

## Sermon and Service of the Word Pentecost 7

July 19, 2020

### Call to Worship

L: The Lord knows each and every one of us and loves each one dearly.

**P: Sometimes it feels as though God has drifted away from us.**

L: Be strong! Look for the ways in which God is present to you.

P: Given all the troubles of the day, we often look more closely at them.

L: Come, open your hearts and spirits to God's love and presence

**P: Lord, help us to see your presence in all of life's circumstances. AMEN.**

### Opening Prayer

God of Jacob, who rested his head on a stone pillow and saw visions of your angels, be with us this day. Give us a vision of your presence in the midst of our strife. Give us courage and confidence that you are with us, calling us to be your loving people in the world. For we ask these things in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Song: "King of kings, Majesty"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5VutCGsVXE&list=FLhH3K7BX0MtSgANwiHYjNoQ&index=2&t=0s>

### Prayer of Confession

Patient Lord, it is so easy for us to focus on all the things that are wrong. We spend much time and energy in anger and sorrow, leaving behind the possibilities of hope and service to you. Ease our hearts, O Lord. Forgive our willingness to get caught up in the negative. Direct our steps toward positive actions that will produce growth and peace. We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

## Words of Assurance

God's seeds of love have already been sown in your midst. Come and see the love of God outpoured for you. You are God's beloved ones. Come, live in the light of God. AMEN.

## Readings

Isaiah 44:6–8

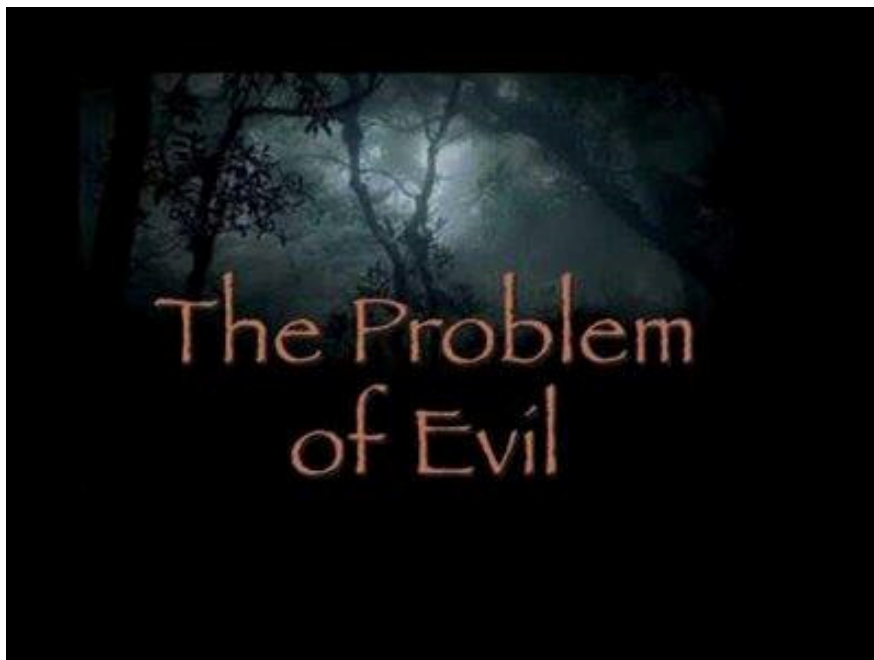
Psalm 86:11–17

Romans 8:12–25

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

Song: "Lord Reign in Me."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ro9U3fJDrQQ>



## Sermon Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

If you turn on the 6pm news you will soon come to the conclusion that our world is filled with all kinds of evil and suffering. The stories of grief, loss and

**pain while perhaps over-exposed by our media, demonstrate a massive problem that infects every aspect of life on this planet.**

**Just like the weeds which had been sown into the field in today's gospel reading, evil has sunk its roots deep into the world. If we are not careful it will fuel the flames of greed, violence and hatred in our own lives as well. Perhaps you have already been a victim of its insidious creep.**

**Why does God allow evil to persist in the world? I am sure we have all contemplated that question at one time or another. It is a question we might ask as we watch the lives of those around us ripped apart by anger, violence, addiction, poverty, oppression and death. The reality is, we live in a world where God's arch-enemy the devil continues to sow weeds in our world, causing untold distress and anguish.**

**Friends you and I know that Satan is real and he desires nothing more than to create chaos in God's creation. His aim is to sow the seeds of evil whenever and wherever he can, hoping to turn us against each other and ultimately against God.**

**So if evil is so destructive why does God allow it to persist? I must confess that - like you - I have no definitive answer to that question. I think that is a question that will elude us until we meet Jesus face to face. And maybe then - in his glorious presence - we won't need an answer because it will become perfectly clear to us.**

**If you will reflect on the other readings for today you will notice that each text makes mention of suffering in some form or other. Consider if you will what the Lord says to the exiles in the Isaiah 44 passage. More to the point consider how God identifies himself. His names become a message of comfort for those in the midst of suffering not unlike the promises he makes to the overcomers in the 7 churches in the book of the Revelation.**

**In Isaiah he calls himself Lord. That's the English translation in the Old Testament for God's name (Yahweh). That's how God identified himself to Moses in the desert when he commissioned Moses to lead the people out of Egypt. He is the God who delivers, and what's more he tells the exiles that**

he is the only God and that there is no other god. Therefore no one and nothing can withstand his purposes.

