

WEEK THREE FINAL VERSION

SCREEN: Unhappy Emoji

Raise your hand if you're unhappy.

(online: it's okay, I can't see you!

in person: it's okay I won't look!)

If you raised your hand, you're not alone.

People are unhappy.

It's the pandemic, our economy, racial injustice, our politics...

all that and more.

I'll admit it...I've been more hopeful, more optimistic.

And I'm guessing you have too.

I think so much of our unhappiness is because we're so divided over those things I mentioned.

Everything now has a side and it's straining

our relationships with family and friends,

co-workers and classmates, neighbors and parishioners.

It feels like there is no safe topic for discussion these days.

And when the discussion gets heated, harsh words enter in.

And I've been guilty of that.

Some people take it to the extreme, labeling those

they disagree with as ignorant or evil, which isn't helpful.

It may not be comforting to hear this but divisions aren't new.

They've been around forever.

And the good news is that 2000 years ago, Jesus gave some great advice which can help us find some happiness today.

SCREEN: Jesus Said What? main screen

This is Week Three of our message series titled,

Jesus Said *Whaaaattt?*

This month we're hearing some of Jesus's best known parables.

The crowds that gathered to hear Jesus preach,

were deeply divided - just like today - over politics and race,

religion and the economy.

And when Jesus told stories, he was challenging his listeners to change, to see God and others in new ways - including one's enemies.

SCREEN: Weeds and wheat photo

In the parable of the weeds and the wheat,
Jesus was focusing on something beyond politics, race or religion.

He was talking about salvation and how
believers and non-believers can live side by side.

Now, if you've ever farmed or gardened,
it's easy to see the picture Jesus painted with this story.

A man sowed good seed in his field but at night
an enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat.

That sounds to me like a lot of work, but in Jesus's day
this was more common than you'd think.

A farmer's livelihood depended on
selling his crop for the best price he could get which put him
in competition with other farmers.

Unscrupulous farmers were known to do exactly what Jesus described.

And there's a plant called darnel that closely resembles wheat
and is found all over Israel.

It is not until harvest time that you can tell the two apart.

So a farmer only had two options:

pull up the weeds which might uproot the wheat OR
let them grow together until harvest time then separate them.

What is the religious meaning behind this story?

In the longer version of this Gospel, here's the explanation Jesus gave:

*"He who sows good seed is the Son of Man,
the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom.*

*The weeds are the children of the evil one,
and the enemy who sows them is the devil.*

The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

SCREEN: blank red background

So how does this parable apply to us?

Well, if you remember that is about salvation
and believers and non-believers living side by side in the world,
Jesus is instructing his disciples (the wheat)
on how to treat the non-believers (the weeds).

He rejects tearing at them, attacking and hating them.

Notice in the parable who does the harvesting and separating?

It's God's angels... at the end of time.

Let that sink in for a minute:

God does the separating, at the end of time.

Not me, not you, not anyone, and not now.

Only God.

We heard this earlier this summer, but Jesus is telling us again that

God is in control, God has a plan, so be patient.

What do we do in the meantime?

SCREEN: imitate Jesus

The answer is, imitate Jesus.

Which means not seeing other people as
rivals or competitors to be undercut or sabotaged.

Not seeing others as enemies.

And, not judging, separating, or labeling others.

Because, disciples who act in these ways are NOT being wheat and
they won't bear fruit for the Kingdom.

Remember what we heard in last week's parable:

Jesus said, *'be a disciple who produces fruit a hundred fold.'*

So it's only by your fruit - by how you live and share your faith -
that others will know you follow Christ.

I remember a homily I heard in the seminary when the priest said,

"sitting in a church no more makes you a disciple

than sitting in a garage makes you a mechanic.”

That shocked a lot of us.

But it's so true!

It's the point Jesus was making with today's parable.

He's saying, *“if you want to be my follower and help my Kingdom grow, imitate me everyday.”*

SCREEN: see others through Jesus's eyes

One important way to do that is by seeing others through Jesus's eyes.

Jesus looked beyond labels and divisions

and invited everyone to follow him.

Everyone.

Jesus had disciples who were sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes,

a Zealot, Samaritans, Romans, Gentiles.

He loved and embraced them regardless of the labels others put on them.

We must do the same.

We must love and embrace others as brothers and sisters

regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, lifestyle, or political persuasion.

And when we see others through Jesus's eyes and

love those who are different - and really love them not just tolerate them -

then we open the door to conversation, to changed hearts,

and to the unity God wants for his children.

So imitating Jesus and see others through his eyes

is the recipe for happiness in our families and workplaces,

our nation and our world.

But for us to have this happiness and harmony with others,

we just stop judging and condemning and separating each other

in neat little categories and labels.

If we persist in it we won't find peace or be any closer to fixing our problems.

Look, I'm not suggesting a Pollyanna attitude

towards those you and I are at odds with.

And I'm not saying you throw in the towel

about things you feel passionate about.

And pretending divisions don't exist won't make them go away.

Jesus saw divisions.

His gospel message angered a lot of people - still does.

But it didn't stop him from reaching out to others, including his enemies.

He engaged in conversation with those he didn't agree with.

And he did it with love.

And because he did, he won people over, he changed hearts
and led them to his Kingdom.

You and I must do the same.

So like Jesus, believe that people can change - even people you may
have given up on, written off, or labeled a weed.

Whether they are family members you're at odds with,
friends you don't always agree with,
or co-workers, neighbors or parishioners who think differently.

And know that it won't be easy.

Taking the time to really listen to others,
to presume goodwill and ask why they
believe as they do can be really hard -
especially now when everybody seems so entrenched.

But it's what Jesus did and what he asks of us.

He wants us to be instruments of his love and
channels of his peace for our troubled world.

It reminds me of the words in The Prayer of St. Francis:

Lord, make me a channel of your peace.

For the past two months, we've all seen our nation wrestle
with racial injustice.

It's been around for hundreds of years, but
the murder of George Floyd brought it to the forefront for so many people.

Here at St. Pius, I want to invite you to join the conversation.

Over the past month, a group of parishioners together with our parish staff

have been talking about ways to invite our members into a conversation on racial injustice.

SCREEN: 'Just Mercy' Sunday August 2nd 7-8:15pm

We've come up with several great ideas, the first of which will be an online discussion of the movie 'Just Mercy'.

It will take place in two weeks on Sunday August 2nd from 7pm-8:15pm.

If you want to join the conversation, all you have to do is watch the movie on your own before the discussion, then RSVP.

'Just Mercy' is available on various streaming platforms.

Then we'll meet over Zoom and break into small groups to discuss the message.

So, consider yourself invited.

For more information, check out the bulletin or our website under the "Next Steps" tab.

([online](#): and if you're worshipping with us online you can click the link in the chat feature).

So this is a start, a response to Jesus's challenge in today's parable to live our faith and grow stronger as wheat among the weeds.

I'd like to end inviting you to join me in praying the Prayer of St. Francis:

SCREEN: Lord, make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me bring your love.

Where there is injury, pardon

and where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope.

Where there is darkness, only light.

And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek

so much to be consoled as to console.

To be understood as to understand.

To be loved as to love with all my soul.

For it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

in giving, that we receive,

and in dying that we're born to eternal life. Amen. +