

V Epiphany 2025

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

Col. 3.12-17 St. Matt. 13.24-30 Hymn #137



“All the world is God’s own field, fruit unto his praise to yield: Wheat and tares together sown, unto joy or sorrow grown: First the blade, and then the ear, then the full corn shall appear: Grant, O harvest Lord, that we, wholesome grain and pure may be.”

The compelling words to our opening hymn are a sung prayer that talks about the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time...his final Great Epiphany...when God will sort things out.

Throughout the Epiphany Season we have been reading the Gospel accounts of the epiphanies...the striking appearances Jesus makes revealing who he is to the world. On this Fifth and last Sunday after the Epiphany this year, the epiphany or striking appearance in the Gospel is Jesus showing himself as the Teacher. He uses one of his favorite teaching methods...parables...short stories taken from everyday life. Jesus tells us in this morning’s Gospel this is a story about what the “Kingdom of Heaven” is like.

In the parable, Jesus tells us the Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who sowed good seed (wheat) in his field. During the night while he and his family and workers were asleep, an enemy came and sowed bad seed (weeds)...among the good seed. This would have resonated well with the people who heard Jesus tell this story. The practice of sowing bad seed in your enemy’s field was so common in Jesus’ time it was made a crime under Roman law. The perpetrator could be taken to court and sued for damages and the financial ruin it caused the victim.

The bad seed was probably darnel, a poisonous grass that looks like wheat until it is mature. In the parable, the farmer’s workers went to pull up the weeds; the farmer tells them not to pull up the weeds now because they might pull up the wheat and the whole crop might be lost. He tells them to wait until the harvest and then pull up and burn the weeds. Then they can safely gather the wheat and store it in the barn.

What lesson do we learn from the Story of the Wheat and Weeds? Jesus tells us this is story about what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. It’s often said the Church is the earthly representation of Heaven. If the seeds in

the story are supposed to be those of us who have been called to be the Church, we could easily conclude some people make it into heaven and some people don't. Maybe we have decided the people we like get to go to heaven...the people we don't like end up in the other place. We must always remember in the end God's justice and not ours will prevail.

It's true the Church is a mixed bag just like the world we live in. Paul tells us in his Letter to the Colossians we who are the Church are called by God to live our lives full of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. We are to be tolerant with each other in the Church and whenever we have a disagreement or complaint with someone else, we are to forgive each other just as Christ has forgiven us. Paul closes with these beautiful and uplifting words...

...“Sing psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing to God with thanksgiving in your hearts. Everything you do or say, then, should be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father.”

We would like to think that everyone in the Church gets that message and acts accordingly all the time. When we let ego and self-interests get in the way of loving and supporting each other...we become like the guy who sabotaged the farmer's wheat crop...we can stifle the Church's mission and growth...we can make our lives and others unpleasant...and we risk losing our own reward in heaven.

The Gospel for this Fifth and last Sunday after the Epiphany directs our attention toward the Final Epiphany of Jesus on the Last Day. Paul tells us on that day, God will sort things out...

...“He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the motives of hearts.”

We want our hearts, minds and souls to be properly motivated, today, tomorrow, and every day of our lives. We want to be the wholesome and pure grain the hymn talks about. We want to be an acceptable harvest for the Lord. We want to celebrate our Lord's Great Epiphany and Easter in heaven...where we will forever sing Alleluia joyfully!

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