

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church

Pinole CA

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 19, 2020

*The Weeds And the Wheat*

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Good Morning everyone. Part of being the church is to stay alert to the issues of our day, so first I bring up that on July 17, Friday was the anniversary of the Port Chicago disaster munitions explosion in 1944. Most of the dead or injured were African Americans and when they stood up for justice they were jailed. This is important to note as part of our darker local history. I bring this up because also on this Friday an ever present fighter for justice, John Lewis, died. John was a true seeker of justice, and we the church need to be aware of our complete history, and continue to seek justice for all. Which leads me into the Word today.

When doing pastoral care, I am often confronted with the question of “why God would do this to me?” Which, in very simple pastoral terms is saying “Why do bad things happen to good people?” And if you get more generalized you come to the question “if God created everything, did he also create evil? And if he did, why?”

So, Jesus in his parable of the weeds in the field begins to touch on some very deep spiritual laws and practice. I can only imagine this is an edited snip-it of a much more intense lesson. When you study spiritual laws, you begin to realize that each religion and culture is striving for the same thing – peace on earth and wholeness. Now that is not to say some feel they would arrive at that state through financial gain or power, but I am talking about the innate goodness we are born with that often gets subdued under social or cultural pressure.

Most of us come to our place in life trying to make the best decisions and choose a life that is comfortable. The needs of the human body kind of demand that our priorities include food, shelter, air, and water ... things we would consider survival needs. And if we can get these needs met in a more elaborate way, well, we are even more comfortable.

But in that struggle to survive, in that search for peace and harmony in our lives, drama unfolds, right? Our parents are a hot mess, our environment is crazy, school doesn't turn out how you thought it would, you are not sure about the job you took, did you marry the right person, or is not marrying the right thing? All the decisions that keep us up at night unfold while we continue our struggle for some kind of spiritual peace and harmony. This is true on a personal level and as a country and then as a universe, as well, this struggle to find balance and respite.

Today Jesus tells us there are two kinds of people, right? We have the wheat that will produce good things and God will store in his kingdom, and we have the weeds, which after being the pests that they are, will be burnt to nothing.

The Greeks had stories about fields and they too dreamed of a more perfect one than what we have. Their version of heaven was a perfect meadow of peace and tranquility, the Elysium fields. The beautiful meadows of grain where heroes go after they die to live eternally in peace and harmony. Culture to culture, Jesus could possibly be borrowing this image to relate to those around him.

Well the truth is, in the afterlife there may be many possibilities and the Elysium fields may exist for those who require it on the soul level, but the Elysium fields are part of heaven. In case you haven't noticed we are far from heaven on our little

fragile earth, Elysium fields are still a dream, we struggle to survive, and that is Jesus' point.

Yes, we are the grain. God has planted us, given us a heart and mind that can grow in love and compassion, lead us to be advocates for justice, raise our children to seek balance and peace, way into future generations. But we don't get there from sitting on the couch eating bon-bons having everything in life come to us.

When we are children we don't want to share, and then there comes a time when we are in need, and then we understand. We grow into our bodies, and maybe we punch our friend for hurting our feelings, then one day we are punched and learn more restraint and compassion. And the list of experiences both positive and negative goes on into our old age. What is important is how we handle the negative, the weeds that want to choke our roots, or shade us from the sunlight.

Those people who we may consider weeds to the grain, (again only God knows where their heart is) the mockers, the judgers, the criminals, and all kinds of negatives, are forcing us to grow as individuals on a soul level and as beings on this planet as we confront those dramas and strife, the loss, the grief, the anger and humility, and use them as lessons as we strive and stretch to reach the sunlight. The spiritual lesson that Jesus is teaching us today is very similar to my sermon last week, God's got this. All you have to do is grow; you are always safe because you are eternal. This is definitely not all there is.

Your job is to endure growing next to the weeds. To learn to have compassion for the weed that will not produce fruit for the future as its own existence is negative in respect. The weed will have its own karmic judgment. Your job is to be fruitful

amidst the stress, find the peace and harmony in your heart and mind while the world's chaos rolls on.

You will, after this life find your Elysium field, but only if you stay the road of love and compassion, for that will keep your head above the weeds, and your roots unbound. The spiritual law begins with the Golden Rule, the love one another, and ends with the giving of a life, Jesus at the Cross forgiving us at the greatest moment of human strife, showing us to grow compassion even in the midst of misery and death, for Sunday, the resurrection always comes.

We are baptized into working toward becoming the beloved community. That work begins with ourselves, for that is all we are really responsible for – but if we help another along the way, well, we grow even more into the life that Jesus has modeled for us, and we become even more prepared for the love that exists after this life.

And probably not a reaction most priests would give you, but as some of you know I have not always had a comfortable and easy life. But I continue to learn how to take that pain and make it grow in compassion as I do my own work in the world. I give thanks to those who have brought me hardship, but only after much suffering, contemplation and prayer. For those I continue to struggle to forgive, I give that burden to Jesus. So please know, this is in jest, in a way, a good way to end a sermon, and something we all sometimes need to express.

To all you Weeds out there, thank you for the lessons and by the way – burn, baby burn! **Amen**