

Homily For Tuesday of the 17th Week of in Ordinary Time- Year II

St Peter's 8:30am Mass - July 28, 2020

Jer. 14:17-22 "We acknowledge our wickedness, the iniquity of our ancestors, we sinned against you."

Psalm 59:1-17 "Deliver us and forgive our sins, for your name's sake."

Matt 13:36-43 "His angels will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers."

Yes, There is Both Good and Evil

Introduction

Sometimes we count on those who have made it a career to study the Bible, to explain certain parts of Sacred Scripture that we have to guess at or that just don't seem to make sense. There is the Word of God, the Bible, and then its human interpreters. In this case today, we have THE Word of God, Jesus Christ himself, telling us what the parable of the wheat and weeds means. It is authoritative because it comes from the one who is the source of all authority. And yet, we still seem to have questions about what it means for us and for the Church today.

Theme: The Reality of Hell and Its Inhabitants

It is a very Catholic thing to say that we don't know for sure that anyone living now, or in history, will be in hell. It's not ours to judge and we believe in the possibility that hell is empty.

But there is no denying that Jesus proclaims it more than once as a given. There are only two paths and two destinations, and every single person is on one of those paths. That is both disturbing and assuring. It is assuring because there is this great possibility of a glorious eternity as children of the kingdom, shining like the sun. That is God's plan for us. That is how we begin and it is his destiny for us.

It is also most disturbing because it means that you and I will be judged. It means that everything we see and everything that happens and every person will undergo a kind of scrutiny, the result of which may be everlasting condemnation. It is as much of a reality as the furnace of fire which his hearers at the time could

see in the burning garbage dump outside Jerusalem, called Gehenna. The world we see today has become obsessed with eliminating the judgment that is racism. That should be a good thing. And yet, that same world is in denial that there will be consequences for all sins.

Matthew

Jesus teaching begins inside a house, away from the crowds. This is the place of intimacy with the Lord, so that he can share with those closest to him, that they may be able to teach others about the hidden kingdom of heaven.

We think about heaven after we die, but he's talking about the reign of God within Israel and within the church. He is talking about the earth, the present life. That is why it is so relevant for us.

The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.

The field is the world.

The good seed are the children of the kingdom.

The weeds are the children of the evil one.

The enemy who sowed them is the devil.

The angels will collect all causes of sin and all evildoers and throw them into the furnace of fire. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Lamentation

In Jeremiah and in the psalm, we see the lamentation of those who know their guilt. It sounds so negative and discouraging. And yet we could use a greater awareness of our guilt today.

Jeremiah: Why have you struck us down so that there is no healing for us? We acknowledge our wickedness the iniquity of our ancestors, for we have sinned

against you. Do not spurn us, for your name's sake. Remember and do not break your covenant with us.

Psalm: Will you be angry forever? Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors for we are brought very low. Deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name's sake. Preserve those doomed to die.

Hope in Jesus

And yet, both readings strongly suggest that God is truly merciful to those who repent. We set our hope on you/preserve those doomed to die. We will give thanks to you forever. We will recount your praise.

Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man, but clearly he does what only God can do. He sows the good seed of the children of the kingdom. He also will be the one to call out the angels to carry out the judgment. But his desire is always for repentance. In a way, the parable actually encourages patience with the presence of wickedness.

St. Isidore explains that the sinners are the weeds not to be pulled and burned in order to give them time to repent. St. Peter himself was not condemned for his denial of the Lord, nor did St. Paul get struck down before he had the opportunity to explain the salvation offered by Jesus Christ on the cross and in the resurrection .

Wheat or Weeds

Do we get discouraged by the presence of evildoers, even in the Church? Pope Benedict warned that Catholics today must resist what he calls the temptation of impatience for the Church to grow and be purified.

Those who have distanced themselves from the Church, even those we know and love, are calling us to dare, once again and with the humility of a small grain, to wait for God to work out his plan.

Like the psalmist, we ask for God's mercy but we do not assume it. Right now, we need to let Jesus examine and interpret our lives. We don't need to wait until the

angels come to reap the harvest. In fact, today is the moment we must ask which path we are on.