

Last week we heard a parable about seed scattered on the ground, some of which bore no fruit while others bore fruit abundantly. In that parable, we were reminded of the need to cooperate with God's grace so that the seeds of faith which He sows in our lives might bear forth great fruit. Today, we hear a similar parable about weeds and wheat in which a man sowed good seed in his field but while he slept an enemy sowed weeds. When his servants asked if they should pull out the weeds, he said, "No, if you pull out the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest."

As we heard Jesus explain, in this parable the field is the world and the good seeds are the children of the Kingdom. Meanwhile, the enemy is Satan and the weeds are those who do evil. The harvest is the end of the age when the good will be ushered into Paradise and the evil will be burned in an unquenchable fire. In the context of this parable, the decision to leave the wheat and weeds together until harvest time makes sense because they both look the same while growing and the wheat could be uprooted mistakenly along with the weeds. The spiritual meaning behind Jesus' words, however, is not clear at first glance.

In reflecting on these words, St. Augustine said, "Let one who is wheat persevere until the harvest; let those who are weeds be changed into wheat. There is this difference between people and real grain and real weeds, for what was grain in the field is grain and what were weeds are weeds. But in the Lord's field, which is the Church, at times what is grain turns into weeds and at times what were weeds turn into grain; and no one knows what they will be tomorrow."

With this beautiful insight, we gain the ability to unlock the true meaning of Jesus' decision to let the weeds and the wheat grow together until harvest time. St. Jerome tells us that these words of Jesus "leave room for repentance... for it may happen that one who has been corrupted today by evil may recover his senses

tomorrow by sound teaching and abide by the truth.” This truth is further highlighted by today’s first reading from the Book of Wisdom when it says, “Though you are the master of might, you judge with clemency... and you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; and you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins.”

I personally think that deep down we all want to be wheat, to be good people, but sometimes sadly we are not. Today’s parable says that this is because “while everyone was asleep [Satan] came and sowed weeds all through the wheat.” God planted the desire for goodness and love in our hearts, but sometimes our intentions go astray and we end up becoming weeds, doing bad things which hurt others and hurt ourselves. This occurs whenever Satan sows evil in our hearts while we are “sleeping.” We are “asleep” whenever we stop focusing on doing good, and instead become distracted by the world, making bad decisions and falling into bad habits.

These roots of evil begin by growing slowly and invisibly within our hearts and minds. They begin with small mistakes like being mean to those around us when we are tired and upset. Then slowly overtime as we begin to become more unhappy, we try to heal our hurts in unhealthy ways. These bad decisions begin to mount up until we find ourselves comfortably doing things that we once would have abhorred. Before we know it, we are trapped in patterns of sin that we never wanted, doing things that we never would have believed that we were capable of. Even though we started out as wheat, overtime we slowly ended up becoming weeds.

Today’s message is a message of hope that we can stop being weeds and become wheat once again. The first step in this is “waking” up, becoming aware of the things that are not good for us then actively working to change them. Satan doesn’t want this, however, and he will try to entrap us in shame, saying that we can never be forgiven for what we have done. This is a lie, however, a lie that is revealed

the very moment we go to the Sacrament of Confession and experience God's forgiveness and mercy as He takes away our burden of sin so that we begin once again on the right path.

This, of course, is just the start of our journey. For we must continue to stay awake and vigilant by beginning to change the habits and attitudes that brought us to such a dark place. An easy example of this would be if we suffered from an addiction. After going to confession, we would be freed from our sins but our addiction would remain. We would still need to uproot this addiction from our hearts and lives so that we can finally live the life of freedom that God meant for us.

In the same way that evil can grow slowly in our lives until it turns us into weeds, God's grace can also grow slowly in our hearts until we become wheat. We must invite God into our brokenness so that He can become our strength. We must beg Him to give us the people and the gifts that we need to transform the weeds in our life into wheat. Sometimes, we do not even know what we need to ask for, but this is when God's Spirit can come to our aid. As we heard in our second reading, "The Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes with inexpressible groanings. And the one who searches hearts knows what is the intention of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the holy ones according to God's will."

When we choose to turn towards God and cooperate with His grace, His strength will set us back on the right path so that the weeds in our life might finally be transformed back into wheat. While this won't happen all at once, just as the mustard seed slowly grows into a large plant and yeast slowly leavens bread, overtime our God will slowly grow ever greater in our hearts until He is all that remains. So, until that day, as St. Augustine said, "Let one who is wheat persevere until the harvest; let those who are weeds be changed into wheat."