

# Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections  
based on this week's lectionary readings

July 20, 2014  
Proper 11A/Ordinary 16A/Pentecost +6

## The readings this week:

- Genesis 28:10-19a ◦ Psalm 86:11-17
- Romans 8:12-25 ◦ Matthew 13:24-30,36-43



[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

## Jesus Condone Weed

Why can't we leave judging to God? What is it in human nature, that is somehow heightened in Christian human nature, that has to judge? Jesus prohibited judging in his teaching. (Matthew 7:1-5) He was always in some conflict with the Scribes and Pharisees for their persistent judging of people and their attempt to control the minutiae of others' lives. Yet if you were to ask most people who have been alienated from the Church what they found most difficult about Christians they would say, "Church people are SO judgmental."

I sometimes think that Christians are not merely trying to be "holier than thou", they are trying to be "holier than Jesus!" Granted, Jesus spoke about being perfect even as our Parent in heaven is perfect, but as a good Wesleyan I know that he was referring to be perfect in Love as God is perfect in Love.

Before holiness and perfection however, Jesus expected transformation in his hearers. He knew that hearing the good news of the unconditional acceptance of a parenting, providing, profligately generous God, has a way of transforming our



natures as we discover that religion isn't about rules, it is about relationships. This is a process. That is why Jesus uses organic images to describe the process of the Divine Domain (Kingdom of God) coming to fruition in the lives of people and their communities. He speaks in this Gospel passage of the Divine Domain operating as

growing wheat amongst weeds; as yeast leavening dough; as a small mustard seed transforming into a tree big enough to host a colony of birds.

This process isn't flawless nor is it conducted in clinically sanitized environments. Wheat grows in the presence of competing and threatening weeds, sourdough yeast is rotting old food material, and that little mustard seed could just as well have ended up as bird seed as a bird housing bush!

So Jesus condones weed. He acknowledges that for the life of God to be real it needs to live and grow in a real world. Nit picking weeding in a field of young wheat does more harm to the wheat than good. Nit picking Christians are as damaging.

*Peter Woods, [The Listening Heart](#)*



"These are the few ways we can practice humility:

To speak as little as possible of one's self.

To mind one's own business.

Not to want to manage other people's affairs.

To avoid curiosity.

To accept contradictions and correction cheerfully.

To pass over the mistakes of others.

To accept insults and injuries.

To accept being slighted, forgotten and disliked.

To be kind and gentle even under provocation.

Never to stand on one's dignity.

To choose always the hardest."

~ *Mother Teresa, [The Joy in Loving: A Guide to Daily Living](#)*

# Reflecting on the Word



## \_\_\_ 1st Reading: [Genesis 28:10-19a](#)

When God spoke to Jacob, his message was not “thou shalt” and “thou shalt not,” nor did God point out Jacob’s crafty deception. What did God say to Jacob in Genesis 28:13-14? How do those promises compare to Isaac’s last words to his son in Genesis 28:3-4? Perhaps the greatest promise God made to Jacob is found in Genesis 28:15. Just as God spoke those words to Jacob four thousand years ago, God speaks those same words to those who love him today. What comfort does this promise offer you in your present circumstances? [My Scottish Heart](#)

## \_\_\_ Psalm Reading: [Psalm 86:11-17](#)

Think of a time when you needed to rely on someone for emotional or physical support. What feelings did you have about depending on them for help? What is the overall sense you get about the nature of the psalmist's relationship with God? How does the psalmist show his dependence on God throughout this psalm? What reactions do you have to this kind of dependency on God? How might the psalmist's dependency on God encourage you to depend more fully on God? In what areas of your life do you need to acknowledge your dependence on God? [Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press](#)

## \_\_\_ 3rd Reading: [Romans 8:12-25](#)

What are Christians not obligated to do? State that in your own words. From Romans 8:16 share what the Spirit does in the hearts of Christians? What pattern of Christian living is mentioned in the latter part of Romans 8:17? Describe both the sufferings and the glories that are mentioned in Romans 8:18. What is waiting for the sons of God to be revealed? Why is it so expectantly waiting? Like the end of a beautiful novel, share how this world’s story will end (Romans 8:21)? Why does hope accurately characterize a Christian’s life on earth? Will we have hope in heaven? [The Coffee House Bible Ministry](#)

## Praying Toward Sunday

God is source of and ultimate good –  
"the author and giver of all good things".  
God sees that all is good.  
May the good in us flourish - by God.  
And kept, guarded, and preserved - by God.  
May we, as salt, which enhances the good  
and discourages the bad, work with God  
in this nourishing, flourishing, keeping, guarding,  
and preserving  
of all the good, fragile though it be,  
wherever we might encounter it.

[Bosco Peters,](#)  
[Liturgy, Worship that works, Spirituality that Connects](#)

## All Creation Groans

An old hymn says it beautifully: "This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears all nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres." Have you experienced how the creation itself sings? It's wonderful! But you might also hear a note in a minor key here and there. With the singing, God's creation is also groaning.

This became clear to me again recently at a wild animal park we visited. We saw magnificent animals, such as the Asian rhino. Music! But we learned they are near extinction, with only 300 left in the wild. Groaning! The strains of environmental pollution, political corruption, and social alienation make for a sad song.

But Paul reminds us that there is good news for this groaning world. God's mission is not just the saving of souls but also the liberation of his whole creation. God is at work in Christ to reconcile people not only to himself but also to each other and to the natural world.



If you listen closely, you might also hear a quiet rest in the music, for Paul says the creation is also waiting for the "sons of God to be revealed." As a friend reminded me, we are those children of God-- and we are already here! So let's get busy addressing the groans of creation in politics, economics, environment, and all other fields in which the Lord has placed us to work.

[Today Daily Devotional](#)

## \_\_\_ 4th Reading: [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#)

Is it easy to distinguish between children of God and children of the devil? How did the owner's servant recognize the weeds? At what stage does it become easier to distinguish between the wheat and the tares? (see **Matt 7:16**) If it's not so easy to distinguish, then how do you know whether you are a child of God? How do you know whether other so-called "Christians" around you are? What should be the basis of our assurance of salvation? Even if one recognizes the weeds, what is the danger in trying to pull them out? What is the application of the concept of not pulling them up but letting them grow together? [bcbsr.com](#)