

Scripture Study

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Wisdom 12:13,16-19

(Ps 86:5-6,9-10,15-16)

Romans 8:26-27

Matthew 13:24-43

Overview of the Gospel:

- Last Sunday, we were introduced to Matthew 13 as a chapter of parables. This week we have three more parables, all with “growth” as a theme.
- Jesus tells another parable about a “sower”, this time one who has an enemy who secretly sows his field with weeds. This certain type of weed (called “tares” or “darnel” in some translations) contained a fungus that was poisonous to people and animals, causing severe nausea. This was sometimes done for revenge or maliciousness and the Romans had severe penalties to those caught committing such an act. These weeds look just like wheat in the early stages of growth thus making them almost impossible to remove without ruining the wheat.
- The owner of the field decides to let the wheat and the tares grow side by side until the harvest. In biblical terms, “the harvest” is often associated with a day of God’s judgment (Jeremiah 51:33; Joel 4:13; Hosea 6:11; Revelation 14:14-20).

Questions:

- What does the 1st Reading teach us about God’s might, justice and mercy? How is the way that God acts (or does not act) different from the way that we might act? What, according to the writer of the Book of Wisdom, should this teach us about God and ourselves?
- In our journey to becoming more like God, from Whom do we receive assistance? What kind of assistance does he give us?
- In the parable of the weeds (verses 24-30 and verses 36-40), who is the sower? What does the wheat represent? The weeds? The enemy? The harvest?
- How does this parable relate to Matthew 7:15-20?
- Why does this parable so puzzle the disciples? Why is patience and tolerance toward unbelievers difficult for them (and for us)?
- In the parable of the mustard seed and the yeast (verses 31-33), what aspects of Jesus’ ministry seem small? What is the promise if the small seed is sown?
- How does the kingdom of heaven become evident to others?
- Where (in your life or in your parish) have you seen faith like “yeast” or a “mustard seed” have a great impact? Where is the harvest field God has placed you in?
- What accountability are you now feeling for yourself? For others? To God? What are you “hearing” God call you to do as a result?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 827, 2284—2287, 764

Closing prayer

Jesus is the teacher of holiness. I go to him because I want him to teach me how to become a saint. Of what use to me is all I learn in school if I do not become holy? -St. Francis de Sales

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father"

Scripture: *Matthew 13:24-43*

Meditation: What can malicious weed-sowing tell us about the kingdom of God? The image Jesus uses here is a common everyday example of planting, harvesting, and sorting the good fruit from the bad. Weeds can spoil and even kill a good harvest if they are not separated and destroyed at the proper time. Uprooting them too early, though, can destroy the good plants in the process. Just as nature teaches us patience, so God's patience also teaches us to guard the word he has planted in our hearts and to beware of the destructive force of sin and evil which can destroy it. God's word brings life, but Satan seeks to destroy the good seed which has been planted in the hearts of those who have heard God's word. God's judgment is not hasty, but it does come. And in the end, God will reward each according to what they have sown and reaped in this life. In that day God will separate the evil from the good. Do you allow God's word to take deep root in your heart?

What can mustard seeds and leaven teach us about the kingdom of God? The tiny mustard seed literally grew to be a tree which attracted numerous birds because they



loved the little black mustard seed it produced. God's kingdom works in a similar fashion. It starts from the smallest beginnings in the hearts of men and women who are receptive to God's word. And it works unseen and causes a transformation from within. Leaven is another powerful agent of change. A lump of dough left to itself remains just what it is, a lump of dough. But when the leaven is added to it a transformation takes place which produces rich and wholesome bread when heated – the staple of life for humans. The kingdom of God produces a transformation in those who receive the new life which Jesus

Christ offers. When we yield to Jesus Christ, our lives are transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Paul the Apostle says, "*we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us*" (2 Cor. 4:7). Do you believe in the transforming power of the Holy Spirit?

Good and evil are sown in our hearts like tiny seeds which germinate, and in due time yield a harvest of good or bad fruit. Charles Read said: "Sow an act and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny." In the day of judgment each will reap what he or she has sown in this life. Those who sow good *will shine in the kingdom of their Father*. They will radiate with the beauty, joy, and fullness of God's love. Do you allow the love of Christ to rule in your heart and in your actions?

"Lord Jesus, let your word take root in my heart and may your all-consuming love transform my life that I may sow what is good, worthy, and pleasing to you."

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