

16th Sunday in Ord. Time -- July 18-19, 2020

A person tells the story of driving through a neighborhood full of large dream houses. These houses or mansions were so big it would take days to explore all of their rooms.

When Jesus talks about the kingdom of God as he does over 50 times in the Gospel of Matthew, we might have expected him to describe amazing palaces or beautiful cities to us. What Jesus does instead is to compare the kingdom of God to very ordinary things -- a farmer doing his work, a small hardly noticeable seed, and woman baking bread.

We may have expected Jesus to drive us through a neighborhood of beautiful homes. But he takes us through our own neighborhood, our own homes and workplaces and places where we come together with others -- pointing out familiar settings and saying each time -- “There” and “over there” sacred things are happening. This is where God’s kingdom and life are growing in our midst and even within us. God’s kingdom is right in front of us if we have the eyes to see it.

Sometimes we look at our situations in life and see nothing happening and wish that we were somewhere else -- what we think would be a better place. Yet, we should not be so quick to move. Rather, we need to take time to look more closely and ask whether we can see the kingdom of God from where we are sitting or standing right now.

So much of the time we focus on the negative, the weeds or what is missing or unfinished and fail to see or to be patient and wait for God’s work to take shape and reveal itself in what is going on around us.

It is the old question -- is the glass half-empty or half-full?

This leads us into the second message of today’s Gospel. The kingdom of God Jesus says is like a man who sowed good seed in his field and then an enemy came at night and sowed weeds in the same field.

The farmworkers discover this and then ask the owner whether they should pull up the weeds. His advice is not

to do so as it will also pull up some of the good wheat as well. Wait until the harvest, he says, and then we will sort things out.

This may sound good in theory, but probably not the advice good farmers would follow. Good farmers try to keep their fields free of weeds knowing how weeds take nutrients from the good plants and seriously choke off the growth of the good plants. The good farmer does all that he can to help the growth of the good plants.

However, with God and his kingdom things are a little different. As today's first reading said --- because God is all powerful and master over all things he is able to be lenient and merciful with our human weaknesses and sinfulness.

While humans tend to abuse power when they have it, God – who is over all things – has nothing to prove. He can afford to be compassionate and have pity on us and been so as we remember and celebrate with thanks at every Mass. Instead of crushing us with his power he patiently uses it to help us. As St. Paul says in today's second reading, "God helps us in our weakness."

Jesus declares quite clearly in today's gospel that at the end of our time on earth there will be a judgement and all evil-doers will be collected like weeds and thrown into the fiery furnace. But until the end of our time on earth, God over and over gives us every grace opportunity to change our ways for the better.

For those who may have started out as weeds or in a bad way he offers all the graces and opportunities we need for transformation.

May we open ourselves to these graces and become shining lights in the kingdom of God.

And may we not only be shining example to help others be transformed but also be people of mercy, hope and patience with others as God has been for us.

The powerful grace of God's kingdom is at work everywhere in our world. May we have the eyes to see it and to find joy in supporting it with our words and actions.