

Living in Hope with the Good and the Bad

(Readings: Romans 8:12-25, Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43)

One of the things I remember from Scripture Lessons at School was this definition of a parable - "An earthly story with a heavenly meaning".

As you read the four Gospels, you see that Jesus was a master teller of parables. We have one such in our reading today from Matthew's Gospel in the Parable of the Good Seed and the Weeds. In some translations you read instead of the word "Weeds" the word "Darnel".

As I read through the passage, some words from the hymn 'One more step along the world I go' by Sydney Carter (born in 1915) came to mind:

'As I travel with the good and bad, keep me travelling the way I should".

In the parable, the farmer must have done all he could to plant good seed and he must have nurtured and cared for his crop too.

But weeds have also grown up with the good seed. But I am sure the farmer knew that this always happens and so he has worked out a plan to harvest his crop without it being contaminated by the weeds.

So if you take the words "the good seed" as meaning the sowing of the good seed of the Kingdom of God in our times, then it is telling us that we will encounter many today who have chosen to reject the Kingdom of God and all it stands for. This is one heavenly meaning of the parable. We need to pray for all have chosen to reject the Kingdom of God and all that it stands for.

Another heavenly meaning of the parable is that all actions have consequences as the farmer has to have a plan to deal with the weeds that have sprung up in his field.

But as you reflect on the parable, you see that it is teaching us something even more significant - that actions also have eternal consequences at the end of what we call " time".

As you read Matthew's Gospel you see that "Actions have eternal consequences " is an ever emerging theme of the Gospel coming out most strongly of all in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats at Matthew 25:31-46.

And as for those who choose not to say "Yes" to our story, then in the end that will be a matter between them and God. As for ourselves, we have chosen to say "Yes" to our story though no one has forced us to do this.

I think too that the farmer in the story is a good one so he would be living in the hope that his crop would do well at harvest time.

This has obvious lessons for us as we travel with "the good and bad".

We can constantly live in the hope that our faith journey can change things for the better and we can project that hope into the future and walk in the light of that hope.

So the word "hope" is an important word on our faith journey. I often think about this when we say in the Prayer After Communion in the Easter Communion Service, "Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us".

But I think Paul is the best person to study to see what "Christian hope" is about and he does so in the Epistle reading.

What he seems to be saying is that all who are on the Christian faith journey are already a part of something far better and it is a hopeful journey and the journey continues at the end of what we call " time".

But in the Epistle he is also saying to us that we are not to keep this hopeful message to ourselves as others are waiting to hear about it from us. So we have to continue the work of telling and living out this eternally hopeful message that does eventually take you at the end of what we call “time” to the full warmth and love of God.

But I don’t think it pays us to think too much of the “hereafter”.

If we do this, then we are taken into Canon Clayton’ famous saying:

“You can be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good”.

I think Paul would tell us today that in the middle of a pandemic that we have a splendid opportunity to tell of our hopeful journey.

Are we up for this challenge? If we are, then in the words of the hymn I began with, then we will be travelling “in the way we should” with “the good and bad”.

Jonathan Slater- Reader (Licenced Lay Minister)

St Giles Church Bramhope

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