

## **Homily For Tuesday of the 17th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1**

### **St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - July 27, 2021**

**Ex. 33:7-11,34:4-9** "God is merciful and gracious, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation."

**Psalms 103:6-13** "The Lord, the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

**Matthew 13:36-43** "All causes of sin will be thrown in the fire. The righteous will shine like the sun."

### **Slow To Anger**

#### **Introduction**

When I hear that someone has rejected belief in God because of the existence of evil, because a God who is truly good would not permit evil, I am confused. I would certainly be right there with the disciples asking Jesus to explain his parable of the wheat and weeds.

It seems so obvious that God's goodness must allow for humans to have the freedom to choose the good. And, therefore, evil thoughts, words and actions are not only possible, but likely. Otherwise, we are just puppets or programmed machines. But, if I give that answer to an atheist, I wonder if I am being simplistic or if I am missing something obvious.

#### **Jesus**

Jesus' explanation of his parable of the weeds and wheat growing up together is obviously very important. The church sets this passage before us on a Tuesday, even though the parable itself was proclaimed back on Saturday, with the Lord's Day and the feast day of Joachim and Ann, the parents of Mary, are in between.

In Sacred Scripture itself, we see that the disciples are especially puzzled and want to know what it means, even though, since he told them that parable, he also told them the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the yeast. But this is the one they want him to explain. This is the one that troubles them, as maybe it should trouble us also, I would suggest.

Jesus says God is the one who sows good wheat only. Well, that's answer to whether God created evil. It is not God who has sown the weed seeds, but the 'evil one'. It explains so much doesn't it? When we look at the opening chapters of our human story, we see that, in the beginning, God created everything good and very good. In terms of relationship, there was only intimacy with God and between human beings.

But, then the note of disharmony was introduced. It came from somewhere - the evil one - but it also had to have a willing recipient, which is the human capacity to choose evil and reject good.

The parable of Jesus tells us that evil will coexist with good and it will often be almost impossible to tell the difference. This should give us pause. Many things that are suggested by the world, as something good for individuals, are highly destructive in the long run for the whole of society. Many examples could be given here. If we look at the life issues, like abortion and assisted suicide, we hear real stories that cause us to feel compassion for people in very difficult circumstances. But the choosing of death to deal with those circumstances creates a general belief in the culture that killing is the solution to a problem which is calling for support and compassionate presence with those who are suffering.

Like the weeds among the wheat, wicked persons and behaviours may not be easily distinguished from the faithful and from good deeds. Good people are told they are full of hate for standing up for Gospel values and Christian teaching. Cancel culture makes decisions about who is good and who is evil based on principles other than what we learn from our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Jesus explains that, as evil starts to reveal itself, and it always will sooner or later, at harvest time, God will send his angels to uproot the weeds. That is when it will be clear what is good and what is evil.

While the parable encourages patience with the presence of wickedness in the world, it also provides assurance that the faithful children of the kingdom will be vindicated and the wicked will face a severe judgment. However, God's mercy

extends to them, since they are given time to mend their ways and repent. Otherwise, all of us would be condemned, because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

## **Exodus**

Those same people who don't believe in God may also claim declare that the God of the Old Testament is full of wrath, anger and judgment. Yet today's very important passage from Exodus provides God's own answer to the question of whether we can trust God to be good. Verses 6 and 7 of Chapter 13 are the most often repeated verses by the writers of the scriptures themselves, by prophets and kings and psalmists. They tell us of seven attributes of God. Can they trust in God? Can we trust God to be good?

The people had just made a golden calf and worshipped it. Moses, after his initial anger, intercedes for them and renews the commitment of the people to commit to him. God declares: I, the Lord, the Lord, am:

- Merciful
- Gracious
- Slow to anger
- Abounding in steadfast love
- and faithfulness
- Keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation
- Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin

## **Call To Action**

This is the God who has called you and me. This is the Good News. Should we be worried about judgment? Of course, but notice the balance of God's mercy. His love endures for a thousand generations, compared to the consequences of evil, which last only last three or four generations.

Even the judgment that Jesus describes in his parable, those who are evil being plucked by the angels and thrown into the fire, has a very important element in it of God's love and mercy. Unlike in my garden, where I have to get the weeds early

to be most successful, at least one saint explains that God leaves those who do evil mixed in with the good, to give them every chance to repent and turn back to God. That is why we have confidence in God who lives with us, who is faithful, who forgives our iniquities and transgressions and sins, and who calls us out of the weeds into his wonderful light.