

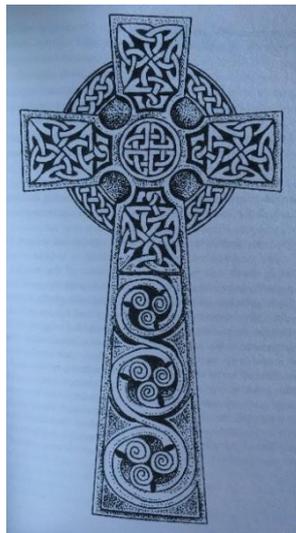
Parish of Central Exeter

Morning Worship and Spiritual Communion
6th Sunday after Trinity 19 July 2020

The service this morning and the comments are from Revd Bob Burn, which, he says, include some, mostly ancient, Celtic inspiration. Many thanks for this Bob. In this service spiritual communion is through a Celtic Eucharist.

Welcome everyone.

The appointed readings continue through Genesis, where we meet again the stories connected with Jacob while the gospel readings, working through Matthew, are still in chapter 13 with a series of parables on the Kingdom of heaven, and today it is the parable of the Weeds, which we shall explore in Night Prayer.



May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God be with us all.

Psalm 139

¹ Lord you have searched me out and know me;
you know my sitting down and my rising up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

²You trace my journeys and my resting places
and are acquainted with all my ways.

³ Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,
but you, O, Lord know it altogether.

⁴ You press upon me behind and before
and lay your hand upon me.

⁵ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

it is so high I cannot attain to it.

⁶ Where can I go then from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

⁷ If I climb up to heaven, you are there
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.

⁸ If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

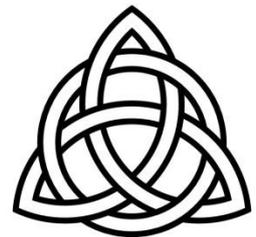
⁹ Even there your hand will lead me
and your right hand hold me fast.

¹⁰ If I say, 'Surely the darkness will cover me,
and the light around me turn to night',

¹¹ Darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day;
darkness and light to you are both alike.

Prayer

Have mercy upon us, O God the Father Almighty, God of hosts,
O High God,
O Lord of the world,
O ineffable God,
O Creator of the Elements,
O invisible God,
O incorporeal God,
O God beyond all judgement,
O impassible God,
O incorruptible God,
O immortal God,
O immoveable God,
O eternal God,
O perfect God,
O merciful God,
O wondrous God,
O dreadful God,
O God of the earth,
O God of fire,
O God of the excellent waters,
O God of the tempestuous and rushing air,
O God of the many languages round the circuit of the earth,
O God of the waves from the bottomless house of the ocean,
O God of the constellations, and of all the bright stars,
O God who didst fashion the universe, and didst inaugurate day and night,
O God who didst rule over hell and its rabble host,
O God who dost govern with archangels,



O golden good,
O heavenly Father who are in heaven,
Have mercy upon us.

Ninefold Kyrie (Lord have mercy) This chant lasts almost eight minutes. After two minutes or so you might like to lower the volume so it becomes a background contemplative chant.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8B_BLtpxQM

May God who looks on us through the cross of Christ with love,
restore us with his forgiveness.

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Creator God,
you made us all in your image:
may we discern you in all that we see,

and serve you in all that we do;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reading

Genesis 28. 10-19

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He 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. 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, 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.'

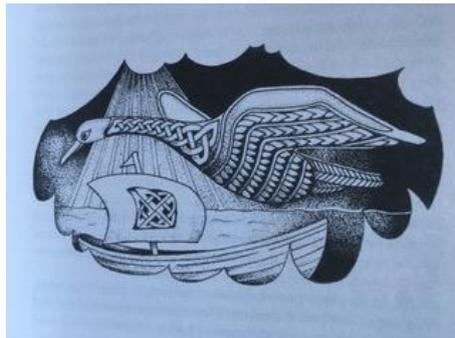
Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said,
'Surely the LORD is in this place – and I did not know it!' And he was afraid, and said, 'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'

So Jacob rose early in the morning, and 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. He called that place Bethel.

Reflection

Let us remember the context for the story of Jacob's ladder. With the help of his mother Rebecca, Jacob had tricked his blind father Isaac into giving him the birthright which should belong to the elder son Esau. Esau was incensed and said he would kill Jacob on the death of their father. Rebecca and Isaac encouraged Jacob to go to his uncle Laban and seek a wife from his relatives. Jacob went, a journey of about 400 miles, fearful for his life, and was not to return for 20 years. It was not more than a few days into his journey when Jacob dreamt of the ladder to heaven. Jacob knew that what he had done was trickery, he was afraid of his brother, and had reason to fear God. But then God stood beside him in the dream, and he went forward thereafter with confidence.

