

Patient Edurance in the Face of Evil

Intro. The parable is about the presence of evil in the world - violence, racism, injustice, poverty - and how we respond to it. We can wreck the world trying to stamp it out, taking out the good with the evil. Or we can find other ways to deal with evil without harming the good. A difficult job at best.

I. No different from us, people in the Lord's time struggled with the presence of evil. But even more so because they didn't understand illness or natural disasters and believed many were due to evil spirits. Like last week's parable, the farmer is not the point. It is a much bigger picture. It is what he *does* about the evil that pops up in his life. He could have torn the weeds out. But a lot of hard work would be wasted and any hope of a good harvest would also be lost. The farmer weighed his options and made a difficult decision: to do nothing for the moment. It must have angered him to look at his field day after

day, seeing the weeds and knowing his enemy was laughing. The enemy also watched the field every day hoping to see disaster. But laughter quickly turned to confusion about what the crazy farmer was doing. He *didn't* uproot the weeds along with the wheat. Confusing evil is a good response. We know about the best laugh; it is the *last* laugh. At harvest time the farmer gathered up both the wheat and weeds. The farmer smiled as he burned the weeds and took his wheat to the barn. And the evil one was no longer laughing.

Concl. The world tries to contain evil and sometimes that works for a little while. It is like the game where you pound the critter every time it pops up (Whack A Mole). Evil seems to pop up in another place. We could ignore it, but we know it doesn't go away. We could give in, surrender, but that only makes it worse. What we can do is *recognize* evil: violence, racism, injustice, poverty, fight it and

develop strategies to contain it and avoid it. In the parable, the farmer might put watchers over his fields to prevent another occurrence. He might pray the wheat will overpower the weeds. He may have to suffer through the season and plan for the next. Patience is a hard thing, but can also be a good strategy to outlast the bad. This is a parable about the kingdom of heaven. In God's kingdom, there is a reckoning. At the end of time, he gathers up his people and sorts the good from the bad. In the meantime, what is our response to evil? Can weeds become wheat? Probably not, but some people *can* change. Our influence and example along with God's grace can and has done that. Maybe one point to remember is God has the patience to let you and I change from *our* ways to *his*. From weeds to wheat; a miracle. But God's harvest *will* come. He will separate "the just and the unjust along with appropriate rewards and punishments" [*Sacra*

Pagina, Daniel Harrington, S.J., p. 8]. God patiently gives us time to recognize the weeds in our lives first and with his grace the ability to overcome the evil in the world.

{1st Communion: Today is the result of seeds of faith planted by your family at Baptism and nurtured by our church and your teachers. Now you receive the Communion – the food – that strengthens your faith.}

Fr. Michael Pendergraft,

July 19, 2020