Awake, my soul and with the sun

Click [here](#) for organ accompaniment (scroll down the webpage to 'Recording')

**Awake, my soul, and with the sun
thy daily stage of duty run;
shake off dull sloth, and joyful rise
to pay thy morning sacrifice.**

**Redeem thy misspent time that's past,
And live this day as if the last;
Improve thy talent with due care;
For the great day thyself prepare**

**Let all thy converse be sincere,
Thy conscience as the noon-day clear;
Think how all-seeing God thy ways
And all thy secret thoughts surveys.**

**Wake, and lift up thyself, my heart,
And with the angels bear thy part,
Who all night long unwearied sing
High praise to the eternal King.**

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;**

**Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

Bishop T Ken (1637-1711)

Prayer of Preparation

Let us pray:
**Lord, direct our thoughts,
teach us to pray,
lift our hearts to worship you
in Spirit and in truth,
through Jesus Christ. Amen**

A time of silence as we call to mind our sins and weaknesses, before we confess them to God.

Confession

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'
So let us turn away from sin and turn to the Lord,
confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

cf Matthew 4.17

**Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name. Amen.**

May almighty God have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins
and bring us to everlasting life
Amen

Collect

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

Readings

Epistle: Romans 8:12-25

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ 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!’ ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ 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. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now; ²³ 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. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hope for what is seen? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Gospel: Matthew 13:24- 30, 36-43

²⁴ He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷ 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?” ²⁸ He answered, “An enemy has done this.” The slaves said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” ²⁹ But he replied, “No; for in gathering the weeds you

would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰ 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.”

³⁶ Then he 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.’ ³⁷ He answered, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸ the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears^[d] listen!

Reflection

Jesus’ parable of the Wheat and Weeds is all about PLUs – that is, People Like Us. If you are not acquainted with the term, then you may recognise its social context when someone says, ‘Oh X is alright he or she is a PLU!’ X has passed the test, - they have the right political views, they share the same kind of hobbies, they were educated at the right kind of school, they have right kind of views about religion and so on. Once judged a PLU then they are ‘in’ and we can relax and enjoy their company.

Last week I went on a very good marriage preparation training course for facilitators. Very early on our course leader said that one of the terms he tries to avoid when preparing couples is ‘compatibility’. Now this may sound odd because one of the purposes, one may have thought, about marriage is to get on with each other. The popular reason why some couples cohabit before marriage is to see whether they are compatible. But the danger with this idea, as our instructor pointed out, is that often relationships work on differences and it is learning to enjoy, understand

and work through differences which is not just the purpose of marriage preparation but indeed marriage itself.

The problem with PLU is that it actively avoids difference.

But there's a more divisive dimension to the very notion of PLU which is social mobility and social division. In his book *People Like Us* (2020), Hashi Mohamed, Somali born child refugee and now UK barrister illustrates the issue with a *Private Eye* cartoon. The cartoon had come out shortly after his BBC Radio 4's documentary *Adventures in Social Mobility* and depicted an older, formally dressed man holding a gin and tonic and saying 'Yes, I was listening to a documentary on social mobility on Radio 4...' His younger shaven-headed, informally dressed companion drinking a pint of beer replies to him saying, 'What is Radio 4?'

The purpose of Hashi's book is that despite the enormous social changes which have taken place over the past 50 years, the UK is still deeply class divided – we may be aware of this but do we really *know* about what our neighbours believe and how they see the world? Our tendency is to associate with PLUs.

Hashi's story is deeply challenging and describes how after the death of his father in Somalia and the collapse of Somalia as a result of the civil war, he was sent to the UK in 1993 when he was 9. Here he survived the toughest London schools and eventually went to university, studied at Oxford and then became a barrister at Lincoln's Inn. Success? Yes, in some ways, but his message is more subtle than this. Is it necessarily success to rise to the so called top or to be well off or have influence? His message is about dealing with change by balancing the practical complexities of society with ideology.

