

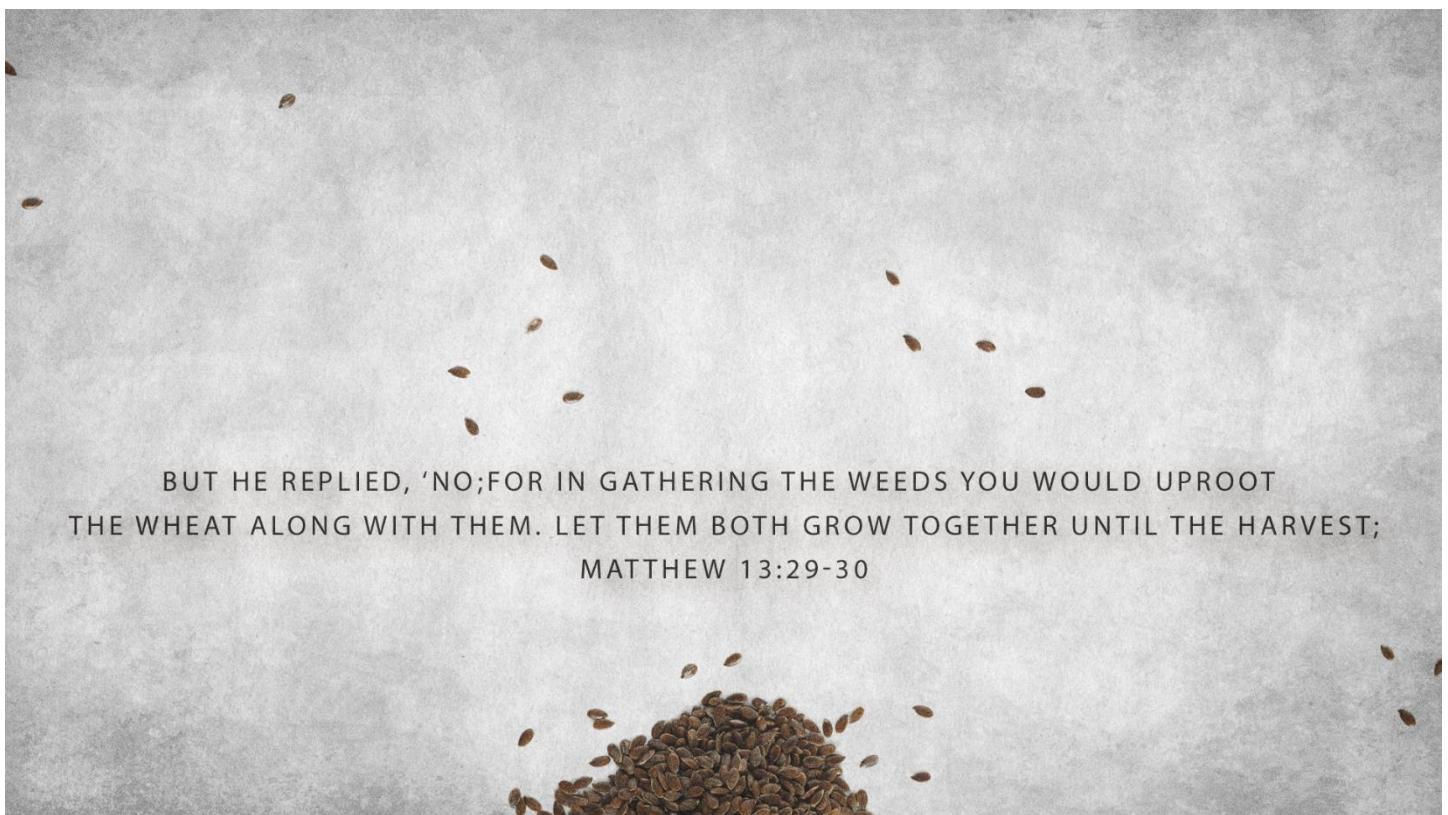


HOPPERS CROSSING UNITING CHURCH

Loving God, neighbour and self
with heart, mind, soul and strength.

