



### Introduction

*It is an age-old question: why is there evil in the world? In the parable of the wheat and the weeds Jesus suggests that both grow together until the harvest. With Paul, we long for the day that all creation will be set free from bondage and suffering. Having both weeds and wheat within us, we humbly place our hope in the promises of God, and we go forth to bear the fruit of justice and mercy.*

### Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity one God, Father, ✚ Son, and Holy Spirit,  
whose steadfast love is everlasting,  
whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Reconciling God,

**we confess that we do not trust your abundance,  
and we deny your presence in our lives.**

**We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts.**

**We fail to believe that you provide enough for all.**

**We abuse your good creation for our own benefit.**

**We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us.**

**We sin in thought, word, and deed.**

**By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us;  
and in your Spirit, lead us;**

**so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.**

Beloved of God,

by the radical abundance of divine mercy

we have peace with God through ✚ Christ Jesus,

- through whom we have obtained grace upon grace.

Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope.

For hope does not disappoint,

because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

### Gathering Hymn

*When Morning Gilds the Skies*

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## **Prayer of the Day**

Faithful God, most merciful judge, you care for your children with firmness and compassion. By your Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## **Psalmody: Psalm 86:11-17**

<sup>11</sup>Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth;  
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

<sup>12</sup>**I will thank you, O Lord my God, with all my heart,  
and glorify your name forevermore.**

<sup>13</sup>For great is your love toward me;  
you have delivered me from the pit of death.

<sup>14</sup>**The arrogant rise up against me, O God,  
and a band of violent people seeks my life;  
they have not set you before their eyes.**

<sup>15</sup>But you, O Lord, are gracious and full of compassion,  
slow to anger, and full of kindness and truth.

<sup>16</sup>**Turn to me and have mercy on me;  
give your strength to your servant,  
and save the child of your handmaid.**

<sup>17</sup>Show me a sign of your favor,  
so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame;  
because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

## **Second Reading: Romans 8:12-25**

*For Paul, true spirituality means that we experience the reality of the Spirit, which enables us to pray as God's children, keeps us in solidarity with creation, and gives us unseen hope that God will liberate us and creation from bondage to death and decay.*

*Read the text [here](#).*

## **Gospel: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

*Jesus tells a parable about the coexistence of good and evil in this world. God's judgment will remove all evildoers and causes of sin, but not until the end of human history.*

*Read the text [here](#).*

## Reflection on the Text

Back in May, the Festival of Homiletics went virtual. The Festival of Homiletics is an event where bible scholars, pastors, and theologians discuss best practices in preaching today. Some sessions are your typical Sunday morning preaching on a text, some sessions are more like class with a PowerPoint presentation to view as the person teaches and preaches. This year's theme was on creation. I thought that was a fun coincidence since I did my internship project on stewardship, including stewardship of creation.

Dr. Joy J. Moore, an associate professor of Biblical Preaching at Luther Seminary, preached on Romans 8:18-22. One of her first comments was a reaction to verse 18. She read it: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us." She immediately put herself in the text and sarcastically said, "*Really? We are in a pandemic... Well, what good news.*"

She went on to remind listeners that the book of Romans is a letter to specific people in reaction to specific questions and issues. A big question in Romans is, "How can one be Christian in a pagan society?" She reminded listeners that, "Our faithful God promised blessing for all people and that God would bring healing to the land." The Roman pagan society had a rule system that was created to disenfranchise.

She said that a core question surrounding this ancient city and current American cities is, "Does the city provide for *all* within its walls? She also wondered aloud, "Is the pandemic a reaction to the abused climate?" She claimed that righteousness is concerned with who works the land, who profits from the land, and who gets the best fruits and produce from the land.

She said that, "Creation is groaning in this time of inequality and pandemic. Paul calls for interdependence between society and creation. Creation waits with eager longing for a change." Dr. Moore looks with eager longing to the day when the prophet Isaiah's future house of God comes to fruition, where it is said...

"In days to come  
the mountain of the LORD's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be raised above the hills;  
all the nations shall stream to it.  
Many peoples shall come and say,  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths."  
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war any more.”(Isaiah 2:2-4)

In this future house of God, in this future hope, is also when God ushers in the new Heaven and the new Earth and where in Revelation we hear:

“See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;  
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:3-4)

Dr. Moore claimed that faith is holding on to God’s promises and moving toward them even when it looks impossible. We can look forward into that future hope of reconciliation and the restoration of people and creation that we have been promised. She said, “Hope harbors what is to be. Now is not what we get later. God loves the **world**, and we have a restored heaven and earth to look forward to.” What we see now is not what we will get later. We grieve, yes, but not like others, because we grieve with **hope**.

We have a lot to grieve right now. We grieve injustice, oppression, death, illness, loss of freedoms that are necessary to protect others, lost jobs, lost purpose, lost happy dispositions, but *God has this*. God holds all things in God’s power. The long-term game plan has always been global. **All** creation, air, water, sky, land, animals, and humanity will be restored.

Dr. Moore closed by saying, “God doesn’t give up on peace. Breathe in the restoring and sustaining breath of God.” And as we breathe, we hope. It is our hope that gives us life and strength to go on. God’s promises are better than any circumstance that we may find ourselves in. As we wait for the glory of God, may we actively wait by doing good, seeking justice, and setting captives free. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**Hymn of the Day**

***My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## **Apostles' Creed**

*We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:*

**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 again 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 Intercession**

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

God of the harvest, you sow the good seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ into your field. Help your church throughout the world to be both diligent and patient, full of resolve and gentleness, that our witness may be faithful to your intentions. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all space and time, your whole creation groans in labor pains, awaiting the gift of new birth. Renew the earth, sky, and sea, so that all your creation experiences freedom from the bondage of decay. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the nations, teach us your ways, that we may walk in your truth. Mend the fabric of the human family, now torn apart by our fearful and warring ways. Guide us by your mercy, grace, and steadfast love. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of hope, you accompany those who suffer and are near to the brokenhearted. Open our hearts to your children who are lonely and abandoned, who feel trapped by despair, and all who suffer in any way (*especially those we name now or silently in our hearts*). Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the seasons, in the midst of summer, give us refreshment, renewal, and new opportunities. We pray for the safety of those who travel. We pray for those who cannot take the rest they need. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of life, those who have died in you shine like the sun in your endless kingdom. We remember with thanksgiving the saints of all times and places and saints close to us. Gather us with them on the day of salvation. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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 trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Closing Hymn**

***Come Ye Thankful People, Come***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

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Today's reflection was written by Vicar Natalie Cook.