What, you may ask, has this to do with Celtic Christianity? Both travelling and dreams figure largely in the accounts of Celtic saints. Brendan sailed on the Atlantic, Patrick travelled between England and Ireland in both directions, also to France and perhaps to Rome. St Cedd from Northumberland to Essex, Fursey from Ireland to East Anglia, an Irish princess Sunniva sailed with her companions and founded a Christian community on a Norwegian island. Columba sailed from Derry to Iona. Columbanus travelled from Ireland all over Europe establishing monasteries. And so on.

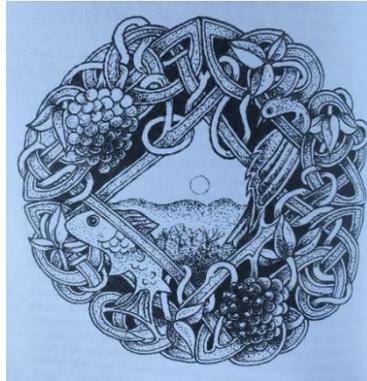


A few of these journeys were by invitation. The King and Queen of Kent asked for Augustine to come from Rome. King Oswald asked for Aidan to come to Lindisfarne from Iona. But many were not so planned. We are told that Abraham went out not knowing where he went (Hebrews 11.8), but none the less compelled by God. And Celtic saints looked back to Abraham. Patrick was moved both to leave Ireland and to return, called by God in dreams. A readiness to travel just for the love of God, and a readiness to go where that might lead, crops up in story after story. The Celtic word for this travelling was peregrination, not our modern 'pilgrimage' with its well-defined end-point, but rather a seeking, a quest, an adventure, wandering and possibly exile, believing that God will guide.

The role of Jacob's dream was in giving him assurance. It did not reduce his cunning. He was tricked by his father in law, whom he in turn tricked. But he returned to Beer-Sheba with wives, children and flocks, a wealthy man, and made peace with Esau. God's promises to Jacob were indeed fulfilled, but what a strange beginning for the children of Abraham.

Song

We sing 'O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder' which in verses 1 and 2 affirms the creation as the work of God. The Celts of old said that God taught with two books: the bible and nature. The second verse here is not sung in our recording, so you may like to read it first.



How great thou art!

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, thy power throughout the universe displayed.
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee: how great thou art, how great thou art.

When through the woods and forest glades I wander and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur, and hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin.

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart;
When I shall bow in humble adoration, and there proclaim: my God how great thou art.

You may need to click on "Skip ads".

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdE_NKyY_o0

Intercessions

Despite reading many ancient Celtic prayers, I found almost none that could in our modern sense be called 'intercessions'. Perhaps our modern meanings are influenced and even shaped by newspapers, the radio, television and our computers, while their sources were more immediate. Indeed their poems, prayers and blessings were interwoven. There are prayers about greeting the sunrise, the making of food, sowing seed, milking a cow, the welfare of a spinning wheel, welcoming a stranger, saying goodbye, even making a bed. There are prayers for one's household. We may be surprised at the individuality of the prayers, but many of the Biblical psalms are individual in just this way. Here are some examples for you to interpret.

First thing in the morning:

Bless to me, O God, each thing mine eye sees;
Bless to me, O God, each sound mine ear hears;
Bless to me, O God, each odour that goes to my nostrils;
Bless to me, O God, each taste that goes to my lips;
 Each note that goes to my song,
 Each ray that guides my way,
 Each thing that I pursue,
 Each lure that tempts my will,
 The zeal that seeks my living soul,

The Three that seek my heart.
 The zeal that seeks my living soul,
The Three that seek my heart.

Getting dressed:

Even as I clothe my body with wool
Cover my soul with the shadow of thy wing.

Before milking:

Bless, O God, my little cow,
 Bless O God, my desire;
Bless thou my partnership
 And the milking of my hands, O God.
Bless, O God, each teat,
 Bless, O God, each finger;
Bless Thou each drop
 That goes into my pitcher, O God!



Saying goodbye:

God be with thee in every pass,
Jesus be with thee on every hill,

Spirit be with thee on every stream, headland and ridge and lawn;
Each sea and land, each moor and meadow,
Each lying down, each rising up,
In the trough of the waves, on the crest of the billows,
Each step of the journey thou goest.

May we join with Christians down the ages in praying as our Lord taught us:

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,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Words from a modern Celtic Eucharist:

Risen Christ, we welcome you. You are the flowering bough of creation; from you cascades music like a million stars, truth to cleanse a million souls. From you flee demons, omens and ill-will; around you rejoice the angels of light. Father, send us the tender Spirit of the Lamb; feed us with the Bread of Heaven; may we become drunk with your holiness.

