

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

### **St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - July 30, 2019**

**Ex. 33:7-11,34:4-9** "Pardon the iniquity and sin of this stiff necked people. Take us for your inheritance."

**Psalms 103** "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

**Matthew 13:36-43** "Evildoers will be thrown into fire and the righteous will shine like the sun."

### **Leave the Weeds Alone ... For Now**

#### **Introduction**

Every year, there are at least a couple of sincere young men who come by our house asking if they can get rid of our weeds for us. And every year, I say no thanks, I'm going to leave them there and hope the grass is healthy enough to keep the weeds somewhat under control. Even though Jesus is probably not giving lawn care advice with his parable about weeds and wheat, I feel like I'm on the right side of Jesus with my decision.

#### **Lawn Care According to Jesus**

The story of our salvation tells us that everything about creation was good. God made it and God saw that it was good. With humans, it was 'very good'. That is also what Jesus says in the parable of weeds and wheat. God is the sower and has sown good wheat only. It is not God who has sown the weeds, but the 'evil one'. It explains so much doesn't it?

In this passage we don't read the parable of the weeds, but only the explanation of it. The disciples want to know what it means. If we are to be disciples, we need to ask the same questions: What do you mean, Lord? Why are there weeds? Why is there evil? In our time, we know that many have abandoned faith because they say evil could not possibly exist if God is so good.

Jesus tells us in many ways how things are and how they will go. The kingdom is dawning but evil will coexist with good and it will often be almost impossible to tell the difference. How often are we confused or even fully deceived by what is going on right in front of us in our own time and our own culture. Apparently,

there is a kind of weed that looks like wheat in its early stages, but its poisonous nature starts to show itself later on. 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.

### **After Calf Decaf**

The weeds were pretty evident amongst the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. It took only 40 days of Moses' absence for Israel to forget God's many favours and seek another deity. But the making of the golden calf indicated that they were really still slaves to gods who can do nothing for them. Moses was so disappointed, breaking the commandment tablets in his anger.

To them, Moses was everything in their ongoing relationship with God. His anger was God's anger. His judgment on them was God's judgment. He won God's forgiveness for them. And so, they became penitent before *him*. But it also means that they are very distant from the God who is their true liberator. Then, only Moses would speak face to face with God "as with a friend" it says, while the people stood at a distance and bowed.

### **Inside or Outside**

The cloud in front of the tent was given as a sign that God wouldn't go back on his promise not to destroy them for their. Jesus is given to us as *the sign* that God lives amongst his people, not in a distant tent. Jesus went into the house and the disciples followed him. The house represents the tent where God dwells. A disciple is one who is friends with Jesus. This is not a buddy to hang out with. This is the one who we can ask with confidence about the meaning of our lives. It is really Jesus himself in whom dwells the fullness of God's presence.

### **Judgment**

The psalmist says that the Lord is kind and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He does not deal with us according to our sins. He is like a father who has compassion for his children. The parable tells us to be patient with the wickedness of the world. At the same time, it also provides assurance that faithful

children of the kingdom will be vindicated and the wicked will face a severe judgment, as the weeds are thrown into the fiery furnace.

Should we be worried about judgment? Of course, but notice that good and evil are not equal in their influence. God's blessings last a thousand generations. The effects of evil only last three or four generations.

Where do we see the good wheat triumphing today? As it comes to the last two official days of Fr. Troy's time at St. Peter's, isn't it wonderful how we can rejoice that God has made himself present to us in such a beautiful through his faithfulness to his calling to the priesthood? He is a reminder to us that God is a faithful presence to his people. Even in only one year with him as a brother deacon, I could tell many stories of how I have been inspired by his humility and faithfulness.

Do we think that God would be less present after the coming of his son than 1500 years before Jesus? No, he is more present. We are not on a downward slope or a descending spiral, or even a repeating circular pattern. God has been going somewhere with us. He has been taking us on an ascending journey.

St. Peter Chrysologus, today's saint, explains that it is not by something in nature that we are saved but by God's power. So, then do not dishonour yourself by evil. The Creator, in the flesh, brings dignity to humanity. In this way he fully raised man to God, and left in him neither sin, nor death, nor pain, nor anything earthly, with the grace of our Lord Christ Jesus.

Today's question for us is: Am I outside in fear of a God whom I cannot understand, or am I inside with Jesus, thankful that he is my judge, but also my friend. Yes, the weeds are there, but our confidence is in God who lives with us, who is faithful, who calls us out of the weeds into his wonderful light.