

**Sermon Proper 11 Year A**

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 23, 2017

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Isaiah 44: 6-8 Psalm 86: 11-17 Romans 8: 12-25 Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-46

May the words I speak, be only yours, O Lord,  
And the words we hear, be only your message of love,  
so we may share that love with all whom we meet  
in the days to come. Amen

Have you ever noticed how often we try to divide the world into two kinds of people?

Mark Twain once said, “There are basically two types of people.

People who accomplish things and people who claim to have accomplished things.

The first group is less crowded.”

Jim Thorpe, the first Native American to win the Olympic Gold Medal, stated that

“The world is divided into two types of people:

those who love to talk, and those who have to listen to them.”

Of course, good old Dear Abby weighed in on this as well.

“There are two kinds of people in the world –

those who walk into a room and say, ‘There you are!’

and those who say, ‘Here I am!’ ”

OK, one more.

Robert Benchley, newspaper columnist and film actor said this.

“There are two kinds of people in the world,

those who believe there are two kinds of people in the world and those who don’t.

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Today’s gospel lesson, also deals with the concept

that there are two kinds of people in the world,

the wheat and the weeds, the good and the bad, the righteous and the evil.

Often those who believe in two kinds of people also believe, with all their hearts, that not only are they themselves the wheat, (you know, the good people, the righteous ones) they also believe that they know who the weeds are.

They also believe that it is their job, their responsibility and obligation to rid the world of the weeds.

Sitting around worrying about who's good and who's bad, who's in and who's out, distracts us from the real work God has called us to.

That is, the work of proclaiming, and living, the Kingdom of God.

As laborers in the Kingdom we're NOT called to the task of separation and judgment.

That belongs completely to God, who's much better suited to that task.

Our calling is to spread the seeds of God's love, in word and deed, trusting God with the outcome.

We're like the farmer who carefully sows good seed by sowing seeds in the field of our lives.

We can sow these seeds by working hard to raise a good family; by making good relationships; helping a loved one who is battling with a disease; or by fighting for better schools, healthcare, the environment, and peace in our world.

However, we do live in a world where good and evil coexist, and there's not much we can do about that.

We can resist evil and temptation, for sure, (and we must resist them,)

But ... we can't get rid of them.

In fact, it isn't even our job to get rid of them.

Saint Augustine once said, "What is currently wheat, can become a weed, and what is a weed, can still become wheat, and no one knows what they will be tomorrow."

None of us is perfect, nor are we immune from failure.

We shouldn't be blind to our own weaknesses.

And as sons and daughters of the church, there is great need for us to lament our sins, and to repent, or turn back, from them.

It is good for us to be mindful of our own failings, and of who saves us from them.

As the Apostle Paul states in today's epistle, we must trust in the Holy Spirit, who comes to our aid.

Confessing our sins each Sunday, affirms the need for repentance and confirms God's grace, forgiveness, and desire for reconciliation.



As the Peanut's character Lucy stated, "When you point a finger at someone, you're pointing three at yourself."

Consider this example.

A man was stopped at a traffic light, waiting for the light to turn green.

When the light changed, he was distracted and he didn't budge.

The woman in the car behind him honked her horn. He still didn't move.

She honked again, and by this time she was pounding on the steering wheel and blowing her horn non-stop.

Finally, just as the light turned yellow, the man looked up and drove through the light.

The woman was beside herself and used her own form of finger pointing.

Still in mid-rant, she heard a tap on her car window.

She looked up to see the face of a police officer.

"Lady, you're under arrest," he said. "Get out of the car. Put your hands up."

He took her to the police station, had her finger-printed, photographed, and then put her in a holding cell. Hours passed by.

The officer returned, unlocked the cell door, and escorted her to the booking desk.

“Sorry for the mistake, lady,” he said.

“But I pulled up behind you as blew your horn and cursed the fellow in front of you.

I noticed the stickers on your bumper. One read “Follow me to Sunday School.”

The other, “What would Jesus do?” So, naturally, I assumed you had stolen the car.”



The Kingdom of God is a mixed bag in which weeds and wheat grow together.

They’re side by side, and we can’t always tell them apart.

We’ll always have evil lurking somewhere among us.

It is not our job to weed evil out of others, (a practice better known as revenge)

because we can’t see into the hearts of people whom we might judge as being evil.

Vengeance resolves nothing. It only increases evil.

Judgment and criticism run rampant in our world.

And in our own lives, there might be more weeds than we care to admit,  
and getting rid of just our own is, well, easier said than done.

As Christians, it’s better to focus on practicing forgiveness and patience.

It’s true, sometimes weeds spring up that we didn’t have anything to do with.

When that happens, it’s important NOT to mis-identify the problem  
as being the problem person.

By focusing on God’s goodness, through faith in the Jesus,

we can experience God’s love guiding and protecting us

when we’re in the midst of the evils of the world and struggles in our lives.

Sometimes we hear this called, “loving the sinner and hating the sin.”

This should not be about judging others, but rather about being understanding of those who are different from us.

In those times when we do need to call people into accountability for their actions, in order to move forward, we must always be willing to forgive.

Progress in the spirit of love requires affirming the good in people, instead of always looking for the bad.

Because this is so seldom seen in secular settings such as businesses, workplaces, and in the media, we can strive to make sure that the values of grace, tolerance, love and forgiveness are at least put into practice in the church and in our own homes.

The parable of the sower is a lesson about mercy.

While the forces of good and evil will be sorted out some day, there’s still time for change now.

The parable is a story about grace, patience and hope.

When we look back on our own mistakes;

times when we were the stubborn rocky ground;

when we were ornery thorny brambles; or when our roots were so shallow

that we simply let the wind and birds sweep us away;

we recognize that we have been given the opportunity to change and make amends.

Our gratitude for God giving us those chances, can give us motivation for reflecting that grace and offering it to others.



Let us pray.

Holy gracious God, take our minds and think through them;  
take our hands and feet and work through them;  
take our lips and speak through them,  
and take our hearts and set them on fire for you  
and for all your sons and daughters. Amen.

Resources:

Liteway.com April 2017

The Text This Week: Scripture Study, Worship Links, and Resource

New American Bible: St. Joseph Addition

Adaption: Paul LeClair