

## HOMILY for 16<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

Reflecting on this Sunday's Gospel that talks about evil acts & enemies, I'm reminded this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A pastor grew watermelons to supplement his meager income (btw, that could be me...). He was doing all right, but it bothered him that local kids would sneak into his patch at night & eat his melons.

After some thought, he came up with an idea he felt sure would scare the kids away. The pastor made a sign reading, "WARNING! ONE OF THESE WATERMELONS HAS BEEN INJECTED WITH RAT POISON!" & posted it in the field. Pleased with himself, he went to bed.

The next day, the pastor surveyed his field & found that no watermelons were missing. But, there was a sign next to his reading, "NOW THERE ARE TWO!"

Anyway, if there's one thing that we humans are very good at, it would be revenge or getting back at the people who hurt us or wronged us. That's what we see happened in the cute story above. That's why we've witnessed wars & fights keep breaking out around the world since the beginning of Creation. The violent unrest continues to happen in the Middle East because people feel that they could carry out justice better than God does. So, if their neighbor wrongs them, they would do the same thing back to that person like what we see in the Old Wild West. That's why we've heard this expression in the Old Testament "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." If we don't like someone/something, we just get rid of that person/thing. That's why bad things & the vicious circle continue to happen in our world.

However, in today's Gospel, Jesus wants to suggest a different way for us to handle grievances or people who might have wronged us. Here's how Jesus addresses it in the form of a parable: "...The Kingdom of Heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep, his enemy came & sowed weeds all through the wheat, & then went off. When the crop grew & bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him & said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go & pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds, you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, 'First, collect the weeds & tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

First of all, Jesus wants us to know that He knows all about the battle of good vs. evil or light vs. darkness. He understands the suffering & endurance that good people or children of the light have to put up with evil folks or children of darkness in this world. He hears the cry of good people & all the jeering & mocking that they have to put up with everyday from the evil folks. He can see all the bad things that the evil folks have done in this life. But, He is not going to punish & destroy them right here & right now like what we've heard about in the Old Testament. For that way of punishment might affect the livelihood of good people or children of the light.

As you might recall, Sodom & Gomorrah were 2 sinful cities in the Old Testament. The Lord sent many prophets to call them to change their ways of life & find the divine forgiveness & salvation. But, they chose to continue their sinful ways. God had no choice except sending fire from the sky to destroy them all. The Lord did the same thing in Noah's story & sent

continuous rain for days & wiped out the whole sinful world. So, it seems that the Old Testament God is judgmental & not afraid to punish sinners right here in this life. But, that's what some good people would want to happen more often in our day & age for all the sinful things of evil folks. They've been frustrated to see evil folks live freely & enjoy their lives as if God does not care or cannot do anything about their sins.

However, Jesus seems to give the good people the answer for their concern in today's Gospel. That is the second point I'd like to tell you after sharing with you that Jesus knows all about the battle of good vs. evil, or light vs. darkness. Here's His answer: "... If you pull up the weeds, you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, 'First collect the weeds & tie them in bundles for burning; but gather wheat into my barn.'" So, Jesus wants to remind the good people that God will sort out the good from the bad on the Last Day or Harvest time. God will also carry out the divine justice on that day & throw evil folks into eternal fire while gathering good folks into the house of God. Maybe that's not what many good folks want to hear about divine justice. But, that's how it will happen on the Last Day.

Meanwhile, the other 2 parables in today's Gospel that use the images of the mustard seed & yeast basically remind us that the Kingdom of God or divine justice takes time to be realized. If the mustard seed takes time to grow into a big, strong plant that can shelter & protect many creatures under heaven, the Kingdom of God or divine justice also needs time to be revealed fully to us. Similarly, as the mixture of yeast & flour takes time to rise & develop into a tasty, good loaf of bread; the Kingdom of God or divine justice needs time to show itself & its sweet result in the end. We just need to be patient & let God show us God's plan & judgment in God's time. For now, the First Reading/the Book of Wisdom wants to give us this advice on our journey of faith to consider: "...Though you [Lord] are master of might, you judge with clemency; & with much lenience you govern us... And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind; & you gave your children good ground for hope that you would permit repentance for their sins." So, we're reminded to be kind & merciful like our God. We should leave all the judgment to God. We should leave all the judgment to God. Otherwise, we'd make ourselves to be God & cause all sorts of fights & bad examples to others in this world.

My dear brothers & sisters, it's not easy for us to live along side with evil folks & see them do whatever they like. However, today's Gospel wants to remind us that divine justice takes time to be realized, but it will be carried out fully on the Last Day. For now, we just need to be kind & merciful to people around us regardless of their sinful ways of life & leave all judgment to God.