This is not easy. The same kind of social and religious issues existed in Jesus' day and as with all really complex ideas, he offered a means of reflecting on them through stories based on human everyday life experience. As the great biblical scholar William Barclay said, Jesus' parables 'make truth concrete'.

Even if we are not all gardeners, most people do know the difference between plants we want and plants we don't – these we call weeds. Plants are PLUs, weeds are outsiders. The ideology or vision Jesus preached is the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven as Matthew prefers). But as with many of Jesus' parables, this parable is also deeply counter-intuitive. Surely it makes sense to cleanse the wheat crop of weeds so that it can grow healthy and strong without contamination. But Jesus plays on the fact that the particular weed he has in mind, called in Hebrew 'zunim', was practically indistinguishable from wheat until it came to harvest time when both could be harvested and the seeds separated out – the zunim seeds being larger and greyer.

So the first challenge Jesus makes to his disciples and St Matthew in turn to his Christian church community is this: abandon naïve ideas of social purity, moral purity, even religious purity because all these ideas of a 'pure' community creates an 'us' of PLUs which is not only impossible but divisive and dangerous. Most significantly even if we think we could distinguish who the zunim are (the word also means 'cheat') – the act of doing so would be to uproot and destroy society. We have far too many examples in human history of disastrous purity ideologies to know just how wise Jesus' teaching is: the cleansing of Catholics by Protestants and Protestants by Catholics; Jews by Nazis; Muslims by Serbians and so on. Jesus' teaching is clear: there will be God's justice for those who deserve it, but at this moment Christians must be patient, trusting and watch out for those who are ideologically over-zealous because *all* lives matter.

The second challenge comes in Jesus' explanation of the parable where at judgement day he says:

'The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father'
(13:43)

The question is: who are the righteous? The answer is provided a little later in Matthew's Gospel in Jesus' parable of the Sheep and the Goats (25:31-46). At judgement day the shock is that the righteous are not the religiously 'pure' PLUs, but *anyone* who has given the hungry food, the thirsty drink and welcomed the stranger. The truly righteous are those

who have bridged the gap between us and them; these are the qualities which will lead to social justice and social mobility.

All human lives in all their differences matter; as Christians must be on our guard against falling too easily into being PLUs.

Prayers of intercession

Please pray in the way that comes most naturally to you, either in silence or out loud we end with the Lord's Prayer

Traditional

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.

Modern

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

Thanksgiving

Living God, Father of light,
Hope of nations, Friend of sinners,
Builder of the city that is to come;
your love is made visible in Jesus Christ,
you bring home the lost, restore the sinner
and give dignity to the despised.
We give you thanks
We praise your holy name

In the face of Jesus Christ
your light shines out,
flooding lives with goodness and truth,
gathering into one a divided and broken humanity.
We give you thanks

We praise your holy name

With people from every race and nation,
with the Church of all the ages,
with apostles, evangelists and martyrs
we join the angels of heaven
in their unending song:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Offering ourselves to God

One or more of the following may be used

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

After the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing.

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

From St Patrick's Breastplate

Eternal light, shine into our hearts,
eternal goodness, deliver us from evil,
eternal power, be our support,
eternal wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance,
eternal pity, have mercy upon us;
that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength
we may seek your face and be brought by your infinite mercy
to your holy presence,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Alcuin of York (804)

Soul of Christ, sanctify me,
body of Christ, save me,
blood of Christ, inebriate me,
water from the side of Christ, wash me.
Passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me:
hide me within your wounds
and never let me be separated from you.
From the wicked enemy defend me,
in the hour of my death, call me
and bid me come to you,
so that with your saints I may praise you
for ever and ever. Amen

Anima Christi (14th century)

Post-spiritual communion prayer for the 6th Sunday after Trinity

God of our pilgrimage,
you have led us to the living water:
refresh and sustain us
as we go forward on our journey,
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing;
and the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

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