

## S.P.A.C.E. for Ash Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024



**Satan sowing Darnel** *Peeter Baltens (1527-1584),*

*Downloaded from <https://www.bing.com>*

Peeter Baltens worked as assistant to, and collaborator with, his more famous compatriot, Pieter Breughel the Elder. He also painted a small number of works in his own right, typically scenes of peasant life and/or biblical scenes, and often illustrating human folly or weakness. His work was characterised by bright colouring in which his subjects were depicted clearly.

Here we see labourers resting in a carefully sown field of wheat. Their work is done and having eaten, they sleep, unaware that Satan, recognisable by his long tail, is busy ruining their work by sowing weeds. Some translations identify these as tares or darnel, a weed resembling wheat and competing with it while growing. Darnel is particularly harmful as it can be infected by a poisonous fungus but could only be clearly distinguished from wheat when the crop was mature. In Jesus' time it was a specific criminal offence to sow darnel in an enemy's fields.

This parable and Jesus' detailed explanation of it have several clear messages for us:

1. Although the Kingdom of God is here among us, evil persists, personified as "the enemy".
2. It is difficult to judge by appearances; we should avoid labelling people too quickly.
3. However, judgement is unavoidable; we cannot escape the consequences of our actions.
4. Such judging is the prerogative of God ("the owner"), not man ("the harvesters") (v30).

The parable helps explain a problem that troubles many Christians or those who are tentatively exploring the Christian faith – how can evil exist if God is in control, even persisting after God sent Jesus into the world as Redeemer and Saviour? It is a reminder that although God will ultimately triumph, for the moment contrary forces are still active in opposing his kingdom.

The warning against making premature judgement of others should not be taken to mean that we can condone wrongdoing and we ourselves are to avoid evil action, but to solve the problem of evil is beyond mankind's power. St Paul neatly summarises this thrust of this parable:

*Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God. (1 Corinthians 4:5)*

# **Silence, Prayer, And Communion Ending 9.30 a.m.**

## **Silence**

*A time for thought...reflection...prayer*

## **Prayer**

Come, let us return to the Lord who loves us.

God of truth, we pray that your church may be led into the way of truth and an ever-deepening understanding of your nature and your will. We pray for those who lead, teach or preach, and for ourselves we pray that this Lent will be a time to reset our priorities and a time for softening of our hearts.

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Come

**let us return to the Lord.**

God of power, we pray for those with authority, influence and power in our world. We pray especially for those who bear the burden of negotiation, especially in matters of peace and war thinking at this time of all parties involved in the war between Russia and Ukraine, and all who genuinely strive for lasting and just peace in the Middle East.

We pray that those who have acquired informal yet powerful influence through social media may turn away from the temptation to abuse that power by making facile judgements on others. Reawaken in them a renewed sense of respect to those who are weak, or sensitive.

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Come

**let us return to the Lord.**

God of loving kindness, watch over our homes and families, our friends and neighbours, our young people and all who are vulnerable. We pray for those who wish us harm, for those we find hard to love, for young people caught up in gangs and criminal violence and for those suffering from mental health issues.

Loving Lord we pray that your example may inspire us in our relationships and your Holy Spirit continue to guide us lest we stray.

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Come

**let us return to the Lord.**

God of mercy and compassion, we bring before you those we know who are ill or suffering, those undergoing or recovering from treatment, thinking today of Helen and Judith. We pray for those nearing the end of their lives and those who care for them. We remember those who mourn, thinking today of Irene.

Gather all of them in your love, give them your healing, your strength and courage, your hope and your wholeness.

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Come  
let us return to the Lord.

*The Collect for Ash Wednesday, which we say together:*

**Almighty and everlasting God,  
who hastest nothing that thou hast made  
and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent:  
Create and make in us new and contrite hearts,  
that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness,  
may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy,  
perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**And**

*Please stay for the communion even if not taking the bread and wine. You can come to the rail for a blessing (a brief prayer) – simply carry this sheet.*

**Communion**

*A moment to reflect on the times when we have not been loyal to God and His ways and have not cared for others.*

In God's holy presence we call to mind our need for forgiveness.

*Silence*

**Father, our sin has brought you sorrow,  
has harmed those who share our life,  
has been hurtful to ourselves.  
We dare not say we have only lightly sinned;  
yet Christ has taken to himself the burden of it all.**

In Jesus' name may we be freed from the penalty and power of sin. **Amen.**

God of love and wonder, we sing your praises: with the great company of people, past and present, here and everywhere. We adore you, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.**

You are indeed holy, eternal God and Father;  
in love greater than we can imagine you gave your only Son,  
that everyone who has faith in him may not die but have eternal life.  
Not as we would, but as we are able,  
we praise and thank you for the reality of his birth,  
the glory of his humanity, the generosity of his life:  
for his sacrifice on the cross, the wonder of his resurrection,  
and the assurance that he lives for ever to save us;

for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for our calling to be his people,  
for the hope all can find in him.

*We say together:*

**Remembering his life and sacrifice**

**we now come to his table as he has invited us to do.**

**Send to us now, we pray, the Holy Spirit**

**so that we may indeed be your people,**

**and that as we share the bread and wine**

**we may share in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Amen**

These are the gifts of God  
for the people of God.

## **Ending**

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,**

**your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours**

**now and for ever. Amen.**

*A post-communion prayer, said together*

**Father of all, you gathered us here**

**around the table of your Son;**

**we have shared this meal with the saints**

**and the whole fellowship of the household of God.**

**In that new world**

**where the fullness of your peace will be revealed,**

**gather people of every race, language and way of life**

**to share in the one eternal banquet of**

**Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen**

*The blessing*

Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,

to deny yourselves, take up your cross, and follow him;

and the blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,

be among you and remain with you always. **Amen**

*The next SPACE service will be on Wednesday February 21<sup>th</sup>  
and then on each Wednesday in Lent*

# Matthew 13: 24-30

## The Parable of the Weeds

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

<sup>27</sup> “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?’

<sup>28</sup> “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

<sup>29</sup> “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> 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.’”

## The Parable of the Weeds Explained

<sup>36</sup> 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.”

<sup>37</sup> He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> 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, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

<sup>40</sup> “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

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## Themes for SPACE in Lent 2024

In SPACE this Lent we will look at six Jesus’ teaching parables. The proposed topics are:

Feb 14 <sup>th</sup>	The Kingdom	Matt 13:24-30	(The Weeds)
Feb 21 <sup>st</sup>	Service and Obedience	Matt 20:1-6	(Workers in the Harvest)
Feb 28 <sup>th</sup>	Prayer	Luke 18:1-8	(The Unjust Judge)
Mar 7 <sup>th</sup>	Neighbours	Luke 10:30-37	(The Good Samaritan)
Mar 14 <sup>th</sup>	Humility	Luke 14:7-11	(The Wedding Feast)
Mar 21 <sup>st</sup>	Wealth	Luke 12:16-21	(The Rich Fool)