

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 106

Reading 1 [WIS 12:13, 16-19](#)

There is no god besides you who have the care of all, that you need show you have not unjustly condemned. For your might is the source of justice; your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all. For you show your might when the perfection of your power is disbelieved; and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity. But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us; for power, whenever you will, attends you. And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16](#) R. (5a) Lord, you are good and forgiving.

Reading 2 [ROM 8:26-27](#)

Brothers and sisters: The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will.

Gospel [MT 13:24-30](#)

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

(Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

The Gospel reading today, continues Jesus' Kingdom discourse from chapter 13 of Matthew, where Jesus is helping the Jews to better understand, through parables, the mysteries of the "kingdom of heaven". It's good, for us to remember while we listen and reflect on these parables that Jesus always used images from their everyday life experience. He recalled scenes from their kitchens, their backyards, and their daily chores and the world around them, to help them understand. The parables use these familiar images to teach deeper truths.

So, let's do a brief review of what Matthew means when he is referring to 'kingdom of heaven'. This Kingdom is not a place we can go to either now or in the life to come. The Greek word *for kingdom*, in fact might be better translated as 'kingship', or 'reign', or 'rule', so some translations in the other Gospels speak of the 'Reign of God'. However, since Matthew is speaking to Jews and trying to avoid saying the name of God, he finds ways to communicate what he means without breaching Jewish sensitivities about the name of God.

We should understand the Kingdom as being primarily an environment, a set of relationships, a way of being in which God's values prevail. There is a sense in which Jesus in the Gospel is speaking very emphatically about the world in the present; the present for the people then, through time, for us now. It also can be understood in the sense of representing the kind of world that God wants to see realized among us here on earth. The reality which we pray for daily in the Lord's Prayer – "Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth – as it is in heaven..." The kind of reality which can only come about in so far as we co-operate, work together with Jesus.

To realize this coming of the Kingdom, we must be convinced of the truth proclaimed in the first reading, about whose Kingdom it is! "For neither is there any god besides you who have the care of all." Since God has revealed to us the truth about God, creation, ourselves... we cannot create other Gods nor kingdoms that reflect idols or broken humanity. Having come to saving knowledge through Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, we come to deeply desire indistinguishably from the desire of God, the Kingdom which comes to be in the midst of the saints. The living Word of God leaves no doubt that the only way to realize the coming of this kingdom is through Christ who is the Way; Truth and Life and without whom no one can come to the Father ^(John 14:6). St Paul abundantly clear when he said, "[Jesus] is the only one by which we can be saved" ^(Acts 4:12). Or again, when he explained that God raised Jesus from the dead to show that he truly is the only Lord, "so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father" ^(Philippians 2:10-11).

Jesus was nothing less than perfectly clear. He didn't say, "Of all the names in the world given to men, it really doesn't matter which one you choose, to worship and pray to, because they are basically all the same." He didn't say, "look folks, I'm just one of history's really good philosophers, follow me or another one as you like, since we all basically teach the same thing." He didn't say, "In the end, some people will worship Jesus, but others won't, because Jesus is only one of god's many faces." Because the scriptures are clear, so too the teaching of the Church is clear, all religions are not the same.

Now we can focus more on the parable of the weeds among the wheat. In the parable Jesus describes the sabotaging of a field by the planting of a poisonous plant that looks like wheat when it is very young. By the time one could easily tell them apart, the roots of the weed would already be intertwined with the roots of the wheat, not to be separated without ruining the wheat. The seeds of the weed, after harvesting, would have to be spread out and picked out by hand. This is so important and something they were all very familiar with, that there were even Roman laws on the books against planting bad seed in someone's field.

The parable is saying that the children of God, filled with the vision and values of God and Jesus, must learn to live side by side with a whole spectrum of people who, in varying degrees, do not yet share or live this vision and these values. As well, that we must see within ourselves this combination of wheat and weeds. In each one of us there are elements of the Kingdom and elements that are deeply opposed to it.

We are reminded in Jesus' explanation of the parable, that judgment is the prerogative of God, which happens at the end of time (or the end of our lives). Until then, the good and bad seed will grow together – although we might prefer life to be less messy. Couldn't God just keep the 'bad people' and 'bad things' away from us? Apparently not. So, we must come to terms with the facts of this life lived in the world.

The development of God's Kingdom among us is going to be messy. The children of God and those of the enemy, those living life in the Spirit and those living in the flesh, live and breathe and have their being side by side, both inside the Church and its communities and outside it. Yet, although the messiness is part of the catastrophic disruption in creation of original sin, we have been given a helper so that we can navigate through the messiness (in the world, in the church, within ourselves). As St. Paul said in the second reading, 'the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness'. No matter what the circumstances in time through the generations, if we individually and together... listen to Him and do what he says, we can be sure that even the most difficult obstacles, threats and dangers can be overcome.

Wickedness and fidelity will continue to exist side by side, the weeds and the wheat thoroughly entangled. Because this is a truth also in our souls, even Christ's Church is home to saints and sinners. Even our first Pope denied Christ. There will always be sinners in the Church and leading the Church. But if we allow the weeds in ourselves and others in the Church to lead us away from Christ, then we're doing nothing less than giving the enemy victory in our lives. Living in the midst of this mess, which is wrought through sin, will test our faith even greatly at times, but it shouldn't destroy it. We must have patience with each other and ourselves. Patience which is borne of holiness through humble obedience as we strive to Love God and Love our neighbor.