

16th Sunday A

The Gospel today gives us the second week in our series of parables.

Parables are stories that are rich in many layers of meaning.

And they often address these 5 points.

1. What does this say about God?
2. What does this say about the Kingdom?
3. What is the surprise element?
4. How does this parable challenge us?
5. What does this call me to do?

So the first parable:

A man plants his field with wheat and the enemy comes and plants weeds.

And they grow.

When the servants discover this, they immediately want to pull up the weeds.

Seems logical, doesn't it?

But the man says, "No, let them stay until harvest time. Then we can separate them."

What does this tell us about God?

It says that God allows good and evil to exist together.

... that God is patient giving us all time to change

Jesus explains that God is the sower, the field is the world, the good seeds are God's children, the weeds are the evil ones, the enemy is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the world.

But what about the servants? Who are they?

They are the ones who are quick to want to get rid of the misfits, get rid of the ones who don't belong, the outsiders, the evil ones. We can identify with them.

Who among us have not questioned why God allows evil?

Who among us have not wanted to rid the world of bad seed?

We think we know best.

We are quick to "weed out" those we determine to be "not like us"

Who we judge don't belong

Who we call misfits.

We saw that happen all too tragically with the ethnic cleansing of Nazi Germany.

But God says, let me decide that. The judgment is up to God.

Then there is another connection:

We too are a mixture of weeds and wheat, of good and bad,

we are at the same time saint and sinner.

We have to acknowledge that we are both or either we will think too highly of ourselves

OR we will think we are terrible. Both are dangerous.
We have to accept that we are a mixture and so is everyone else.
It doesn't mean that it's all OK... but realize I'm not perfect and you're not perfect.
The church is not perfect America is not perfect.

Accept the messiness ... allow the field to grow together.
As my grandmother used to say, "It will all come out in the wash!"

So this parable says...

God is the final judge, not us

The surprise is that God allows the good and evil to grow together until the end.

The challenge is to see that we are not perfect nor is anyone else.

And even in the midst of evil, of trouble, of bad times, ...

some good can be found in the middle of it all.

And finally, our call is to look at our attitudes, our ways of thinking and of judging.

The next two parables are similar.

They are about great things coming from small beginnings.

The mustard seed grows into a large tree and the leaven, though hidden, expands the bread.

St. Francis began with a few brothers and within a few years, thousands were his followers, bringing Christ's message to the world.

Rose Hawthorne took a woman who had cancer into her home and thus began the Hawthorne Dominican order of sisters who care for dying cancer patients.

Mother Theresa picked up one person off the street and her work among the poorest of the poor is now world- wide.

A man in Pax Christi parish heard of a family that had no beds for their children, so he started collecting furniture to give away. Now there is a huge warehouse called "Bridging" that serves the homeless.

What can we learn from these parables?

Little things that God begins have large endings.

Don't worry about doing great things. Take one small thing and watch it grow.