Then he calls himself “King of Israel”. He reminds the exiles that although the kings that ruled them before the exile are no more, He their true King is still on the throne as their source of enduring hope.

Next he calls himself “Redeemer”. That would have been especially meaningful for the exiles because it meant that God would rescue his people out of their trouble.

Then he calls himself the “Lord of Heaven’s Armies”. Such an army could never be anything else but victorious.

He calls himself “the first and the last”. He is the only reliable eternal source of help. His kingdom will last forever.

Final he is the “Rock” a solid durable foundation for all who put their trust in Him.

Today’s text from Romans indicates that those who follow Jesus are bound to feel the hatred of all that hates God. If you read carefully the message to the seven churches of Revelation you will see that Christians are bound to suffer for their faith in Jesus. But notice what Jesus says to those who remain faithful even in the face of suffering. He makes seven incredible promises. Let’s list them:

- a) To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.
- b) Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death.
- c) To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.
- d) To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, To them I will give authority over all the nations. They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!

- e) All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine.
- f) All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name.
- g) Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

I don't know the reason God allows evil to exist at this present time (however the bible tells us that a time will come when he will put an end to all evil) but I do know that our God is not a God who sits in some ivory place unconcerned by the struggles his children face. God got down into the muck and mire of sin when Jesus was born into our world. Jesus knew suffering and in his suffering he began the process that will eventually lead to the total defeat of all evil and suffering. The battle is still ongoing.

*Listen to what St Paul says in Romans 8:1-23, 18 "Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. 20 Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse. But with eager hope, 21 the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. 22 For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children,[f] including the new bodies he has promised us."*

As humans we struggle with waiting. We want things to happen now. God asks us to trust him and believe that in his perfect time he will deal with evil.

Just as the owner of the field waits for the wheat to mature before he deals with the weeds, God waits until all his people reach maturity before the

trumpets are blown and the harvest begins. When that time comes God will finish the work that was begun with Jesus on the cross. Evil will be eradicated from existence and as Revelation 21 tells us,

*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. 2 And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.” Amen!*

Song: “In His Time”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJeNUINY7lw>

### Prayers

Almighty God and Creator, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. How majestic is your name in all the earth. We praise and thank you for making and upholding all things day by day. For our bodies and minds with all their powers, for food and clothing, home and family, daily work and all we need from day to day, we give you thanks. Open our eyes and ears to your creative presence in our daily lives; and open the eyes of our hearts to your Son through your word.

Lord in your mercy:       hear our prayer

We thank you for your new creation – your church, the body of your Son – in whom we receive grace and mercy. Bless and protect your church throughout the world that she may preach the gospel in all its truth unhindered to all people. Equip the leaders of our church, and today we commend to you our Bishop (John) and our District Bishop (Paul). By your Holy Spirit enable them to carry out their callings with joy, strength and wisdom.

Lord in your mercy:       hear our prayer

We thank you for ordering our country and society by means of our government and elected leaders. Bless those in positions of responsibility

that they may willingly strive for truth and justice, and so be your instruments of care and protection. We particularly pray that they would continue to grant freedom of religious expression so that the church may publicly declare that there is no salvation apart from your Son Jesus Christ.

Lord in your mercy:      hear our prayer

Grant your healing and peace to all we know are unwell or undergoing medical treatment. Today we commit to you (insert names). Watch over them, give them confidence in your good and gracious will for them and guide the surgeons, doctors, nurses and other health professionals who care for them.

Lord in your mercy:      hear our prayer

Graciously protect us from fire and flood, from war and disease, from famine and strife and from every kind of disaster. Support all people in their proper vocation, particularly those who are overworked and those whose work is difficult and dangerous. Help all those who are unemployed or underemployed to find suitable work. Bless our arts and culture, our science and technology. Be with all widows and widowers, and provide for all children who have lost their parents. Comfort those who are lonely and those who mourn the loss of loved ones.

Lord in your mercy:      hear our prayer

Almighty and merciful Father, hear us, your children, as we bring our prayers to you. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### Benediction

20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. 21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. (Ephesians 3)

Closing Song: "Who am I?"

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VU\\_rTX23V7Q&list=FLhH3K7BX0MtSgANwiHYjNoQ&index=127](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VU_rTX23V7Q&list=FLhH3K7BX0MtSgANwiHYjNoQ&index=127)