

Our Gospel parable today tells of a farmer who planted wheat. Unfortunately for the farmer he had an enemy, and that enemy came during the dead of night and scattered weed seed among the newly planted wheat. After the seed germinated and the first blades came from the earth, the treachery was immediately evident. What to do? The most pragmatic and best action was to let them grow together until the harvest; then it would be easy to separate the good from the bad.

The Gospel parables always teach us something about the world in which we live and about God's realm - the community of believers. In today's passage, Jesus explained, to his followers, the reality of evil in this world. Jesus invites us to think of God as the farmer that planted good seed. God's intent, in creation, was a perfect and balanced order in which good would always prevail. God did not intend for there to be evil in this universe and he certainly cannot be understood as the author of evil. Nor can we claim that God uses evil to punish us for moral failure. That idea is bad theology that should have no voice in the Church. But at the same time, we cannot deny that evil is alive and present in the world. It seems to always have been and always will be until such time as our Lord returns. It is hard to explain evil except in terms of a certain dualism, unless you define evil as the absence of good, but philosophical dickering aside, it is clear that Jesus understood evil as the intentional product of the devil and that is what this parable is telling us, today.

We find evil in many ways and forms: crime, terrorism, human bondage, genocide, sexism, and deprivation of basic human rights certainly do not define an all-inclusive list. These things, and all sin, are driven by greed, anger, ignorance and hatred. There is no denying the presence of evil in this world. At any given moment, we tend to focus more on one evil than another, selecting our evil of the hour based on what has most recently grabbed our attention. Today, it is hard not to focus on religious terrorism as abject evil. If there has ever been pure evil perpetuated in the name of God, it is religious terrorism. That which is most insidiously evil is that which seeks to make itself good by calling falsely on the name of God. But religious terrorism is but one evil in a world of many evils.

What does Christian faith say about evil in this world? What does today's Gospel parable say about evil in this world? The parable teaches us, first, that evil is not accidental. The second thing it teaches us is that God does not put evil in this world; neither does he just let it happen. Today's parable makes this clear. Evil is the antithesis of God's good. Evil is the antithesis of God's intent. It is the enemy's intent and the enemy of God is the evil one, the devil, Satan, or whatever you want to call him. Christianity holds that evil in this world is intentional and intentionally the work of the Antichrist, the devil, in whatever form he might take. And the whole world suffers because of evil. But just as

clearly, Christian faith holds that in God's due course God's good will triumph, because Christ has triumphed. Christ is victorious. Christ won the battle against Satan by his victory over death, and in God's own good time, God's pervasive good will check evil, and the peace of God which passes all understanding, the perfect peace of triumphant Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, will prevail.

What does this mean for us? What does the parable say to us today? It says to have faith in the goodness of Almighty God and the work of his son, Jesus Christ. It says to place trust and hope in the unwavering righteousness of a just and loving God who is the creator and universal Lord. It says that to stand with Christ is to align ourselves on the side of good and be a good soldier of the Cross. As a Christian soldier, we will take the Cross as our standard and do all that we can to make the world around us just a little better, a day at a time. The parable tells us to never lose faith, because in the end, good will prevail. In his own time, God will separate the good from the bad, and the bad will perish from the face of the earth. In the words of Jesus, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!" *Amen.*

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