

V Epiphany 2022
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
Col. 3.12-17 St. Matt. 13.24-43



It's been three years since we last celebrated the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany. The number of Sundays after the Epiphany varies from one to six depending on the date of Easter; which is relatively late this year. The next time we will celebrate the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany is in three years. And what about the Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany? We will not see that until 2038...16 years from now.

This morning's Gospel is one of Jesus' parables...short stories...about what the Kingdom of Heaven is going to be like. The epiphany in the Gospel is Jesus showing himself as teacher...the Messiah and God's Son.

A farmer went out to sow wheat in his field. During the night while everyone was asleep, his enemy sowed *weeds* (*tares* in the KJV) among the wheat. People do bad things at night hoping they won't get caught.

The *weeds* were probably *darnel*...a type of *ryegrass* sometimes called *false wheat*. It is found worldwide. The plant is toxic and can be fatal if consumed. It is almost impossible to tell the difference between wheat and darnel until the wheat grows and begins to form heads of grain.

When the farmer's hired hands discover the sabotage, they want to pull up all the weeds. The farmer doesn't want to risk losing any of his wheat should his workers accidentally pull up wheat along with the weeds. He tells them to let both grow until the harvest...then pull up the weeds...tie them in bundles...and burn them. Then gather up all the wheat and put it in the barn.

When asked by his disciples, Jesus explains the meaning of the story...one of the few times he does so. The farmer is the Son of Man (Jesus); the field is the world; the wheat is the people who belong to God's Kingdom; the weeds are the people who belong to the Evil One (Satan); the Saboteur is Satan. The harvest is the end of time (end of the age).

When that time comes, Jesus will send his angels to gather up out of his Kingdom all those who have done evil and caused people

to sin. Like the weeds in the story...they will be thrown into hell...where they will cry out and grind their teeth. Then God's people will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Pay attention...we are told. This is Jesus' ultimate epiphany at the end of time...his most glorious and striking appearance. It will be apparent to everyone...both good and bad...what is happening.

The Church is the primary vehicle for getting the Good News about Jesus out into the world. The Church is also a microcosm of the secular world...a mixed bag made up of good and bad people. We don't like to admit there are people within the Church sowing seeds of discontent; sometimes without even knowing what they are doing; sometimes deliberately. We don't always know what causes a person to behave in a certain way. We can try to reach out to that person in love to offer help. We may not exclude people from Church or Heaven if we don't like them. Only God himself knows with 100% certainty the goodness that exists in people's hearts.

In the Epistle, Saint Paul gives us some practical advice on how we can do our part to keep the field (the Church) healthy...we must show compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance with each other, and forgive one another.

Paul goes on to say Christ's message in all its richness must live in our hearts. We should teach and instruct each other. We should sing psalms and hymns. And we must be thankful God has called us together into one body and it is the peace Jesus gives that helps us make the right decisions.

In his First Letter to the Church in Corinth, Paul writes,

...“wait until the day the Lord comes, when he will bring to light the dark secrets and expose the hidden purposes of people's minds. And everyone will receive from God the praise he deserves.”

The world and the Church are mixed bags, just like the wheat and weeds...we do have our work to do...and God will sort things out in the end.

