
Sunday 19th July 2020 – The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Readings: Romans 8:12-25 & Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Romans 8:12-25

Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation – but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Jesus told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed ears, then the weeds also appeared.

‘The owner’s servants came to him and said, “Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?”

“An enemy did this,” he replied.

'The servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?"

"No," he answered, "because while you are pulling up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.'

He answered, 'The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people 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.

'As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Reflection

One of the key words in both readings this week is "waiting." In his letter to the Romans, Paul was writing to a community who were undergoing the most horrendous trials. These may have been some of the questions Paul was addressing; "When are our sufferings going to end? When will we see the kingdom of God revealed in all of its power, in all of its glory? When will our persecutors receive the judgment they surely deserve? Come to that, will our persecutors receive the judgment they deserve? Where is God in all of this?"

Paul's answer is to remind the Roman believers who they are and whose they are; Romans 8:14 & 15: "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God... the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba Father'. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." Adoption to sonship is a legal term. Their new relationship with God is binding. God cannot nor will not abandon them!

Incidentally did you notice how many times Paul mentions "children" and "sonship"?! Paul really wanted these believers to be secure in their new identity and to remember the benefits their adoption entitled them to! Firstly, they no longer need to be ruled by fear (v14). Death no longer has a hold over them! Rather they are co-heirs with Jesus. One day they will share in Jesus' glory and all of creation will rejoice with them! Secondly, their current sufferings are not worth comparing to what awaits them!

Paul urges them to fix their hope on what is to come and to wait patiently in the meantime. Paul doesn't dismiss their trials – these are real and unavoidable – but he urges the believers to focus on who and what will sustain them; “who” being God's Holy Spirit; and “what” being their promised inheritance. God is still in control and all will be well.

In the parable of the weeds the farmer sows the seed. At first all seems well; but later his servants spot weeds growing amongst the wheat. They are darnel; a grass that looks identical to wheat until the seed head forms; they are most unpleasant if ingested; causing nausea, dizziness or worse. Moreover, these weeds have not appeared by chance; an enemy has sown them deliberately to spoil the farmer's crop. The farmer tells his servants not to pull out the weeds because the crop will be damaged in the process. Instead, they are to wait until harvest; when it will be easy to spot the difference between the true grain and the rogue grain; the first to be kept and the second burnt.

In Matthew 13:36-43, Jesus explains that he, the Son of Man, is the farmer. The field represents the world; the good seeds those who belong to the kingdom; while the weeds are those who show allegiance to the evil one. It's only when the grain begins to form that their true likeness can be seen. And because the farmer doesn't want to destroy the good alongside the bad, he has to wait. It may look as if he is doing nothing, but the farmer is actively waiting, never taking his eyes off the crop, watching for the optimum time to bring in a full harvest.

Like the Roman Christians we experience pain and suffering as a result of evil. We look at our broken world and wonder why God seems to be silent. This parable suggests the answer. If God were to remove all that is evil in the world, we would experience collateral damage. Instead God gave his Son to pay the ultimate price for all of mankind. God cannot be hurried as he waits for the harvest. He wants to give everyone the chance to align with him. At the right time God will act. He is still in control.

So, remember who you are and whose you are! Nothing can separate you from God's love. Remember the hope that God has planted in you. Breathe deeply of his Holy Spirit. One day all will be well. That's God's promise!

Amen

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