**Worship at Home
19th July 2020**

7th Sunday after Pentecost



BUT HE REPLIED, 'NO;FOR IN GATHERING THE WEEDS YOU WOULD UPROOT
THE WHEAT ALONG WITH THEM. LET THEM BOTH GROW TOGETHER UNTIL THE HARVEST;

MATTHEW 13:29-30



A candle, symbolising Christ's presence, is lit.

We Gather

Here I am to Worship <https://youtu.be/FaUTv1pXRyU>

CALL TO WORSHIP

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
the love of God and the fellowship
of the Holy Spirit be with you.

And also with you.

The Creator has planted seeds in all of us.

May we nurture good deeds and loving-kindness.

Jesus is calling us to bear spiritual fruit.

May we bless and build up others for the reign of God.

The Holy Spirit moves in us, encouraging us to grow.

**May we be nurtured, may we be blessed
and may we grow in this time of worship.**

Let us worship God.

O Praise The Name <https://youtu.be/LqBpifDpNKc>

This is Amazing Grace <https://youtu.be/zPQKj2Zptr0>

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND INVOCATION

Lord God, you know me through and through;

you know my sitting down, and my getting up.

You sense what I am thinking from far away;

you understand my journeying and my resting.

In fact, you are familiar with the way I do everything;

even before I speak, you know what's on my mind.

You are in my past, and in my future,

you surround me with your love

and your reassuring hand is upon me.

This wonderful knowledge is beyond my understanding;

it surpasses everything, and is beyond my grasp.

For the stories we share, for our life together,

and for the breath of your Spirit among us,

we thank you, Holy and blessed Trinity. Amen

PSALMS 139:1-6

MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43

The Parable of the Good Seed and the Weeds

²⁴He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷And 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?’ ²⁸He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let 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.’”

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

In faith let us approach God who is gracious, merciful, and full of compassion for us as we confess our sin. Let us pray together:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, you plant each of us like seeds in the same field and together we are nourished and nurtured by the sun. We sway in the wind and are refreshed by the rain. We are blessed by the knowledge that you want us to grow towards whatever you call us to be.

When we deprive others of that same opportunity,

forgive us.

When we want to uproot those whom we believe do not belong in our part of the field,

forgive us.

When we label others as good or bad rather than accept them for who they are,

forgive us.

When we are reluctant to acknowledge that we ourselves are a mixture of weeds and wheat,

forgive us.

When we are afraid to look, into the fields of our own lives to see what is growing there,

forgive us.

Loving God, you know us inside and out, through and through.

You search us out and lay your hand upon us.

You know what we are going to say even before we speak.

So we pray that you will help us to reach out to the uprooted and rejected, the lonely and the outcast, and to develop and grow the good in ourselves in others and in the world. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God to whom we have been reconciled by Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-18

Rejoice then, for in Jesus Christ
we are known
accepted and loved and forgiven
Thanks be to God!

Forever https://youtu.be/gUH_NzfRmbs

PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you **and also with you.**

ROMANS 8:12-25

God's Spirit beckons.

12-14 So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go!

15-17 This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him!

18-21 That's why I don't think there's any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly **wait** for

what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.

22-25 All around us we observe a pregnant creation. The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it's not only around us; it's *within* us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We're also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why **waiting** does not diminish us, any more than **waiting** diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the **waiting**. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we **wait**, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy.

THE FIRST WORD Waiting

We Listen

Your word O Lord is a lamp to our feet. **A light to our path.**

GENESIS 28:10-19a

Jacob's ladder, a Dream on his Journey to Find a Wife,

¹⁰Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. ¹²And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; ¹⁴and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. ¹⁵Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." ¹⁶Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!" ¹⁷And he was afraid, and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." ¹⁸So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. ¹⁹He called that place Bethel;

Lord may your word live in us **and bear much fruit to your glory.**

HOMILY

But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest;

MATTHEW 13:29-30

Title: Seeds, Weeds & Uncertainty

Jacob was a man who did somewhat foolish things. For instance, when his brother Esau was hungry, he made Esau trade his birthright for the stew he had cooked. Jacob then goes on to deceive his blind father Isaac to bless him, with the blessing that was Esau's as the firstborn son. And now in today's text from Genesis we find him on the run from Esau's fury. He is many miles from home, in a new and strange place and then puts his head on a rock and falls asleep. And he dreams.

