

16 OT Year A Readings and Commentary by Dave Pitt: If one is prone to thinking about the final judgment, it can be tempting, after hearing the today's first two readings and psalm, to emit a thankful sigh. Who can help but be relieved by hearing that their judge is "lenient to all," "judge[s] with clemency," and is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity." How much more grateful should we be, then, to discover that our judge is also our defense; God, the Spirit, is our advocate, bolstering our prayers. It appears that the odds are in our favor. The parable of the harvest, however, complicates things. Despite the mercy of our judge, there are still those "weeds" that will be punished.

The point of this parable is, at least, twofold. First, we must trust in God, believing that God seeks our salvation. We must repent and seek reconciliation, and accept that we are, ultimately, incapable of saving ourselves. We need the assistance that God readily provides. Second, however, we must also accept that it is God, and not ourselves, who is the final judge. It is frequently tempting to assume this role in our communities. But the parable of the harvest promotes tolerance: we are not equipped to distinguish between the weeds and the wheat, nor would we be able to remove the weeds without damage. We are, instead, to trust in God's justice, lenient as it is. After all, it is solely on God's merciful judgment that we rely for our own salvation.

Debate often swirls around the miracle in today's Gospel: was it miraculous that Jesus was able to multiply five loaves and two fish, or that Jesus was able to convince a crowd of strangers to share their food. To become embroiled in this debate, however, is to miss the real point of the parables. Jesus' teaching and miracles point towards the coming of the Reign of God. Through description and action Jesus articulates what God's kingdom will look like.

Jesus' instruction, "bring them here to me," echoes the invitation in Isaiah: "All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk." Everyone, regardless of status, is called to the feeding. Since the miracles foreshadow the Kingdom of God we can also say, echoing Romans 8, that since nothing can "separate us from the love of God in Christ," everyone is called to the eternal banquet.

This reality is made more clear by the parallel between the feeding of the five thousand and the Last Supper: Jesus takes the bread, looks up to heaven, says the blessing, breaks the bread, and gives it to the

disciples. This description also fits our Eucharistic liturgy. If we are to accept the Church's description of the Eucharist provided in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, that it is taking "part in a foretaste of [the] heavenly liturgy" (SC, 8), then the relationship between today's miracle and the Reign of God is made abundantly clear.

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Lectionary Summary: Glenn CJ Byer

If one is prone to thinking about the final judgement, it can be emptying, after hearing the today's first two readings and psalm, to emit a thankful sigh. Who can help but be relieved by hearing that their judge is "lenient to all," "judge[s] with clemency," and is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity." How much more grateful should we be, then, to discover that our judge is also our defense; God, the Spirit, is our advocate, bolstering our prayers. It appears that the odds are in our favor. The parable of the harvest, however, complicates things. Despite the mercy of our judge, there are still those "weeds" that will be punished. The point of this parable is, at least, twofold. First, we must trust in God, believing that God seeks our salvation. We must repent and seek reconciliation, and accept that we are, ultimately, incapable of saving ourselves. We need the assistance that God readily provides. Second, however, we must also accept that it is God, and not ourselves, who is the final judge. It is frequently tempting to assume this role in our communities. But the parable of the harvest promotes tolerance: we are not equipped to distinguish between the weeds and the wheat, nor would we be able to remove the weeds without damage. We are, instead, to trust in God's justice, lenient as it is. After all, it is solely on God's merciful judgment that we rely for our own salvation. Debate often swirls around the miracle in today's Gospel was it miraculous that Jesus was able to multiply five loaves and two fish, or that Jesus was able to convince a crowd of strangers to share their food. To become embroiled in this debate, however, is to miss the real point of the parables. Jesus' teaching and miracles point towards the coming of the Reign of God. Through description and action Jesus articulates what God's kingdom will look like. Jesus' instruction, "bring them here to me," echoes the invitation in Isaiah: "All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk." Everyone, regardless of status, is called to the feeding. Since the miracles foreshadow the Kingdom of God we can also say, echoing Romans 8, that since nothing can "separate us from the love of God in

Christ," everyone is called to the eternal banquet. This reality is made more clear by the parallel between the feeding of the five thousand and the Last Supper: Jesus takes the bread, looks up to heaven, says the blessing, breaks the bread, and gives it to the disciples. This description also fits our Eucharistic liturgy. If we are to accept the Church's description of the Eucharist provided in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, that it is taking "part in a foretaste of [the] heavenly liturgy" (SC, 8), then the relationship between today's miracle and the Reign of God is made abundantly clear.

First Reading Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

You give repentance for sins.

A reading from the Book of Wisdom

There is no god besides you who have the care of all,
that you need show you have not unjustly condemned.
For your might is the source of justice;
your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all.
For you show your might when the perfection of your power is
disbelieved;
and in those who know you, you rebuke temerity.
But though you are master of might, you judge with clemency,
and with much lenience you govern us;
for power, whenever you will, attends you.
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.