Ebb tide, full tide, praise the Lord of land and sea
Barren rocks, and darting gulls, praise his holy name!
Poor folk, royal folk, praise the Lord of land and sea;
Pilgrimed sands, sea-shelled strands, praise his holy name!
Fierce lions, gentle lambs, praise the Lord of land and sea;
Noble women, mission priests, praise his holy name!
Chanting boys, slaves set free, praise the Lord of land and sea;
Old and young and all the land, praise his holy name!

The Trinity was the central focus for much Celtic worship. Evidenced by St Patrick's Breastplate. The hymn may not be as old as St Patrick, but the story behind the name is this. The king of Tara had demanded the presence of St Patrick and his company. The Christians knew this was dangerous and prepared songs for the journey of which this song was one. The king had sent out soldiers to ambush the group, but the soldiers only saw a herd of deer

and a following fawn. Hence the local name given to the hymn 'the cry of the deer' and the 'breastplate'. 'Christ be with me' is a prayer of protection.

If you had wished to receive Communion at this time, please take the fourth verse here, 'Christ be with me' as your moment of spiritual communion. It is not sung in our recording, so you may wish to read it first.

I bind unto myself today the strong name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same, the Three in One and One in Three.

I bind unto myself today the virtues of the starlit heaven,
The glorious sun's life-giving ray, the whiteness of the moon at even,
The flashing of the lightning free, the whirling wind's tempestuous shocks,
The stable earth, the deep salt sea around the old eternal rocks.

I bind unto myself today the power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch his might to stay, his ear to hearken to my need;
The wisdom of my God to teach, his hand to guide his shield to ward,
The word of God to give me speech, his heavenly host to be my guard.

Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me;
Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

I bind unto myself the name, the strong name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same, the Three in One and One in Three,
Of whom all nature hath creation, eternal Father, Spirit, Word.
Praise to the Lord of my salvation: salvation is of Christ the Lord. Amen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH4ToVxtn9A>

Thanks to Claire for Celtic images

Thanks to Nigel for songs

Thanks to Esther de Waal for
thoughts and prayers.

**Scroll down for Coffee
Break**



Coffee Break

We invite you to make your own contributions informally to replace the time we usually spend chatting after the service over coffee. This can include prayer, or requests to remember someone or some event. Please email or post material or requests to Keith.

Daphne has suggested this prayer by Thomas Merton

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore I will trust you always, though I may seem lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Bishop Edmund Lacy's 600th anniversary

On Wednesday 15 July Exeter Cathedral celebrated the 600th anniversary of Bishop Edmund Lacy being made Bishop of Exeter. His tomb became a place of pilgrimage in the late middle ages, with people seeking healing through his intercession. In 1942, some fascinating wax figures that had been hidden in his tomb, were dislodged by a WWII bomb.

Within Exeter Cathedral Library and Archives are the remains of moulded 'votive offerings' made of hollow beeswax, which were hung around the tomb of Bishop Edmund Lacy (c. 1370-1455) by pilgrims seeking cures through the bishop's saintly influence. One complete female figure (about 20 cm. high) survives intact.

The other pieces are smaller fragments, many of which represent individual limbs, human and animal, according to the part of the body which was afflicted. (Lacy himself suffered from disease in his legs in later life.) There are 1,058 pieces in total, as well as some of the twisted and waxed threads used to hang them. They are of great importance as there are no similar survivals anywhere else in Great Britain.



Please scroll down for night prayer

Night Prayer



If you are able to do so, you might wish to light a candle near a window.

You might like to begin this time of reflection with the hymn: 'Be still for the presence of the Lord' Which you will find at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U>
Words appear on the screen. You may need to press skip Ads.

Opening Prayers

Crowd-gatherer,
Beach Preacher,
Storyteller,
tell us stories.

Tell us stories that challenge and reform us,
for we are in serious need of reforming.

Our hearts are far from you,
and we are failing our neighbour at every turn.

Remind us who we are, O God.
Remind us to whom we belong.

Tell us stories that
strengthen and sustain us,

We need to be reminded what it means
to love.

Lift up for us the stories of the one who loved sacrificially
to the point of death
and help us put into perspective the sacrifices we are asked to make
for the stranger in our midst.

Tell us stories that nourish us and produce in us a harvest of hope,
for we are hungry for hope in these trying times.

Shine the light of your truth into our darkness
with your stories, we pray,
and lead us into tomorrow with the reassurance that
no matter what
we belong to you.

