

SUNDAY NOTES 19TH JULY PENTECOST 7 2020

Wisdom 12. 13,16-19

For neither is there any god besides you, whose care is for all people, to whom you should prove that you have not judged unjustly;

For your strength is the source of righteousness, and your sovereignty over all causes you to spare all. For you show your strength when people doubt the completeness of your power, and you rebuke any insolence among those who know it.

Although you are sovereign in strength, you judge with mildness, and with great forbearance you govern us; for you have power to act whenever you choose.

Romans 8.24-27

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Matthew 13.24-30, 36-45

He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?” He answered, “An enemy has done this.” The slaves said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” But he replied, “No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.’ He answered, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls;

Introduction

We go to Church, not because we think we are saints, but because we know we fall noticeably short of perfection. Thankfully, we have a Lord who is always patient with us and always ready to receive what we can give. He never abandons us but calls us back to the right path.

Old Testament

It is very unusual for the lectionary to prescribe a reading from the Apocryphal Books of the Old Testament. The lectionary offers an alternative reading from Isaiah but we will use the reading from the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon. The extract points out that God's attitude towards his creatures is fundamentally one of care. Though God has both the knowledge and the power to root out evil people if He so desired, He is patient in the face of human wickedness and gives people the chance to repent. This should all serve as a blueprint for our dealings with one another. Mercy and leniency towards our brothers and sisters are an expression not of weakness but of strength.

Epistle

In this short extract St Paul is talking of prayer and it is a profound form of prayer he means. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray when we are at a loss to find the words we need to express what is in our mind. Many of us find prayer tedious or downright difficult. Despair not. The Holy Spirit comes to the rescue.

Gospel

Jesus parable of the wheat and seeds originally addressed the problem of sinners in the kingdom. The Pharisees believed that the Kingdom was for saints only. Sinners should be ruthlessly and absolutely weeded out. Jesus attempted a different approach. The seed was good seed, so the farmer's workers were surprised to find there were weeds growing along with the wheat. However, living in an age before pesticides, they would have recognised the good sense in waiting until the harvest and then they could separate the wheat and the weeds. As usual, the disciples do not get the meaning of this parable and want an explanation. In essence, what Jesus is trying to teach them is that up to the last judgement, the kingdom will be a decidedly mixed bag of saints and sinners. Over the centuries the Church has not been good at living this truth. It is not for the modern Church to play God by attempting to purify itself through the modern-day equivalent of purges and inquisitions. The definitive separation of the good and the evil-ones (if that indeed is what happens) must be left to the future judgement of God. Meanwhile we live with the messiness.