



# Sunday Reflection

## 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 19 July 2020

# Pentecost 7

while all Church worship in the buildings is suspended

On this 7th Sunday after Pentecost, and the sixth Sunday after Trinity, our lives and our world may often seem out of kilter with how we feel things should be, and God has words for us to hear on this subject today.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"Let anyone with ears listen!"** Matthew 13:43

### An Illustration to set the scene

Ella Wheeler Wilcox was an American author and poet, whose poem "The Weed" reads as follows:

A weed is but an unloved flower!  
Go dig, and prune, and guide, and wait,  
Until it learns its high estate,  
And glorifies some bower.  
A weed is but an unloved flower!



This might be true, yet most gardeners know that weeds can crowd out the vegetables and flowers that they are trying to nurture and grow. Most know the experience of weeding a cultivated area – whether it be a flowerbed, a vegetable patch or an allotment – only to find that the next moment the weeds appear to have sprung up again, just as strongly as before.

## **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

In last week's Gospel reading we heard the familiar parable of the sower, and this week we are given the parable of the "wheat and weeds", or "tares", as the old version has it. Of course, Jesus isn't giving a talk on agriculture here, and in fact he is most probably speaking to urban dwellers who, while they might have grown a bit of food for themselves, might rely mostly on the wages they earned as day labourers in vineyards or olive groves or on building sites.

Jesus' audience may have laughed to hear about the plight of the landowner who wakes up one morning to find that weeds have been sown among his crops. On the other hand, however, if the crop was spoiled the price of wheat and bread would rise, so the poorest workers and their families would struggle and might well go hungry.

In his explanation, Jesus goes on to talk not of spoiled crops but of patience in the face of finding that weeds have been sown among the wheat. He foresees a time when order will be restored and justice will be done. Sorting out the wheat from the weeds can't be rushed, says Jesus, because that would result in too much damage to the wheat and would incur a huge loss.

## **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

If you are a gardener battling with weeds, and you rush to sort out your vegetable patch or flowerbed using strong weedkiller, or digging with an implement that is too clumsy, you run the risk that everything might end up ruined. There are those things that you can see, such as plants and vegetables, and then there are those that aren't visible to the naked eye, such as the teeming life of the soil, which forms the delicate infrastructure needed to nourish the plants' roots and enable things to grow and flourish.

Our first reading today puts God firmly in the picture at the same time as pointing to our own deep belonging to the whole of creation. This is God's world – including the mess, the weeds and our own foolishness. We are not apart from creation, or above it, but an integral part of it, created to flourish right where we are planted. God doesn't rush in and pull up the weeds, but gardens with patience, encouraging us to know and cherish our part in the whole of creation.

Rushing can't solve the problem for the landowner, the hired hand or the gardener. Rather, it takes careful and thoughtful, prayerful and active, participation to move through our current problems and fears together.

We face big challenges in our world, none more so than the challenge of climate change, when the delicate balance of our ecosystem has been disrupted by years of clumsy husbandry and we are starting to pay the price. Yet God's promise is to be there as we do the slow and careful work of restoration. The promise that God will hold our hand as we work at it can be enough to give us the courage we need.

**“Let anyone with ears listen!”** Matthew 13:43

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God's spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**