The word of the Lord

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19 Commentary by John Paul Heil: Main

Theme: God allows all sinners the opportunity to repent.
There is often a tendency among us human beings to rush to judgment. We can look at the world around us and always find people who have committed particularly sinful and egregiously evil acts whom we feel justified to quickly condemn. Although the one and only God, who has the care of all, has might and mastery over everything as the Creator, God wisely and patiently does not use this power to condemn but to "judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us." God has the rightful power to condemn all of us as sinners, but God does not do so. God thereby teaches us to imitate his way of being

just by likewise not rushing to the judgment of others: "And you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind."

God calls us to be lenient and kind in our dealings with sinful people, because we too are sinners whom God does not condemn. Indeed, God gives us "good ground for hope" by allowing us opportunities to repent of our sinfulness. We in turn are to give others a ground for hope by allowing them the opportunity to repent. One of the many reasons why the death penalty is wrong is that it deprives the condemned criminal of the opportunity to repent and rehabilitate his or her life.

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Responsorial Psalm Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16

✠(5a) Lord, you are good and forgiving.

You, O LORD, are good and forgiving,
abounding in kindness to all who call upon you.
Hearken, O LORD, to my prayer
and attend to the sound of my pleading.

All the nations you have made shall come
and worship you, O LORD,
and glorify your name.
For you are great, and you do wondrous deeds;
you alone are God.

You, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in kindness and fidelity.
Turn toward me, and have pity on me;
give your strength to your servant.

Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16 by Deacon Owen Cummings:

The response in this psalm tells us what is of such great importance about God: "Lord, you are good and forgiving." The psalm picks up this theme with its various synonyms: kindness (twice), merciful, gracious, slow to anger, fidelity. This is the God whose loving initiative

makes us be, and whose loving communion draws us into the Divine Communion. The psalmist asks this God to respond to his prayer for help, but in a context marked by utter confidence that he will be heard, and graciously. Mitchell Dahood, S.J. thinks this was originally a prayer of the Israelite king, the lord, addressing the Lord, "a royal letter addressed to God." In Hebrew theology the king was God's vicegerent or representative on earth, praying on behalf of all his people. In Catholic theology the Church is God's premier sacrament on earth, praying on behalf of all God's people, that is, everyone. In the liturgy, a psalm of Israel becomes universal in scope. Perhaps this is anticipated in the lines, "All the nations you have made... glorify your name." The face of the Church --- in a word all of us --- praying this psalm, is invited and expected to show God's face as good, forgiving, kind, merciful, gracious, faithful. Do we?

Second Reading Romans 8:26-27

The Spirit intercedes with inexpressible groanings.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Brothers and sisters:

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.

The word of the Lord

Gospel Acclamation: cf. Matthew 11:25

✠ Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;
you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

Gospel (longer form) Matthew 13:24-43

Let them grow together until harvest.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying:

"The kingdom of heaven may be likened
to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

While everyone was asleep his enemy came
and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off.
When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well.

The slaves of the householder came to him and 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 and 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 and tie them in bundles for burning;
but gather the wheat into my barn.""

He proposed another parable to them.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed
that a person took and sowed in a field.

It is the smallest of all the seeds,
yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants.

It becomes a large bush,

and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.'"

He spoke to them another parable.

"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast
that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour
until the whole batch was leavened."

All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables.

He spoke to them only in parables,

to fulfill what had been said through the prophet:

I will open my mouth in parables,

*I will announce what has lain hidden from the foundation of the
world.*

Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house.

His disciples approached him and said,

"Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."
He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man,
the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom.
The weeds are the children of the evil one,
and the enemy who sows them is the devil.
The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.
Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire,
so will it be at the end of the age.
The Son of Man will send his angels,
and they will collect out of his kingdom
all who cause others to sin and all evildoers.
They will throw them into the fiery furnace,
where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth.
Then the righteous will shine like the sun
in the kingdom of their Father.
Whoever has ears ought to hear."

The Gospel of the Lord

Matthew 13:24-43 Commentary by John Paul Heil: Main Theme:
We are to be patient with the evil in the world.

Matthew's parable of the weeds among the wheat communicates to us the following pragmatic message: As disciples of Jesus with the responsibility of making known the good news of the kingdom of heaven that has arrived with the person and ministry of Jesus, good news that will lead others, the "wheat," into the kingdom, we must be patient that some, the "weeds," because of the mystery of evil ("his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat"), will not understand. We are not to try to eradicate evil people, the "weeds," from the world for the sake of the good people, the "wheat," for "if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them." God himself will eradicate the evil "weeds" at the end of time, the final harvest, when the weeds are collected and burned but the wheat gathered into "my barn"--the kingdom of heaven.

Hearing the parable imparts patience to us as it teaches us that the "weeds" will not prevent the "wheat," those who do understand and repent, from ultimately being gathered into the kingdom of heaven. Such an attitude of patience gives us an experiential knowledge of another one of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. With such patience we experience even now what it means to live in the kingdom of heaven we confidently and patiently look forward to entering at the final harvest.

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