

Morialta UC Worship July 19 2020



Gathering and call to worship

We worship the God who inhabits our world through nature and who also indwells our lives.
To find God, we can look around at the wonders of creation:
but we can also look within ourselves, and into the eyes of others.
To find God, we need only listen to the music of life,
the words of children, the questions of the curious,
the rhythm of a heartbeat.

Let us pray:

As we gather here today, may the Holy Spirit surprise us with grace.

May we experience the presence of the risen Christ among us
as we sing, listen and pray.

Let our ears be open to here the message of God's love
and our eyes be open to the new insights.

We give thanks for stories of grace that carry us into new depths of love.

We give thanks O God of Love

that those who followed Jesus and looked into his face could see your love personified in him.
It is an endless gift of grace to us. Amen.

Acknowledgement of Land

We acknowledge that we worship on land that was home to generations of the Kurna people, the traditional owners this area. We honour them, and the traditional owners of all places where this service goes, for their custodianship of the land, and pay our respects to their elders, past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge and give thanks for all those who have gone before us in our places of worship.

Song: TiS 188 Where wide skies roll down

**Where wide sky rolls down and touches red sand,
where sun turns to gold the grass of the land,
let spinifex, mulga and waterhole tell
their joy in the One who made everything well.**

**Where rain-forest calm meets reef, tide and storm,
where green things grow lush and oceans are warm,
let every sea-creature and tropical bird
exult in the light of the life-giving Word.**

**Where red gum and creek cross hillside and plain,
where cool tree-ferns rise to welcome the rain,
let bushland, farm, mountain-top, all of their days
delight in the Spirit who formed them for praise.**

**Now, people of faith, come gather around
with songs to be shared, for blessings abound!
Australians, whatever your culture or race,
come, lift up your hearts to the Giver of grace.**

Prayers of thanks and confession

Creator, God and giver of life,
You who spoke and all things came to life,
Word that became flesh in Jesus, We praise and worship You in all things.
Enable Your Word to take life among us this day.
Give us voice that we might honour You,
and witness to the transforming life of Jesus, living Word.
Forgive us for cheap and careless words, or deliberately harmful words,
for words of conflict rather than peace, for words of exclusion and words that make enemies, rather than
words that build neighbourhoods and welcome.

Forgive us when our words make others silent, or when we refuse to listen to other words.

Forgive us that we belong to a community which has in so many ways robbed people of their languages,
culture and identity. May we work hard to find ways of peace, justice and hope for all in need.

Hear these, our words to You we pray. Amen

Scripture readings Psalm 139: 1-12, 23-24

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
²You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
³You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
⁴Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
⁵You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
⁷Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
⁹If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
¹⁰even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night,"
¹²even the darkness is not dark to you;

the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.
Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
²⁴ See if there is any wicked^l way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

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.'"

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^l listen!

Song: TiS 693 Come as you are

**'Come as you are:
that's how I want you.
Come as you are;
feel quite at home,
close to my heart,
loved and forgiven.
Come as you are:
why stand alone?**

**'No need to fear,
love sets no limits;
no need to fear,
love never ends;
don't run away
shamed and disheartened,
rest in my love,
trust me again.**

**'I came to call sinners,
not just the righteous;
I came to bring peace,**

**not to condemn.
Each time you fail
to live by my promise,
why do you think
I'd love you the less?**

**'Come as you are:
that's how I love you;
come as you are,
trust me again.
Nothing can change
the love that I bear you;
all will be well,
just come as you are.'**

Sermon

Just the other day I did a clean out of my email in box. It doesn't take long for 100s of emails to collect. I would say about 60% are probably replies of one or two words, like, thanks, got it, will do. 20% is probably junk, spam or photos from people. The remaining 20% are probably important.

Well, thankfully we have a "deleted items" section and to permanently delete something requires a multiple keystroke process. In my attempt at a clean out, after I thought I had carefully selected the emails to delete, I hit the delete button, - gone. Great! One job done.

That afternoon I needed to respond to a matter and guess what – no email. I had deleted an important email without realising it. Fortunately it was still in the deleted items box. But my attempt to do good, to purge the '*evil email weeds*' that were choking my hard drive, I actually deleted some '*good email wheat*'.

This is like the kingdom of Heaven that Jesus is talking about. A crop of wheat and a bunch of weeds and servants seeking permission to go and pull up those weeds. The land owner, whose name was Paul McCartney says no, *let it be, just let it be* - leave it alone, deal with the weeds later lest you might pull up the wheat also.

I reckon this parable of the wheat and the weeds can be subtitled, live and let live, as opposed to James Bond's movie soundtrack, and Paul McCartney's song, live and let die.

When you were young

And your heart was an open book

You used to say live and let live

You know you did

But if this ever changin' world

In which we live in

Makes you give in and cry

Say.... live and let **die**

When you read this parable, it sort of sticks out, its not quite like the others, its not like the good old stories of the prodigal son, the lost sheep and coin all with happy endings. But this one is a bit gruesome, even a bit scary, its rated MA 15+ – words like burn, cut, harvest, furnace, gnashing of teeth.

Well, essentially its about Wheat and weeds growing together and I think it's a good analogy for the church and maybe MORE SO SOCIETY. I see stalks of wheat. Yet I also see weeds, dandelions, thistles, soursofs, 3 corner jacks. I see backstabbing ~~in the churches~~, criticism, over protective relationships, manipulation, power, cliques, jealousy, mistrust. How do the weeds like this get in? We just want to rip them out, but Jesus says live and let live!