And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood beside him and said, “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

Genesis 28:12-15

Despite his foolish ways and choices God visits Jacob. And God blesses Jacob! What is God up to?

The story is a good way of reading the Parable of the weeds among the wheat in Matthew's gospel.

To our ears the sower does something which may seem foolish. Let's listen to Matthews telling of the parable:

He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So, when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 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?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together (13:24-30a)

It would seem foolish to leave the weed to grow with the wheat for one thing; they draw all the nourishment and moisture away from the wheat.

Think about that and permit me to digress and briefly say some words about choices, decisions, and uncertainty.

Daily, we are bombarded with having to make choices and decisions. Yet, as Jacobs story and the parable of the weeds amongst the wheat shows us making the right choices and decisions are not necessarily easy. And depending on the situation that is at hand, often times, there will be moments we may need to make decisions with some uncertainty of how things will end up. A story to illustrate a man named Fred was a passenger on a plane making its way to Melbourne from South America. As the plane was flying over the Andes, one of the engines fell off. Our man Fred didn't have a positive view of himself and considered himself unlucky for others to be around him, so he made his way up to the captain and said, "I'm a jinx, I'm unlucky. I'm a jinx on this plane. Let me out if you want to save your lives. Give me a parachute." The pilot agreed, but added, "On this plane, anybody who bails out must wear two chutes." So, Fred jumped out of the plane, and as he fell through the air, he tried to make up his mind which ripcord to pull. Finally, he chose the one on the left. It was rusty and the wire pulled loose. So, he then pulled the other handle. This chute opened, but its shroud lines snapped. In desperation, the poor fellow cried out, "St. Francis save me!" Suddenly a great hand from heaven reached down and seized poor Fred by the wrist and let him dangle in mid-air. Then a gentle but questioning voice asked, "St. Francis Xavier or St. Francis of Assisi?"

We all come with our own perspectives of the parable about the wheat (good) and weed (evil). I wonder if also it could be about the uncertainties, the lack of clarity, the ambiguities of life in the decisions we encounter?

Yes, the sower planted with good seeds. Yes, there are now weeds strewn among the wheat that puts the ideal harvest the sower had imagined at risk. It would seem unwise to leave the weed to grow with the wheat for one thing; they draw all the nourishment and moisture away from the wheat.

Ideally, the servants could just rip out the weeds, but the sower knows that to tear out the weeds now risks ruining the maturing wheat as well. And so, the sower must wait, living with both the wheat and the weeds until the day of harvest when they may be separated in due time.

How often do we not also face similar dilemmas of uncertainty? If not with wheat and weeds, then with a multitude of others:

- working the graveyard shift because the money is very good or choosing work hours that pay less money however you get to spend more time with the family;
- or between supporting someone who consistently struggles at work and pulls your team down or having to let go of that person;
- or between choosing the best school your child has been accepted into or one that is more affordable;

- or between two different treatment options in responding to a grave illness;
- or succumbing to fears of 'the other' 'the stranger' in our midst, living amongst us in our neighbourhoods and communities, even membership of our churches or accepting 'the other' 'the stranger' is just like you and me seeking a place of peace and safety?
- or between giving into peer pressure because it just plain sucks to be left out or choosing to stick to your values and convictions and risk isolation.

This time of COVID 19 is another example. For instance, its impact on the economy, employment, education, family and just life in general, the impacts of shutdowns produce so much fear and uncertainty of the future. The so-called new norm belies the inherent uncertainties in which we must wrestle with questions and decisions for both the long term as well as the short term. Some we will linger on for a while and others may require us to do so promptly as our friend Fred shows us.

Friends, our lives are littered with situations where there are no clear or easy answers. But I hear in this parable Jesus' promise that in challenging situations and times, such as these times of uncertainty we have the promise that, in the end, the grace of God is ever present to help us. Which does not necessarily mean everything will turn out just fine. Sometimes we don't choose well. Sometimes things go wrong. The promise here isn't that Christian faith prevents hardship; the promise is that we are not justified by our right choices but rather by grace through faith. And knowing we have God's unconditional regard, despite our poor choices, frees us to live in the moment.

