

Pentecost #7

7-19-2020

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

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Celebrate (Introduction)

“It is an age-old question: why is there evil in the world” In the parable of the wheat and weeds Jesus suggests that both grow together until the harvest. With Paul, we long for the day when all creation will be set free from bondage and suffering. Having both weeds and wheat within us, we humbly place our hope in the promises of God, and from the Lord’s Table we go forth to bear the fruit of justice and mercy.”

Opening Hymn: [“When Morning Gilds the Skies”](#)

Psalm 86:11-17

Teach me your way, O Lord,
that I may walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.
¹² I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever.
¹³ For great is your steadfast love toward me;
you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.
¹⁴ O God, the insolent rise up against me;
a band of ruffians seeks my life,
and they do not set you before them.
¹⁵ But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.
¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant;
save the child of your serving girl.
¹⁷ Show me a sign of your favor,
so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame,
because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

Hymn of Praise: [“Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“ Faithful God, most merciful judge, you care for your children with firmness and compassion. By your Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Isaiah 44:6-8](#)

2nd Reading: [Romans 8:12-25](#)

The Gospel: [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“Come, Ye Disconsolate”](#)

The Message ([Video](#))

There is little doubt that living in the year 2020 has been an extreme challenge. We not only have had to cope with an election year consumed by extremism, we have had to live with a deadly pandemic and societal uprising. If that were not enough, we have come face to face with a society that has difficulty in knowing the difference between what is true and what is false, no less what is good and what is evil. It is so easy to become discouraged and even question if this is what God’s creation is meant to be. Why is there the propensity for man to lie and to seek evil? If there is the seeking of a good life, why is there so much evil? If God created this life and world, why must we live with so much that is bad?

These are questions which have haunted mankind throughout the ages. The great minds of philosophers and theologians have written countless volumes in order to search for some meaning in all of this. In our own way we wrestle with this almost daily. Who’s to blame, God, the devil, man, circumstances, or providence?

We look for answers as if they will bring some kind of magical solution which will ease our conscience and sooth our anxieties and fears. Especially through difficult times we long for that Garden of Eden wherein we no longer have to ask the question, why?

The truth is that there is evil not because God chose to create it but because we have chosen to give life to it. In many ways we have glamorized it, accepted it, supported it, or at best ignored it. In movies, video games, music, and on TV we have supported the dark and evil side of life. We have allowed corruption to rule our government and we even glorify corrupt elected officials. Injustice and hate have become a way life for all too many. Is it any wonder why we have come to our present crisis?

We have come to this point because when evil benefits us as individuals everything is well and good. In many ways evil is despised on one hand and embraced on the other. Good and evil become relative to how it affects us. Evil then can in that way erroneously be seen by us as good. When evil works against us or even when it comes from us, we then like to place the blame on someone else, or on a circumstance or power beyond us. The devil made me do it. Better yet, we even blame God for the results of evil. Why did God let this happen? In this we are not any better than children who blame their errant actions on someone else – “Joey did it.” The basic fact is that we like to avoid the reality that evil is there because we allow it to be there. As much as we like to take responsibility and receive kudos for the good in our lives, we like to pass on the repercussions of evil onto others. This is quite evident among the spin doctors and politicians.

Jesus in His parable of the wheat and weeds or tares presents the reality of good and evil in life. The good is represented by the seeds of wheat which fall upon good soil producing a harvest of food. The bad or evil are the seeds of weeds or tares which yield a harvest of bitter and toxic grain. Both wheat and tares when they are young plants look very similar and grow in the same fashion. When mixed with wheat their root systems intermingle. By the time their differences are recognizable it is too late to weed out the tares because to do so the wheat is destroyed also. The only way to separate them is at harvest with the painstaking separation of the two. Many times an enemy of a farmer would deliberately distribute the tare seeds amidst the farmer's newly sown wheat field.

In this parable Jesus was saying that, whether we say we like it or not, good and evil not only exist but coexist in the life of a person for we are the soil upon which the seeds fall. Like the wheat and the tares it is often difficult to distinguish the nature of those things which enter our lives since they have been so integrated into the life of our society. When confronted with harboring evil we then try to camouflage it through rationalization. We may even go so far as to believe that the evil is good. It can work the other way also in rationalizing that good is evil. We have far too many examples of that today.

This is why the primary and fundamental doctrine of Christianity is that of repentance. Since man cannot escape the reality of both good and evil within his own life, evil must be recognized in oneself as the destructive power that it is. In our order of confession we state: we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves.” Notice the confession is before our actual worship for we must first be in recognition of the evil within us and know that we are free from its burden in order to effectively worship God. Likewise, we must prepare our lives through repentance before we are able to understand the forgiveness of God's love through Jesus

Without the acknowledgement that evil does exist in our lives we can never begin to rid ourselves of its entangling web of deception. Both good and evil will coexist within us but, like the tares evil will try to overcome the good and usually is successful. Thus honesty becomes the keystone to repentance and repentance underlies the life in Christ. To live this life in Christ we must recognize that there are and always will be the tares in our lives. Unless we honestly face

them there is no life. Paul relates, “We are debtors not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh, for if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

Even though evil and evildoers may rationalize and try to camouflage their actions, in the end they are seen for what they are. As the saying goes, “It all comes out in the wash.” We kid no one but ourselves when we rationalize our way through good and evil. At one point or another, the truth will be known. For us and for our society hopefully it will become known before it is too late. It is important for us because the truth we live is primary to the life in Christ.

God chose to make His love available to us through His Son, He chooses good for everyone through Christ. We are the ones who choose to make evil a reality and deny good. We are the ones to make the nighttime news what it is, not God. In the news of our making there is little hope with more turmoil and destruction of our lives. Jesus made it clear that there is no future or hope in letting the tares take over our lives and likewise our society. He said, “Just as the weeds (the tares) are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.” On the other hand, for those who repent of their evil they will find new hope and life. He states, “The righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.”

As Christians we must believe in the hope which can be found in being honest with ourselves and with each other. In this way we may find the strength to overcome all that is destroying us as individuals and as a society.

The Anthem: [“How Great Thou Art”](#) Jackie Evancho

We give thee but thine own, what-e’er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Our God whose mercy never ceases, we are struggling everyday to live through the pandemic and the turmoil which threatens our very existence. Open our minds so that we may clearly see the vision of hope which you have shown us through Jesus’ life and message. Give us the wisdom and strength to see the truth amidst all the false prophets and then to be the living example of this truth. We need the courage to stand against all the evil which surrounds us during this time of mistrust, turmoil, and divisiveness. Let us see that we have a vital role and responsibility to play not only in the pandemic but in the political and social extremism which is destroying the lives of our brothers and sisters and perhaps our lives also.

We continue to pray for those who have been overtaken by the corona virus and those who are caring for them in their desperate time. Help us be sensitive to all those who are suffering at this time and work towards alleviating their pain.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Kirk Strobel, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less"](#)

*Offering to be sent to:

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