Julie Gvillo in Revgalsblogpals

Psalm

In the silent hours of the night bless the Lord!

O come bless the Lord, all you who serve the Lord,
who stand in the house of the Lord,
in the courts of the house of our God.

Lift up your hands to the holy place
and bless the Lord through the night.

May the Lord bless you from Zion,
he who made both heaven and earth.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

In the silent hours of night bless the Lord!
(Concord Pastor)

Reading

The New Testament reading appointed for today is Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

The Parable of the Weeds (New International Version)

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

²⁸ "'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

²⁹ "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

Comment

Parables, like all good stories, are capable of more than one response. Here is one.

The key driver in this story is the field owner, who is the decision maker. We also own 'fields' whether they be window boxes, gardens, or rolling acres, and metaphorically our life is a field that we own. We don't have to sow weeds – they just appear. We don't intend to grow them, but there they are. I can blame my neighbours for allowing their weeds to be scattered in the air and infecting my pristine planting, but that does not solve the problem. I still have to manage the weed situation!

But what is a weed? Today a good definition for a gardener is anything growing in the wrong place. My garden has foxgloves which self seed and grow in some places where I am happy to have them, and others where I am not. Yet weed management is not as easy as it sounds. I find that I tolerate some weeds more than others. Some weeds are easier to remove than others. Many I just don't notice. So I go to the garden centre and look for things that help me in weed control. I can choose products that kill everything green and growing. Fine for a path perhaps, but not on lawns or flower beds. So some form of selective weed killer is needed. Then I start reading the instructions. Mix in the following proportions; don't use when it's too hot, too dry, too wet, too cold, too windy, in the sunshine, in the rain, when the weeds are growing strongly, before they finish flowering. The optimal time for spraying or whatever is in reality infrequent. The second Tuesday in May at about 3.47 in the afternoon was actually the best time, and I've missed it and I was probably doing something else in any case. Weed management is an inexact process.

Is it any different managing whatever we think of as weeds in our lives? What do you think?

Another interpretation

Feuding between families was a well-known occurrence in Biblical times, so 'an enemy' trying to wreck someone's harvest would be understood by Jesus's listeners. The weed sown was probably called *zizania* which looks like wheat in its early green stages of growth so in trying to pull it out, the true crop could mistakenly be pulled up too.

By letting the crop and the weeds grow together, our landowner does not let his enemy get the better of him. At harvest he retains his crop and has the weeds to act as a second crop for fuel. So he wins this encounter.

Matthew also suggests in the words Jesus uses that communities should not try to sort out in judgement who is righteous and who is not. We grow together in community, and it is God who makes the ultimate judgement.



Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 Parable of the Wheat & Tares

Jesus's interpretation of the Parable.

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

³⁷ He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Reflective Prayer

Weeds – and their leaves

Nothing fancy here, Lord, just plants and their leaves,
so very ordinary - and yet extraordinary, these plants, these leaves:
there is a simple beauty in their greenness,
the shades and textures of their greenness,
the natural hues of their soft greenness...



Would that we might find beauty in all the colours
drawn from your natural palette, Lord,
the glory in the colours all around us,
the shades and hues of humankind:
varied, simple, ordinary - and yet extraordinary
for each and all in their own shade image you
their Creator and Redeemer...

Nothing fancy here, Lord, just your people,
your very own in all their colours and their beauty,
one great mirror of your glory now revealed
with extraordinary artistry and grace...

Amen

(Concord Pastor)

Evening Collect

Lighten our darkness
we pray,
and in your great mercy
defend us from all perils and dangers of this night,
for the love of your only Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Conclusion and Blessing

Spirit of the living God
present with us now,
enfold us, body, mind and spirit,
and heal us of all that harms us,
in Jesus' name. Amen

The Lord bless us and watch over us;
the Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us;
the Lord look kindly on us and give us peace.
Amen.

*We bring worship to a close with Bee playing 'before the ending of the day'.
Access as usual – just music, no pictures.*

<https://www.parishofcentralexeter.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Before-the-ending-of-the-day-converted.mp3>

The words are below.

Before the ending of the day,
creator of the world, we pray,
that with thy wonted favour thou
wouldst be our guard and keeper now.

From all ill dreams defend our eyes,
from nightly fears and fantasies;
tread under foot our ghostly foe,
that no pollution we may know.

O Father, that we ask be done,
through Jesus Christ thine only Son,
who, with the Holy Ghost and thee,
dost live and reign eternally. Amen

Thanks

*Thanks to everyone who has contributed to these services:
Especially to Bob Burn for the morning service, Daphne for her contribution to Coffee Break,
Nigel and Bee for music.*

Other material taken or developed from various websites and blogs is normally identified in the text.