

Greetings members and friends of First Congregational Church of Shelburne,

This week's Worship Resource is attached and can also be found on our web page, shelburnechurch.org. This service offers the Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat for your reflection. This week there is no YouTube video. Look for our next worship video for Sunday July 26.

God be with you as we unite in praise, in ministry and in worship even from a distance.

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Sunday Worship July 19, 2020

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

This week's Worship Resource reflects on the Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat. This parable explores who God is and How God acts. It also offers the opportunity to consider who we are and how we live our lives. This week there is not a video offering. Our next Sunday morning video will be for July 26.

Prayer Requests: We are accepting requests for prayer (healing, comfort, thanksgiving and others). Please send your requests to the Pastor at pastor01089@gmail.com. Requests will then be sent out through our email list to the congregation for our common prayer life during the week. PLEASE remember that all prayer requests received become public knowledge. If you are uncertain if your request for another might be confidential, do not send it.

And now let us be in worship

Morning Prayer & Lord's Prayer

Almighty and Everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order and created the infinite complexities of living creatures. You provide us with food in its season and feed us in both body and soul. Grant that as followers of Christ, we may seek to nourish and nurture all whom we welcome into our midst. This we ask in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray saying...*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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Prayers of the People

Our prayers this morning are about God's love and our call to reflect that love. You may wish to add your own prayers for healing, prayers of thanksgiving, prayers for comfort and others during our time of meditation.

God of Joyful Love, Lord of unconditional joyful love, Holy One of Love divine and Love excelling, in you, we discover a love that never ends, never dies, never retreats and always folds us into your tender mercies that regardless of the slings and arrows of the outrageous fortunes of

this our unpredictable, exceptional, confusion of this our life we may be lifted up. Even when we come away from the storms of life, wet and bedraggled, barely able to walk or even to breathe, your joyful, unconditional, healing love may bring us strength and set us once again upon our intended journey. And when our time in this world draws to a close, when life's little day ebbs out, your unconditional, compassionate love may bring us the quiet peace of coming home.

God of Joyful, Unconditional, healing and compassionate Love, in us your love finds a welcome home. Grant that your mountain of love may be reflected in the blush of romance, the abiding love of spouses, the deep love for our children and our parents, the love we share for our friends and all those with whom we are close to. In us, loving God, may your broad, expansive love take hold of us. That we may love our neighbors, whoever they may be, and wherever they may dwell. May helping to meet their needs and tend to their welfare be the desire of our hearts borne of the love you have for all your people. In us, loving God, creator of heaven and earth, who has entrusted us with the stewardship of your creation, may we live to bring life to our environment, not because it will ultimately benefit us, but because this is your world, and to our listening ears, all nature sings, and around us rings your music of the spheres. God of joyful, unconditional, healing, compassionate and creative love, Holy One of Love divine and Love excelling, in our gratitude, may we always be beacons of your love for all your people and all you have created, and in our love for others, hear now these prayers.....

God of Love, let us walk with you and hear your clear winning word of love that our way in this world will be one of joyful, unconditional, healing, compassionate and creative love. For the sake of Christ. Amen

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:24-30

Today's Gospel lesson takes place beside the Sea of Galilee. Jesus has gone to sit by the sea, but the crowds that follow him were so large that he commandeers a boat as a makeshift pulpit, speaking to the people as they sit on the beach. Jesus often taught in parables and today's text tells the story of the Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat.

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 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.'"

After the reading, you may reflect on this passage and share your thoughts.

There is a set of notes concerning this text for your reflection.

Benediction:

Salvation is of the Lord,
Salvation is of the Lord,
Salvation is of Christ
May your salvation, O Lord,
be ever with us.

Patrick of Ireland

Notes on the text

Is a parable a metaphor or an allegory? Every time I work with a parable from the Gospels, that question is asked. Every time that question is asked, I scratch my head, and I prayerfully consider the inquiry until at last I can bear it no longer and my hand goes to the one book that will silence that relentless, nagging, primal voice that threatens to reduce me to Basic English 101. I open my dictionary and thumb my way to the middle of the a's as the question comes fully to light. So, what exactly is an allegory and what exactly is a metaphor? I am sure that there are many who that can answer that question as easily as reciting the Lord's Prayer. There are others, like me, that while we once learned it, we've misplaced that piece of information and ever since have nodded our heads when the terms are used. Well, you know Rob, metaphorically speaking, this reminds me of the story of the tortoise and the hare. Yep, I know exactly what you mean. So, today, as we seek to come to grips with the parable of the weeds and the wheat, let us remember this: A metaphor makes a single point by way of comparison. Metaphors may include many details. But many of these are incidental to the story. They make the comparison vivid, the story engaging, but they are not the point in themselves and are not intended to contribute to the point being made. Parables are said to be extended metaphors. They have one point. They are not allegories, where everything means something else, and every detail stands for something else. Today's story is a case in point. If we go down the allegorical road, then every detail about the story must mean something. For example: since the weeds and the wheat grow together, and in the end, the weeds are destroyed and the wheat is brought into the barn, what does that say about predestination? If weeds = bad folk and wheat = good folk, then from the get go weeds stay weeds and wheat stays wheat. One does not change into the other. So, the weed who thinks it does not want to be a weed cannot change and is doomed from the beginning. And the wheat, who knows the nature of its character, will be brought into God's barn regardless. So, what has happened to transformational power of the Gospel where every repented sinner is forgiven? What about the slaves? Who are they, what do they represent? Allegorically, they might be angels, are angels God's slaves? Might they be us? Those who work for the Lord? Are we slaves? And who is the master and the master's enemy? Is it God and the devil? Does that mean God cannot stop the devil from sowing weeds among the wheat? That God cannot transform the devil's weeds into wheat? Does this not limit God's power, especially since neither the weeds nor the wheat have freedom of choice in this matter? We could do this for some time, parables have always been a battle ground for those who read them as allegories and then extrapolate exclusive, inflexible doctrine from them. But if we decide to see the parable as an extended metaphor, one point, then the thorny issues of the allegorical method fade away as we focus on the one point and what that means for us today, as

Christians living in our society, our culture, our community of faith. One author began his deliberations this way: “the salient point of this story is patience in awaiting god’s judgment and justice. Both the wheat and the weeds must be permitted to grow together until the harvest. To get ahead of God’s timing only risks uprooting the wheat along with the weeds.” The parable, as metaphor, informs us about who God is and how God acts. It also serves as a guide to who we are and how we might act. If God is the patient creator who brings justice, then we, who are not the God of creation, need to be careful when we label people as weeds or wheat for that matter. Lastly, if we look at this parable where might we see ourselves?