

## The Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – 19<sup>th</sup> July 2020 – St. Matthew 13 v 24 – 43

In our Gospel today, Jesus continues to teach the crowds by means of parables. The central theme of the parables of Jesus is that of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God has broken into the world through the Person and the Ministry of Jesus – “if I by the finger of God cast out devils then the Kingdom of God has come upon you” ( St. Matthew 12 v 28 ) – and the parables suggest to us ( if we have “ears to hear” ) the nature of the Kingdom of God and how we are to recognise ( by their behaviour ) those who are members of that Kingdom.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus suggests that there is a “hiddenness” to the Kingdom of God. The Word of God is like a seed, and that seed may not at first be apparent but as it grows, nourished by the grace of God and our obedience to that grace, so it begins to flourish and becomes more apparent until ( in the lives of the saints ) it can be said, “ it is no longer I who live but Christ Who lives in me” ( Galatians 2 v 20 ). Our Blessed Lady is so conformed to the life of Christ her Son that she reflects and magnifies only the glory and the radiance of her Divine Son – “my soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour” (St. Luke 1 v 46 ).

However, for all the saints, “we feebly struggle, they in glory shine”, and it may not be clear ( and we are not to judge) who is in “a state of grace” and who is not; who is progressing in grace and who is falling back, and we must resist the temptation ( often felt to be a “righteous zeal” ) to “weed out the darnel” (v28), a prerogative (that Jesus makes clear in this parable) which belongs to God alone, and Who will exercise that judgement on the Last Day, when our expectations may be overthrown because it is not those who say “ ‘Lord, Lord’ who shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven but those who do the will of my Father in heaven” (St. Matthew 7 v 21 ), and “men will come from east and west and from north and south and sit at table in the Kingdom of God and you yourselves turned out” ( St. Luke 13 v 28f ). There are those outside of the Church who will be brought in and those within the Church who will say, “ ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name – and do mighty works in your name’ and then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me you evildoers’ ” ( 7 v 23/24 ). St. John says, of the antichrists who precede the coming of the Antichrist, “they went out from us but they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would have continued with us” (1 John 2 v 19 ).

Though we are saved by faith, love is greater than faith ( 1 Cor. 13 v 13 ), for faith is the means whereby we access that which is greater than faith, which is love itself. Therefore it is those who love who “are born of God and know God” ( 1 John 4 v 7 ) thus manifesting a latent, if not explicit, faith whereas “ if a man says he has faith but has not works – can his faith save him?” ( James 2 v 14 ), so that even “Rachel the harlot” was justified by her works (2 v 25 ) which was the evidence of a faith/obedience which (presumably) was not explicit.

So we must not hasten to pass judgement on one another (“there, but for the grace of God, go I”) whilst acknowledging that there will indeed be a time of judgement, in which God “has given all judgement to the Son” ( St. John 5 v22 ), “and has given Him authority to execute judgement because He is the Son of Man” ( v 27 ) This is the “harvesting” to which Jesus refers in our Gospel today ( 13 v 41 ), therefore the writer to the Hebrews cautions us, “take care, lest there be in any of you an unbelieving spirit leading you to fall away from the living God”(Hebrews 3 v 12 ), “for we share in Christ if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end” ( v 14 ). There must be no presumption. “Therefore while the promise of entering His rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it” ( 4 v 1 ). In the race that is set before us, “you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised” ( 10 v 36 ). Even St. Paul admits that he himself might finally be disqualified if he fails to exercise the necessary self-control which every athlete must exercise if he hopes to cross the finishing line ( 1 Cor. 9 v 24 – 27 ). “For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of God. So each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14 v 10 – 12 ). Jesus knows who belongs to Him both within the Church and outside of the Church – “therefore, let no one pass judgement on another but rather decide never to be a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another” ( v 13 ).

When we see another has fallen our instinct should be to help them up because when we ourselves fall, do we find it helpful to be condemned by others? We know we are fallen and, if we have disappointed others, much more have we disappointed ourselves. How wonderful, when we have fallen, to have a hand to help us up. How grateful we are and that sense of thanksgiving is part of our transformation and restoration. “ Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and Knows God” ( 1 John 4 v 7 ). May God grant to us this compassionate love and concern for each other! Come Holy Spirit!