

The Rectory  
Rectory Close  
Radyr CF15 8EW  
[vicki.burrows@me.com](mailto:vicki.burrows@me.com)  
Tel 029 20842417 or 07515 965781

Dear Friends,

***One man went to mow, went to mow a meadow***  
*The parable of the weeds of the field (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)*

In 1986, two years after we married, Billy and I moved from Norwich to live on a new estate in Great Bookham in Surrey. It was there that we met two of our closest friends who, like us, were expecting their first child. Whilst Louise, Charles, Billy and I loved our brand new homes, none of us were keen gardeners. We could not understand the passion with which another neighbour cared for his grass. This is probably not the place to tell you the nickname he was awarded by our friends... Our neighbour spent hours tending his grass and fussing if the smallest daisy or dandelion appeared. We had small fields filled with these wild flowers that we called our gardens whilst he had a little bowling green. He worried incessantly about the threat to his perfect lawn whilst we sat and made daisy chains with our tots, barbecued noisily in our gardens and wondered if he ever had time for fun.

Jesus takes images of the world around us and tells some unforgettable stories. Last week we heard the Parable of the Sower and this Sunday we hear about The Parable of Weeds. The gospel writers regularly speak about "The Kingdom of God" or that place where God's will is done and all may flourish, but Matthew alone in his gospel speaks about "the kingdom of heaven". The kingdom he says begins here and now not in some faraway place one day. Matthew alone tells the parable of the weeds saying that,

*"the kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat".*

This week the kingdom is not compared to a man sowing or to the good seed that is sown but to a field filled with wheat and weeds. The Greek word *zizania*, translated as weeds in our story, is sometimes translated as "tares" or "darnel" for keen gardeners – that's *Lolium temulentum* (a weed that looks like wheat when it grows but can only be easily identified when it is ripe). This weed must be removed before milling the wheat or the flour will be ruined. However, when "the slaves of the householder" in the story suggest they pull up these weeds, they are told to leave the good and the bad plants to grow side by side until the reapers come to harvest and separate them.

Many of us clergy love this reading for we are none of us perfect. Anglican clergy also cherish the 26<sup>th</sup> Article of the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion for it speaks "*of the Unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the sacrament*". Yet how strange that we who know we are far from perfect are so good at judging others.

Many evenings in these past few months I have walked along the River Taff and watched with wonder God's hand in creation as buds and trees have unfurled besides the flowing river. I have also felt a moral rage and indignation at the garbage that has emerged from the river bed onto banks and grassy paths. Draped on trees and grass since the river subsided, after the floods some months ago, are bits of clothing, blankets, shopping trolleys, scooters, prams, car parts and rusty bits of God alone knows what. The fish are consuming parts of plastic bottles, human trash and countless





items that could have been reused or recycled. And then there's another problem; crowds of youngsters having picnics beside the river and on our lovely cricket ground, peeing behind trees and leaving behind them bottles, tins, food wrappers and condom wrappers. And have you seen those little gas canisters beside the river in the long grass and on the footpaths? Billy saw one and thought it was for pumping up bike tyres!! "Yeah, really?!" I said. These canisters contain nitrous oxide (laughing gas) used by doctors and dentists for our pain relief, by cooks for propelling aerosols

and whipping cream, and by our youngsters for getting high. These little brass canisters are cheap, readily available on line or in shops and the kids call them "happy crack". It is illegal to sell this gas for 'psychoactive' purposes but Radyr youngsters are buying them and who knows or cares?

Today, I feel like a man who told me about some girl's knickers found on the soft matting in the bowling nets of our cricket club. He wondered whether they should be photographed for The Radyr Chain just in case a young lady or her mother might like to reclaim them! Oh dear, it's so easy to lose patience and judge. Am I the only one who got up to all sorts of things that my parents knew nothing about when I was a teenager?... and even now there are things I'd rather not tell you about.

Perhaps I'd better stop telling stories or there will be nothing left to say about The Parable Of The Weeds of the Field when I stand up for the first time in many months to preach in front of a congregation ...but, suffice it to say, The Kingdom Heaven according to Matthew's Jesus is not a place where only the good seed grows but where the weeds grow so intertwined with the wheat that you cannot tell the difference.

I'm really looking forward to seeing you in church again and I want to take this opportunity to reassure you that a group of us have spent hours preparing our buildings and completing risk assessments to ensure you will be safe and socially distanced at our four services of Holy Communion this Sunday. If you plan to attend, please help us by arriving a little earlier than usual to give you time to hand sanitise, leave contact details (so we can track and trace if necessary), provide you with an order of service and be seated by one of our welcome team who will ensure you are distanced by at least 2 metres. All our services will be similar in length and, because we cannot sing, also slightly shorter than usual. Holy Communion will be received in one kind only (no wine) and you will receive where you are seated to avoid movement and contact along narrow aisles. Of course we cannot share the peace or pass the offertory plate in the normal way so do please make a gift as you arrive or leave ...the digital (contactless) plate will be by the door for card or cash donations and please be generous if you can as our income has plummeted over the last few months.

Tomorrow we will gather, feeling a whole host of emotions. There will be joy and gratitude that we are together again, sadness for friends and family who have died, lament for our vulnerable friends and family who are sick or shielding, and maybe fear for what the future holds. Come expecting not just smiles and laughter but tears and sadness too. We shall gather in the presence of God who in his Christ wept with the broken hearted, brought healing to the sick, forgiveness to the sinner, comfort to the dying, welcome to the little children, patience for the weeds and hope to all with whom he shared a meal. For all who can join us there will be a welcome and a place at God's table and for those who cannot be with us we will hold you in our prayers knowing that you are just as much in God's presence for there is no place beyond God's love and mercy.

**With my love and prayers,**

**Vicki**

**X**