



The Methodist Church In Ireland

Sunday 19th July, “Living in the day of God’s Grace”

This short act of worship has been prepared so that you can spend some moments with God, knowing that other people in your local congregation and beyond are sharing in this same act of worship with you.

Opening Prayer

Oh, Holy Lord, you are worthy of all of our praises. You reign in majesty above us and are our Lord forever. We thank you for allowing us to be graced by your presence today, hallowed be your name. Accept our love and adoration in Jesus’ name.

We are here to pray, almighty God that you will always light our way with your presence. We resist evil and pray that your light will always shine on us. May all people see your glory through us and come to worship you as the living God.

Hymn: Lord, I lift your name on high

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful song

1 Lord, I lift Your name on high
Lord, I love to sing Your praises
I'm so glad You're in my life
I'm so glad You came to save us

You came from heaven to earth
To show the way
From the earth to the cross
My debt to pay
From the cross to the grave
From the grave to the sky
Lord, I lift Your name on high

Rick Founds

Genesis 28: 10-19a

Jacob’s Dream at Bethel

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set.

Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it^[a] stood the LORD, and he said: “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.^[b] ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.” ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”

¹⁸ Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel,^[c] though the city used to be called Luz.

Let us pray

Almighty Father; we enter your presence confessing the things we try to conceal from you and the things we try to conceal from others.

We confess the heartbreak, worry, and sorrow we have caused, that make it difficult for others to forgive us, the times we have made it easy for others

to do wrong, the harm we have done that makes it hard for us to forgive ourselves.

Lord have mercy and forgive us through Christ.
Amen.

Romans 8: 12-25

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba, Father.*” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that ^[c] the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his

field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “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?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ 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

³⁶ 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.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ 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, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Reflection

To Jesus’s original audience this parable of the weeds would have made a lot of sense. When one farmer wanted to sabotage another, it wasn’t unheard of for them to sow bearded darnel into their wheat.

Bearded darnel is a noxious weed that mimics many of the characteristic of wheat—for a while. Before they mature, the two plants are almost identical, but as

they grow, the differences become apparent in the fruit. Unfortunately, dandelion is poisonous and in big enough doses will kill someone. So, it's not something a farmer wants mixed up in their harvest.

The concerned servants wanted to remove the dandelion, but the farmer doesn't want perfectly good wheat to be pulled and thrown out if it is mistaken for dandelion. He instructs them to leave the separation to the harvesters whose job it is to remove the dandelion.

The enemy brings such destructiveness, sowing destructive seed in Christ's field. There is no positive objective in mind. The motivating force of all his work is simply to destroy the harvest.

Daily we see and hear terrible things being reported in our news. If God is so good, if Christ is so mighty, then why is there so much evil in the world? It's a question that arises in every generation: Where does this evil come from? If Jesus triumphed over evil on the cross, then why is it flourishing today? People in Jesus's day assumed that when the kingdom came, the Messiah would blow the whistle and it would be game over evil. But Jesus came without judgment.

Isaiah says the coming Messiah will "proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance" (Isaiah 61:2). Early on in Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:19), He got up and read this, but stopped halfway through the verse! What about the day of vengeance? Grace comes with Jesus now; judgment comes with Jesus later.

So what's going to happen between now and then?

Evil will grow alongside the good until the return of Christ. That is the teaching of Jesus, and we need this wisdom if we are to sustain a lifetime of ministry, because we need to understand the nature of the world in which we are living.

Is this world getting better or is it getting worse? Both! This world is getting better *and* it is getting worse at the same time!

The good seed is growing and producing an abundant harvest. *And* the weeds are growing too. With every

week that passes they are larger and more deeply rooted than before.

We are living in the day of God's grace. The Day of Judgment has not yet come, and until that day, this is what the kingdom will look like: Good wheat in a field laced with weeds.

Respond/Reflect

Take some time now to reflect. Think about where God has rooted you down. Where have you been sown? He calls us to live and grow in this world until he comes and brings about a righteous judgment in which all will be brought to account before him.

A time of Prayer

Lord Jesus, we come to you today thankful of the privilege of praying for others and how powerful prayer can be. We ask you to cleanse our hearts and show us if there is any unconfessed sin in our own lives so that our prayers for others will not be hindered. We thank you that through your name, we can come boldly before you and pray with confidence, according to your will and know that you hear us.

We pray for teachers and pupils, who are on their summer holidays, we pray that they all will have good rest. We especially pray for the teachers as they plan for what September will look like as they enter another school year. We ask that any concerns that teachers, pupils and parents have about the return of physical attendance at school will be minimal.

For those in authority and leadership both locally and throughout the world. We pray for wisdom and understanding that they will lead with integrity and work for justice, morality and freedom.

We pray for the lost, the hurting, the lonely, the sick, the bereaved, and those who are imprisoned—behind both visible and invisible walls. Send your comfort, your peace, and your calming presence to those who are without hope. Protect the defenceless and hold them close to your heart. Bind the power of Satan, and strengthen believers everywhere. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father.....

Hymn: Before the world began

Sing/read/proclaim the words of this wonderful hymn

1. Before the world began one Word was there;
grounded in God he was, rooted in care;
by him all things were made;
in him was love displayed;
through him God spoke and said, 'I am for you.'
2. Life found in him its source; death found its end;
light found in him its course, darkness its friend,
for neither death nor doubt
nor darkness can put out
the glow of God, the shout: 'I am for you.'
3. The Word was in the world which from him came;
unrecognized he was, unknown by name;
one with all humankind,
with the unloved aligned,
convincing sight and mind: 'I am for you.'
4. All who received the Word by God were blessed;
sisters and brothers they of earth's fond guest.
So did the Word of Grace
proclaim in time and space
and with a human face, 'I am for you.'

John Bell and Graham Maule (b. 1949, 1958)

A prayer of Blessing

May the weeds that surround us not choke or
weaken us. May we stand, rooted firmly in His
grace. **Amen.**

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