

**Abbey International Baptist Church, Reading
Sunday Worship Service**

10:30AM 27 September 2026

Zoltan Biro leading & Simon Bird preaching

www.abbeybaptistchurch.org.uk

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Growing until the harvest

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Good morning, everyone.

Today we continue our Harvest series, exploring Jesus' harvest parables in Matthew's Gospel. So far, we have looked outward to the harvest field and prayed for the "Lord of the harvest" to send more workers. We have also looked inward, examining how open our hearts are to God's word. Today, Simon will explain how the harvest also points to the final judgement. But first, let us acknowledge God's presence and pray.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Give thanks to the LORD!
Praise His name!
Tell the whole world what He has done—
His mighty acts on our behalf.

**Sing to the LORD,
for He has done wonderful things for us!
Raise your hearts and voices!
shout and sing your praise!
For great is the Holy One who lives among us!**

Hymn BPW11

I will enter His gates with thanksgiving in my heart,
I will enter His courts with praise;
I will say, 'This is the day that the Lord has made,'
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.
He has made me glad, He has made me glad,
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.
He has made me glad, He has made me glad,
I will rejoice for He has made me glad.

Leona Von Brethorst © 1976 Maranatha!

Psalm 95

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

**Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.**

For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.

**In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.**

The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.

Come, let us bow down in worship,

let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.

Hymn BPW3

As we are gathered, Jesus is here;
one with each other, Jesus is here.
Joined by the Spirit, washed in the blood,
part of the body, the church of God.
As we are gathered, Jesus is here,
one with each other, Jesus is here.

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FAMILY TIME

(*An offering will be taken during the following song, after which teenagers and children will leave for their groups)

HYMN BPW530

Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning,
give me oil in my lamp, I pray;
give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning,
keep me burning till the break of day.

Chorus: Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
sing hosanna to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
sing hosanna to the King!

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
give me joy in my heart, I pray;
give me joy in my heart, keep me praising,
keep me praising till the break of day. [Chorus]

Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
give me peace in my heart, I pray;
give me peace in my heart, keep me loving,
keep me loving till the break of day. [Chorus]

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
give me love in my heart, I pray;
give me love in my heart, keep me serving,
keep me serving till the break of day. [Chorus]

Author: A. Sevison

BIBLE READING 1: Matthew 13:24-30

BIBLE READING 2: Matthew 13:36-43

HYMN BPW 553

Great is thy faithfulness, O God, my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with thee.
Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

Chorus: Great is thy faithfulness,
Great is thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed thy hand hast provided;
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.

2. Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. [Chorus]

3. Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine and ten thousand beside. [Chorus]

Author: Thomas O. Chisholm

SERMON - *Growing until the harvest* (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

Last week we heard the parable of the Sower, with the challenge, 'what kind of soil am I?' This week we look at another parable with soil, seeds and weeds, but with a different meaning.

Have you experienced culture shock? We certainly did when we went to live in Thailand. Life was perplexing and exhausting. Nothing could fully prepare us, but reading the Lonely Planet guide helped us prepare and understand a new culture.

So it is for the Kingdom of God. Matthew has grouped seven parables together, which tell us important truths about this Kingdom. He says, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is like...' (e.g. 24). We have our guidebook to this new country!

The parables both challenge people to decide to enter the Kingdom, and for Jesus' disciples, they tell what this Kingdom is like. You see, the Jews had the hope, from the Old Testament of the Messiah coming and bringing in God's Kingdom. So his disciples expected Jesus to overthrow the Roman rule and bring in God's Kingdom right then and there. But it did not happen this way. The parables help manage expectations about the Kingdom. We see this in the seven parables.

The Sower. As well as the challenge, 'what kind of soil am I?' this shows not everyone will respond favourably to God's word. So we are not discouraged by results; our job is to keep faithfully sowing seeds!

The mustard seed and yeast. These tell us the Kingdom of God may seem small and insignificant now, but it has the power to grow and influence.

The hidden treasure and pearl of great price. These tell us the Kingdom of God is worth every sacrifice to find and enter.

The wheat and weeds and the fish net. As we shall see, these tell us the Kingdoms of God and Satan exist together now but are separated at the end. This helps us understand why the world (and the church) is as it is. So, we are not perplexed, have patience and are wise in how we live.

So, in this parable we have: the **Sower** (the Son of Man - Jesus), who sowed wheat, **good seed** (the people of the Kingdom), in **his field** (the world). An **enemy** (the Devil) came at night and sowed **weeds** (his people). As they started to grow the owner's servants asked if they should pull up the weeds. The owner replied, no, you may uproot the wheat, leave them until the **harvest** (the end of the age). The **harvesters** (angels) will first collect the weeds and **burn them** (their terrible future), then gather the wheat **into his barn** (a glorious future, shining like the sun).

What does this tell us? I think the central point was the surprise not to pull up the weeds but wait and let the wheat and weeds grow together. Why? One thought is giving time for repentance - God is patient not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Equally, we ask, 'God, why don't you deal with evil now?' We cannot fully answer that, but we trust God has loving plans and purposes. I think the point of the parable is he wants us to understand the time we live in, not be perplexed, be patient and get on with the task of sowing and reaping.

