
Let both grow till the harvest



He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'

So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn. (Matt 13:24-30)

"Schindler's List" by Steven Spielberg is one among the best movies I have ever seen. Oscar Schindler, the member of the Nazi party, a womanizer and a greedy businessman who makes fortune out of the terrible sufferings of other people is the best candidate for those weeds sown by the enemy in the middle of the night. Yet, he turned to be the wheat that risked his life and spent his fortune to save the lives over one thousand Jews.

Why Weeds

The servants of the householder, surprised to see the weeds in the field, asked him: "did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?" (Matt 13:27). The Bible begins with an account of the creation of the world. We read that after completing its creation God "found it very good" (Gen

1:31). This first account of the creation (Gen 1:1-2:4a) - there is also a second one (Gen 2:4a-25) - was written around the sixth century before Christ when the Jewish people experienced their national tragedy. They lost their land, they saw their beloved city and the temple destroyed, and most of them were exiled to Babylon. How could that happen? The writers acknowledge that everything God created was "good", yet something has gone wrong afterwards. They show the tragic and murderous face of evil (Gen 4:5; 4:23), which they had personally experienced during the time of the Babylonian Empire. They could not comprehend the tragedy that had befallen them and dreamed about revenge. "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. . . . O daughter of Babylon, doomed to be destroyed, blessed shall he be who repays you with what you have done to us" (Psalm 137:1.8). For the pro-

phet Isaiah, the king of Babylon was the living incarnation of Satan, the fallen angel of light. "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low" (Is 14:12).

The history of the world abounds with similar examples of devilish acts of cruelty committed against nations and individual persons. Although committed by people, the primary source of such acts is Satan, the ruthless and merciless fallen angel of light. Why God allows him to operate remains a question since the time of the prophets: "You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong, why do you idly look at traitors and remain silent when the wicked swallows up the man more righteous than he?" (Hab 1:13).

The prophet got the answer, which calls for trust in the final triumph of good over evil: "Behold, the unrighteous man will not have the peace of heart, but the righteous shall live by his faith (Hab 2:4).

Lets do away with the weeds

Knowing the answer the servants come with a proposal: "do you want us to go and gather them?" (Matt 13:28). The usual solution to the problem of evil in the world is to destroy the evildoers. "Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies" (Psalm 139:21-22). There are those who pray that God would destroy them: "Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God" (Psalm 139:19). Yet, the householder forbids his servants to do that. Although collecting weeds seems such a simple and practical solution, yet it poses potential threat to the wheat as well. Darnel is a wheat-like weed. If the enemy had sown darnel into the field then it would have been very easy to make a mistake in the process of collecting weeds. The householder is concerned that "in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them" (Matt

13:29). He tells them to wait till the harvest (Matt 13:30).

God calls us to be patient and wait. "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart" (1 Cor 4:5). It is not easy for us. We are so quick in deciding who are weeds and who is wheat. We tend to forget that God can easily reverse our judgment. To those who thought of themselves to be the wheat, Paul wrote: "you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things" (Rom 2:1).

This concern of the householder for the possibility of making mistakes in distinguishing between weeds and the wheat shows his compassionate heart. God is charity and He is merciful. He does not want to see even one seed of the wheat become uprooted. The first saint of the Church, the unknown malefactor from the Gospel of Luke, turned out to be the wheat at the last moment of his life (Lk 23:40-43). The householder's statement, "No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them" (Matt 13:29) and the servants' obedience exemplifies the commandment of Luke's Gospel: "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Lk 6:36).

Conclusion

The householder lets the wheat and weeds grow together until the harvest (Matt 13:30) and our Father in heaven "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45). The baffling mystery of evil finds its answer in the mystery of God's compassion. Truly "O Lord, You are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15-16).

May God bless all who remember us in prayer and support our ministry.

New Life Asia Team