

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

**Sixteenth Sunday
in Ordinary Time**

Gospel Word
Matthew 13:24-43

When Jesus spoke about the Kingdom, he used parables. Today's Gospel reading is no exception. In a way, he had to use parables to help people look at their beliefs from a different perspective because their beliefs were blocking the message. The issue faced by Jesus when he announced that God's Kingdom was at hand was that his hearers had certain ingrained ideas. They had ideas such as: it would be an experience enjoyed only by those who followed the Law rigorously and perfectly; it would be a mighty Jewish nation similar to Israel during the reign of King David; it would be made up of the conquered and the conquerors. This often led to the expectation of a "perfect" Kingdom. And it evoked a related question: How perfect would the lives of those living in the Kingdom of God be? Jesus believed that some good images would help them understand some of its characteristics.

He probably was suggesting: Be patient; Rome wasn't built in a day, nor is God's Kingdom. In fact, we shouldn't focus on magnificent results. They can deceive us, and may not at all be a part of what God intends.

In the matter of weeding the field, reading between the lines might suggest that Jesus is very concerned about each and every stalk of grain. In Kingdom terms, this means that God treasures each and every member of his Kingdom. So, be careful about pulling up growing things. You may "accidentally" pull up something that is needed by everyone. Let God be in charge of weeding.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

Most of us want everything to be perfect. That's why advertisers are always promising us the perfect car, the perfect vacation, or the perfect meal. But those of us who live in the real world (hopefully that includes all of us) know from experience that "perfect" is not something that's a part of ordinary life. Every day, for instance, we look in the mirror and we are reminded of certain imperfections.

But shouldn't something that God creates be perfect? If applied to us, it's a warning about making quick judgments about others. We have it in our bones to judge others—the good and the not so good. But really, everyone is a mix of both. Humans are a complex lot, filled with some good qualities and some qualities that, let's say, could use some improvement. The real world is messy. Jesus is saying that this is reality. This parable does not support passing judgment on others, especially in matters of God's Kingdom. Instead it is saying don't look for perfection where it can't be found. It calls us to be generous in accepting others and our own faults as persons in process. We are all "on the way" or as the Church says, a pilgrim people not yet arrived.

Prayer

Dear God, Sow in me a spirit of goodwill and generosity toward others and myself. Amen.