

Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many.

Matthew 7:13

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost +

How is it are to understand which gate is truly the narrow gate, for many times the events of our lives seem to point us in many different directions and often we perceive that each path difficult or narrow. We can and are deceived into believing that we are following not the wide easy path, but a way the Lord would have us walk. How does that happen and how are we to understand how we are to proceed?

In the Gospel Jesus teaches us further of the Kingdom of God in what seem to be a simple parable. The Kingdom of God is like, Jesus begins, and then He offers an image that farmers are all too familiar with. The crop has been sown with the desire for a healthy and large harvest, but as the crop grows both weeds and wheat grow in the field. This is certainly not what the farmer had intended to have happen.

This is the first level of the parable. At this level we can be comfortable or uncomfortable, but since most of us would identify with being the good wheat, we are comfortable. As we read the passage we understand that God is the Farmer and world is His field. It is God's Plan that all who live in His world will bear good fruit and be with Him. At the same time, we realize that there are those who reject God's Plan. They we are told are the weeds that will be burned.

Nice Gospel, okay sermon, at least it was nice and short and now we can go home.

But if we stop there, we fail to go into the parable and examine the deeper level of understanding. This is what St. Paul refers to when he speaks of milk and solid food. Mature Christians are ready for solid food and they will not be satisfied with this simple understanding of this parable.

The simple understanding likes to skip over the part about the evil one planting the weed seeds. We infer that at night, that is under the cover of darkness, not in the light. The evil one sneaks into the field and plants weed seeds.

In John 12:35, "Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes." This concept of darkness as something to fear and evil acts are linked throughout the Sacred Scripture. The understanding is that children of light walk by the light and not in darkness so that they can be sure that their actions are proper.

But in the parable we have the evil one sowing weeds in God's Garden, what are we to make of this? First, that there is an evil one, a fallen angel. He is the image of one who has deliberately disobeyed God Holy Word and Command. Too many people then like to think of two kingdoms. They believe there is a kingdom of darkness ruled by the evil one and one of light, which is God's Kingdom. This is a foolish as not believing in evil at all.

This heresy of the two kingdoms is called dualism and has been condemned by the church since the early ages. There is but One God who is all powerful and from whom all things come. The question that then needs to be asked is; if God is all powerful and created all that is where did the evil one come from? And who is he?

The evil one comes from the heart of every man!

For in each of us there is a daily struggle fought. Will we follow the narrow path and will we be diligent and obedient to God's Holy Word? The path to destruction does not usually begin with a conscious thought to defy God. Rather, it starts with cutting corners or making poor choices. Failing to do what we have been given to do and thinking that someone else will take up the slack.

Let's examine the parable again. The field is growing and the plants are identifiable and large enough so that the weeds cannot be removed without harming the wheat. A question we might ask was; where were the servants when the seeds first began to grow? My father-in-law was a farmer with a big vegetable garden. As the seeds first began to grow he would identify the tomato plants, the beans and all the other vegetables. He could identify them and the weeds could be easily removed from the hot beds without harming the good seeds.

Why did the servants wait so long to notice the weeds mixed with the wheat? Were they diligent to the work they had been given, or had they failed to do as they had been commanded? Can we not consider the field full of weeds the result of the evil one – the evil one that was in each of the servants who was inattentive to his work? The enemy was not some foreign power that snuck into the field, but those who were already there choosing to be blind, to be in the darkness and thus not seeing the work that was to be done.

It is so much easier to examine this parable and stay on the surface of understanding. When we do it all seems easy and clear. There are the good people and the bad people. There is goodness and evil. There is God and the evil one locked in a cosmic battle. We are justified because we are "good people" and we know that in the end the evil one has already been defeated.

It is much more difficult to consider the deeper meaning of this parable and the teaching of the church. In every human heart, by God's Gracious Will, there exists free will. The evil one and the good one are both within each of us. When we choose to accept the Grace of God and with His strength walk in the light, our actions will be holy and we will bear much good fruit.

If we begin to make choices that are easy for us, with no concern for the needs of others or God's Divine Plan. Then we are walking through the wide open gate and each poor choice becomes easier and easier until one day when we stand with the Master. He will look at the field He placed in our care. God will see all that is present, the good wheat, and the weeds. He will know the choices we have made and He will read in intentions of our hearts.

Those who have born good fruit will be gathered into His Barns and those who have wasted the soil and grown weeds will also be gathered, but those will be discarded, just as they have discarded the Word of God and chose the easy wide path.

May we seek always God's Grace and His Protection as we struggle to walk in the light on the path He has laid before us. May each of us bear good fruit.

AMEN

