



The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 19, 2020
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

†May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

These days, not a day seems to go by that we as citizens of a global society are not faced with issues of justice, economic justice, racial justice, social justice, environmental justice and the multitude of other justice challenges here and around the world. As Christians, followers of a man for whom justice was key to his way of life, justice for all people ‘should’ burn within us. It should capture our attention perhaps like never before. As we hope to be treated justly, so, too, should all people be treated justly. Justice should pour from us and cause a ripple effect all around us.

The Nation mourns the passing of a truly great man whose commitment to justice stood as a beacon of hope for many years. Congressman John Lewis passed away this past week at the age of 80. His life, his legacy and his commitment to Gospel values of justice and equity for all will be with us for generations to come.

Theologian, Holly Hearon, recently wrote that “Justice denied can give way to a rage that burns like a furnace of fire. It can cause us to wither and cease to bear fruit. It can even lead us to become bitter enemies of one another and of God. In the end, judgement is necessary and important. Not as a means of self-satisfaction; rather, as a continuing process of discernment in the here and now.” (Holly Hearon https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4511)

In the current issue of “The Living Church”, article after article deals with justice in the here and now. One of the articles is entitled, “Standing at the Doors of the House of the Lord.” The article chronicles the photo of President Trump in front of historic St. John’s Episcopal Church in Washington, D. C.

The author quoted a powerful Scripture passage from the Prophet Jeremiah: “In Jeremiah 7, God tells the prophet to go and stand in the gate of the Lord’s house, and call out to the passersby, warning all who enter: ‘Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place’”. (Jeremiah 7:5 and *The Living Church*. July 12, 2020, page 30)

As a nation, we acknowledge injustice in our midst, the sin of slavery, the disproportionate ravages of COVID cases among People of Color including indigenous populations and other racial disparities across the country. Are we not being called to be Christians committed to the Gospel of Jesus?

We are challenged to amend our lives so that *all* people can breathe in the goodness of God. We recognize that all people have the right to live according to God’s desire for all God’s creatures experience equality, equity and justice.

Today’s Gospel is known as the Parable of the Weeds. It challenges us to see that there is good seed and bad seed and that bad seed produces weeds. For anyone who gardens and who has pulled weeds from

flower beds and vegetable gardens, weeds and weeding can be a job and a half. Today's Gospel reminds us that weeds sown by the evil one, or the unholy one, will be with us until the end of time.

The Gospel reminds us that God's justice will prevail. God's justice may not be what *we* might deem as just. In the end, the ultimate justice which is God's justice will prevail.

The Gospel challenges us to examine our lives and to live lives in accordance with Gospel values. As Christians, we are called to live according to the life of Jesus who embodied God's love, justice and mercy, aspects of God's reign. We are called to examine our lives and do all we can to bring about the reign of God here and now.

This brings us face-to-face with today's Gospel. At its core, there is a challenge to each of us. We are to actively discern good from evil and recognize that the world in which we live is comprised of both. That which is good is life-giving. That which is bad or evil is destructive.

The word "evil" isn't one that we care to think about let alone discuss out loud. The Holy Scriptures are clear that evil exists in the world. As followers of Jesus and people who long for *all* people to have life, we acknowledge that those things which are destructive to others are examples of evil in the world. When we participate in destructive behavior toward others, then, that which seeks to destroy turns back in towards us.

Perhaps, today's Gospel is a call to discernment, the discernment of the Holy Spirit in our lives. During this Season of Pentecost, we celebrate the gifts of the Holy Spirit which enable us to experience what it means to live into the goodness of God. We can experience that goodness and share that goodness with our sisters and brothers in life.

When we claim to "walk by faith and not by sight", we claim to embrace the Spirit of God which draws us to God. The Spirit envelops us in God's love and enables us to love others including those unlike us.

Today's Gospel reminds us that we do not live in a utopian society by any means. It reminds us that good and evil, good seed and weeds, will always be with us, and that we live side-by-side with others in life.

We are called to respect every person and to do all we can to love as we desire to be loved. We are called to bring others to the love of God in Jesus and to remember that redemption is always possible. Forgiveness and reconciliation are always possible, and the love of God can transform even the hardest of hearts!

The Gospel reminds us that we are to "sow good seed" and do all we can to bring about the reign of God in this life. The 'reign of God' is a world of justice, mercy and love. It is a world replete with respect and care for others. It is a world nourished by the Word of God which challenges us to love others as God loves us. It is a world where more and more 'good seed' is planted and where all God's people can and will live in peace and harmony.

What will you, what will I, do this coming week to plant more 'good seed'? How will others experience the goodness of God active alive in our hearts? Amen.