The truth is that we do not live in an ideal world and each day we're faced with a myriad of uncertainties and challenging decisions, some small and others large, to which there is no clear answer. Some decisions we will get right, others wrong, and still others we won't know whether we were right or wrong for months or years to come. As our friend Fred shows we will not be free from them.

Which is why having the Prayers of Confession and the Assurance of Forgiveness included in the liturgy or the service are important. For they remind us each time we gather to worship, that God loves us anyway and promises that, in the end, God will hold all of our uncertainties, all of our choices and our lives together in love.

Prayer

Lord in these times of uncertainty help us to stay close to you. In the midst of the many challenges, the many questions and the difficult decisions may our eyes and ears, hearts and minds ever remain vigilant and focused on you the author and perfecter of our faith. Truly lord your steadfast love is constant and never falters. For this we can be certain and eternally thankful. Thankyou Lord.

Amen.

We Respond

Jerusalem <https://youtu.be/wX4ZCHRksBA>

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God,
you have promised that there is no place on earth beyond your presence:
hear our prayers for the world and its people.
We pray for all who live in places of war and oppression
for prisoners of conscience and for refugees
for the leaders of nations and all who make and administer laws.
Search out our hearts and lead us in your way
that we may work for an end to war and injustice.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have promised to make us your adopted sons and daughters:
hear our prayers for your church.
We pray for all will be baptised or confirmed
for all who suffer persecution for their faith and for those whose faith is weak
for pastors and teachers and all who lead your people.
We pray for the Church council and Elders and Convenors of groups as they
faithfully carry out their roles.
Search out our hearts and lead us in your way
that by our lives we may proclaim your good news to the world.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are hungry or homeless, the marginalised and unwanted
for those with too little work or too little reward for their labour
for all who contribute to the well-being of this community.

Search out our hearts and lead us in your way
that we may live in love for you and for each other.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have promised to be with us even in the darkest parts of life:
hear our prayers for all who are in pain, sorrow, or hardship.

We pray for those who do not know the joy of companionship and love
for those whose minds are anxious and whose hearts are sad
for the sick and the dying and for all who care for them.

Grant patience and courage to the families and friends of those who are ill in
this pandemic. Strengthen their resilience as they face challenges. We pray
especially for those who feel traumatised by being locked in their homes and
guarded by police.

Search out our hearts and lead us in your way
that we may respond with generosity to the needs of others.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Scandalous God,
sowing weeds among the crops, we pray your kingdom come,
despite everything that seems to fight against it;
a kingdom in which the first are last and the last first,
in which everything that frustrates your purpose and denies your love is
defeated,
and in which all people live together in justice and harmony.

Through Jesus the stumbling block who taught his disciples to pray saying:

And in the languages of the nations, we pray as Jesus taught...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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.

**Save us in the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

You are invited to contribute financially to support the ministry and mission of the Hoppers Crossing congregation using the following details:

Bank Transfer

BSB: 013-915

Account Number: 354 439 707

Account Name: Hoppers Crossing
Uniting Church

Reference: 'Your SURNAME'

Credit Card

www.HoppersUniting.church/offering

Please take your weekly offering or a symbol of your offering in your cupped hands as we dedicate it and ourselves, giving thanks for all God's blessings and mercy. Let us pray:

Gracious God,
Lord of the harvest
we bring you these gifts
not to settle a debt or buy your favour
but as an expression of our love,
a token of our gratitude,
an outpouring of our worship
and a symbol of our commitment.
Use them, and use us
as we dedicate ourselves to spread the seeds of your life
wherever we go, and through whatever we do

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Our God Saves <https://youtu.be/kUOgVI0KuFI>

We are Sent

BENEDICTION

As you have received the seeds of faith and hope;
Go into God's world with joy,
telling of the good news of God's abundant,
lavish love for all creation,
scattering the seeds of reconciliation and peace,

And the blessing of God,
the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with you now and always.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

One Way Jesus <https://youtu.be/A7IQvg6VSNI>

The service is ended.

Acknowledgments

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