

Broken Things

By the Rev. Dan Fowler

Matthew 13:24-30

African Bishop Festo Kivengere was known as a great story teller and often thrilled his own and other's children with his storytelling skills. A favorite story of his: "One day a little girl sat watching her mother working in the kitchen. She asked her mommy, 'What does God do all day long?' For awhile the mother was stumped, but then she said, "Darling, I'll tell you what God does all day long. He spends his whole day mending broken things."

When I was a candidate for ordination to the Diaconate I was sent out as part of the ordination process to experience brokenness in my community. My bishop who sent me, knew brokenness firsthand, as he served in Uganda during Idi Amin's religious, purge. He along with African Bishop Festo KIVENGERE spoke out against Idi Amin's tyrannical behavior, fled to Kenya in fear for their lives.

For my brokenness experience, I spent six weeks at St Luke's Hospital in the Mission District of San Francisco experiencing what the ER Doctors called the Saturday night Knife and Gun Club, sitting with family members in the surgery waiting room praying for a son or daughter's survival. I volunteered as a telephone counselor at Santa Clara County Suicide and Crisis hotline on the midnight to four a.m. shift, talking to those experiencing mortal highs and lows. Sending out police and para meds when necessary.

I learned from people in crisis that good and bad influences are always present in our lives, like the good wheat seeds and bad weeds seeds sown in the parable in this mornings Gospel.

Parables are a little like poetry or song lyrics in that there usually isn't just one worthwhile explanation of their meaning rather, they are meant to challenge each person who hears them to come up with his or her own interpretation, and it is no secret that these interpretations can vary widely and even wildly.

Reading or hearing parables, is like reading the rest of scripture in that we bring the Bible to our current condition and situation, so that as we read the Bible, the Bible also reads us, it speaks to us in ways that may be remarkably different from the way it speaks to other people, because those other people aren't experiencing anything like what we are going through at the moment.

The parable of the wheat and the weeds may be one of the most practical parables that Jesus ever told. It tells us that there are both kinds of influences, that act upon our lives, the influence which helps the seed of the word to flourish and grow, and the influence which seeks to destroy the good seed before it can produce fruit at all. It teaches us how hard it is to distinguish between the good and the bad. At times we may be much too quick to classify people and label them as good or bad without knowing all the facts.

It teaches us not to be so quick with our judgments. If the reapers had their way, they would've tried to tear out the weeds and they would've torn out the wheat as well. Judgement had to wait up on the harvest in the end. We will be judged, not by any single act or stage in our lives, but by our whole lives. No one who sees only part of a thing can judge the whole, and no one who knows only part of an individuals life can judge the whole person.

This parable teaches us that it is God alone who can discern the good and the bad, who sees all of an individual and all of a persons life. It is God alone, who can judge so ultimately, this parable is two things it is a warning not to judge people at all, and it is a warning that in the end there comes the judgment of God alone.

Bishop Festo , who one evening, had had a fierce argument with his wife. Unfortunately he had a preaching engagement that same night, so he said goodbye and went off. But a she walked down the drive, God spoke to him- and this is how the bishop described the dialogue between himself and the Lord.

"Festo,"said the Lord, "You go back and apologize to your wife!"

"But Lord, I've got a very important sermon to preach!"

"You go back and apologize to your wife!"

“But Lord, there are hundreds of people waiting for me and we’re going to have a good time tonight.”

“You go and apologize to your wife!”

“But Lord, I’m almost late and someone is coming to collect me!”

“All right,” the Lord said, “You go and preach your sermon and I’m going to stay here with your wife in the kitchen.”

Bishop Festo ended the story with these words:

“I went back into the kitchen and apologized.

So there was revival in the kitchen before there was revival in the church.”

We lose our way sometimes because the things we do are done our way, we are driven by our self-will rather than by the wind of the Spirit of God.

The well worn example, the path that Jesus has walked before us, is the only one for us to follow if we as Christians want to keep in step. Sometimes we pride ourselves on our goodness which so often falls short of the standards Jesus has set us.

In his book, “I love Idi Amin,” Bishop Festo, asks us to think of the person we could never love. He encourages us to think of that person whoever it might be, and let a crack open up in our heart to let Christ’s love flow through us to those we find hard to love or impossible to love, he calls that revolutionized love. You can whisper a prayer and that prayer will not only be your prayer it is the Holy Spirit praying through you to them. He never leaves the desperate to go through it alone.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds reminds us that good and evil coexist in this world. It reassures us that God's judgment will ultimately separate the wicked from the righteous. As we navigate through life, let us remain steadfast, bearing good fruit, and trusting in God's perfect timing for judgment. May we find comfort in His patience and strive to be a beacon of light in a world that desperately needs it.