The house down the street has put in a new lawn of turf squares, they watered it, it was green during summer when, all our lawns died off. It looked great. One day when walking I noticed in the fresh, lush green lawn – dandelions, weeds! Where did they come from, who put them in this nice new lawn.

What speaks strongly to me from the parable of the wheat and weeds is – let it be! Live and let live!

Remember, this is a parable of the kingdom of Heaven, and if we cant affect what goes on in heaven, then what can we relate this parable to? The church? Maybe Jesus is saying, its not our job to be hacking or weeding. That is not our task, so... live and let live! And let it be!

Yet human nature falls into the temptation to weed. We don't want the poisonous infectious weeds, we want to purge the church, make it holy, to make room for the good wheat to flourish – not chocked by the weedy actions of others. On the surface that seems a good motivation, but Jesus says, hang on! Don't! Don't weed!

He says don't because weeding is not our job. Our job is to be good wheat, not the gardener. Just get on with growing and growing together.

Jesus says don't weed because perhaps you will be mistaken. Some wheat and some weeds do look alike, especially in infancy and given that we are all something of a mixture of both wheat and weed, then the one whose job it is to weed, must be careful.

There is an amazing little thing in this passage that we don't often notice. It's at the start of the farmer's instruction: "Let the wheat and the weeds grow together." It is that word "let" or "permit" or "allow". The same Greek word also means "forgive". This is not just a passive ignoring of the problem, hoping it will go away.

Rather, it's an active naming it and forgiving of it. We are not called to pretend that the wheat and the weeds are no different. That is irresponsible. We are not called to refrain from calling for repentance and change. That is not the gospel

What we are called to refrain from, is attacking what we think might be weeds.

We need to stop thinking we are the 'good seed' and that others are 'weeds'. That is judgment! We might all be wheat, yet we might all be weeds. Our calling is to turn this around and be a church, that by the grace and love of God, lives and let lives. That doesn't mean simply anything goes, or lack of discipline and challenging wrong or hurtful behaviour.

It means, don't treat people as weeds, don't exclude, don't gossip, betray, compare, don't bitch. In other words stop weeding. STOP WEEDING! Every time we criticise, we weed. Every time we back stab or fail to forgive, we weed. Every time we exclude, we weed. Every time we look at skin colour or religious or gender preference, we weed.

It is not a call for us, as the people of God, the church, to start pulling weeds! It is Jesus who says its up to God and God's harvesters to do the work. God might be more patient than we might ever be, and there is always a chance that a weed might turn into a wheat somewhere along the way.

Perhaps the intention of this parable is not to reassure Christians that they are wheat, but to warn each of us that we must make the status of being wheat real in our daily living as followers of Jesus, to act like good seed.

We are to be a church full of wheat and weeds, for it is God's church. We are God's church. We are all and each, here, not because of any goodness of ours, but because of the love of God in Christ Jesus. We are to act like Christ and forgive, serve, and sow seeds of the kingdom. Forgive, love and tolerate! Let our only experience of evil or violence be in suffering it, and not inflicting it.

Boss, you planted good seed didn't you? Where then did the weeds come from? In this parable we might be expecting advice on how to get rid of the problem, but that is not what we get it.

Instead we are told that we had better learn to live with the problem or we might end up becoming the problem. Stop weeding! Live and let live!, Let it be!

Lord, help us to stop weeding.

Lord help me to stop weeding.

Lord forgive us for treating others as weeds.

Lord forgive me for treating others as weeds.

Teach us your ways!

Teach me your ways!

Amen!

Song: TiS 668 touch the earth

**Touch the earth lightly,
use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder,
ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.**

**We who endanger,
who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live,
we who would foster
clouds of disaster,
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!**

**Let there be greening,
birth from the burning,
water that blesses and air that is sweet,
health in God's garden,
hope in God's children,
regeneration that peace will complete.
God of all living,
God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,
teach us, deflect us,
Christ re-connect us,
using us gently and making us one.**

Prayers for others

What a mixed bunch we are, Jesus,
and what a tortoise-shell world we live in;
Light and shadow, grace and judgement, goodness and sin
side by side in each of us;
But our deep longing is that the life-giving, nourishing fruit we bear
may overwhelm whatever weeds may have crept in.

May our capacity for love and friendship
be stronger than our tendency to hatred and divisiveness;

May our search for truth and wisdom
be satisfied more than our quest for denial and self-justification;

May our desire for joy and goodness
be larger than our lust for wealth and power;

May our journey to peace and wholeness
lead us away from the path of war, violence and self-destruction.

Make us those who live Your values and purpose
in a world that too easily chooses cursing over blessing,
wounding over healing,
and destruction over creativity;
so that all creation may finally find its place
in Your harvest of life and love. Amen

Song: Deep in the human heart Hope is our song# 19

**Deep in the human heart
The fires of justice burn;
With visions of a world renewed
Through radical concern.
As Christians we are called
To set the captives free,
To overthrow the evil powers
And end hypocrisy.**

**This is our task today,
To build a world of peace;
A world of justice, freedom, truth,
Where kindness will increase;
A world from hunger freed,
A world where people share,
Where every person is of worth
And no-one lives in fear.**

**Taking the step of faith,
We leave the past behind
And move into the future's world
With open heart and mind.
By grace we work with Christ,
As one community,
To bring new hope and fuller life
To all humanity.**

Benediction and blessing

The blessing and peace of God – Creator, Word, Spirit
Christ's light and love lives in us and is now carried into the world by us
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path – the Bible is not for display but read and engaged with. We are encouraged to open our Bible wherever we are and be nourished by the words and stories within.