I give an illustration to help us understand the times. Here is a summary of the bible in four steps! 1. Creation, 2. Fall, 3. Salvation and 4. New Creation, or the Kingdom. This is what the Jews were expecting, and it is what Jesus will do fully at the end of time, when he returns. However, he introduced the Kingdom when he came for the first time. The evidence was his miracles, healings and driving out demons. And we continue to do these (Hebrews 2:3-4). However, we will not see complete victory this side of Jesus' return (Hebrews 2:8). A theologian wrote there is a 'now, and not yet' about Jesus' Kingdom. We see the first signs of the Kingdom, but not its fulness. Like the wheat, we live together with weeds. Now that we understand the rules of this new country, we can be patient and keep working faithfully. More than that, we know we have the joy and privilege of working with Jesus now to bring in his kingdom. What better aim can we have in life? Serving God and seeking first his Kingdom is never a mistake (Matt 6:33, 1 Cor 15:58). There will be hard work, setbacks, disappointments, but we persevere because we know the result.

What else might we learn from this parable? The mixture of wheat and weeds may apply to the church. Even if we see things wrong, we should resist the urge to start 'weeding.' Remember, Jesus called Judas to be one of his Twelve even though he knew he would betray him. Also, baptism was offered in Acts quickly on profession of faith; yet some were found to be false. Let us first be responsible for our own hearts and slow to judge others. Allow time and the work of the Spirit to bring repentance. Remember the saying about the perfect church! We can also see the weeds as unhelpful things that the Devil would plant in the church to destroy it: false teaching, factions, gossip. James tells us the tongue is like a forest fire, a world of evil. Let us be on our guard. But I take encouragement from the parable: the Devil sowed, trying to destroy the crop, but did not triumph. God dealt with the weeds in his time.

The wheat and weeds remind us we have a choice. We can decide to be people of the Kingdom. The good news for those who do this is the promise of being brought into his barn at the end and shining like the sun, with our Father in heaven (43). We could repeat the challenge from last week, 'what kind of soil am I?' Am I hardened or soft. Do I want to come into God's kingdom? I can choose this today.

And there is a solemn warning for us if we remain a weed: people of evil. I find it difficult to get away from the warning of destruction here. We would rather ignore this, but it is clear from Jesus' teaching. Those of us who know and have experienced God, know he is loving, all powerful, all knowing, but holy. We trust that he is just. If you do not know you are a child of God, put it right today, come to him.

So, we have read the parables – the 'Lonely Planet' guide - about the Kingdom of God. God's Kingdom co-exists in the world with Satan's kingdom. This helps us understand why the world (and the church) is as it is. So, we are not perplexed, we have patience and we are wise in how we live. God does not uproot now, he is patient. We do not expect a perfect world, nor a perfect church. We do not judge others in the world or the church now. The good news is all will be made right in the end. There is a glorious future for the righteous, but punishment for the wicked. There is a challenge today: are you in God's Kingdom.

HYMN BPW 306

Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:

Chorus: Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name.

Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth. [Chorus]

Suffering servant, scorned, ill - treated,
victim crucified!
death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified. [Chorus]

Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!
sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love. [Chorus]

So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song. [Chorus]

Michael Saward © Jubilate Hymns

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (Kelly)

Heavenly Father, Almighty God, we come before You with humble hearts, thanking You for Your Word spoken to us today.

Lord, as we respond to Your message, we bring before You a broken world in need of Your grace. We lift up the Middle East, praying especially for the peace, freedom, and well-being of the people in Iran, as well as those suffering in Ukraine, Sudan, and other conflict-torn regions. Protect the innocent, bring comfort to families separated or grieving, and guide all leaders with divine wisdom and compassion. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we lift up the United Kingdom, the nation where You have placed us, and its future into Your hands. Grant wisdom to our leaders, and bring economic stability and social cohesion to this land. At the same time, we remember the people of Hong Kong—we pray for Your peace over the city, and Your comfort and strength for all who are suffering, imprisoned, or separated from their loved ones. May Your hope sustain them and their families in times of trial.

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our own church family—a home You have gathered from British, Hong Kong, Iranian, and diverse backgrounds—as we navigate this season of organizational restructuring. Grant clear vision to our leadership, and give us all humble hearts and unity of spirit during this transition, so that our church may continue to be a vibrant light in our community.

Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

As we prepare to enter the coming week, help us to carry Your truth in our hearts and live out Your love in our daily lives.

In Jesus' precious name we pray, **Amen.**

HYMN BPW550

Amazing grace (how sweet the sound)
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forbear to shine;
but God, who called me here below,
will be forever mine.

Author: John Newton

BENEDICTION

May we always walk gently upon the Earth, in right relationship,
nurtured by your love, open to the wind of the Spirit,
taking only what we need, always open to the needs of others,
making choices that bring wellbeing,
living with generosity, striving for justice,
honouring all with reverence, reconciling and peacemaking,
mindful of those who will come after,
recognizing our proper place as part of your creation.

**Grant us strength and courage, Lord,
for such a radical transformation into your Kingdom. Amen.**

THE GRACE

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore, Amen.

Events to highlight next week

Wednesday 30 th	10.30	Renew Wellbeing
	12.00	Bible Study
Thursday 1 st	10.30	Bible Study
	10.30	Toddlers
	12.15	Baptismal class
	7.00	Praise and Worship
Friday 2 nd	10.30	Prayer meeting in Upper Room
	4.30	Table Tennis Club

Sunday 4 th October 10.30 Worship and Baptism

QR Code for Financial Offering

