

16th Sunday, Cycle A, July 23, 2017

Once upon a time, there was a man who wanted to have the perfect lawn. He worked very hard, fertilizing and watering his grass, so that it looked beautiful, rich and green. It was almost perfect, except there were a few dandelions growing in a corner of the lawn.

The man tried and tried, but he could not get rid of those dandelions. The man used every weed killer he could find, but nothing worked. In desperation, the man approached a wise man for advice.

The wise man looked at the lawn, looked at the man who owned the lawn, and said: "If you can't get rid of your dandelions, why don't you learn how to love them."

In other words, learn to tolerate what you cannot change.

In our search for perfection, we often make judgments about ourselves and about others. We try to weed out the bad from the good. In in doing that, we sometimes cause great damage.

As the owner of the field says in the gospel parable that we just heard, "If you pull up the weeds, you might uproot the wheat along with them." We do not always have the ability or the wisdom to separate the good from the bad. We also do not always have the patience to wait till things sort themselves out. We definitely do not have the patience to wait for the coming of God's kingdom, when God will judge the good and the bad, and bring the universe to perfection. We want it right now.

After all, we Americans are the ones who invented fast food, and who thrive upon it. We are the people of instant coffee and instant potatoes and instant ice tea. We are constantly coming up with ways to speed up our lives. Just think of e-mail, cell phones, texting, microwaves. They save us time. They also feed our desire to have it right now. Why wait? Just press this button.

Just think of the recent traffic accidents during rush hour, huge car pile-ups. People lose their patience, they can't wait, and they drive into tragedy.

Technology may produce instant results, but it does not work that way with people. We need time to grow and develop. We need time to learn from our mistakes, which after all, are many, since we are not yet perfect. We need time, just as a plant need time to sprout, to reach maturity and bear fruit.

And we human beings are much more like plants than we are like machines. That is why the parables in the gospel reading are so appropriate, the parable about the wheat and the weeds, the parable about the mustard seed. They are parables about the kingdom of God, but they are also parables about us, about how we also can fit into the kingdom of God, about how we also can become part of that kingdom.

But it takes time. It takes patience, patience with ourselves, patience with others, patience with how the world is right now, patience as we await the coming of the kingdom of God.

Keep that in mind the next time you are driving in heavy traffic, and cars are zooming past, and perhaps someone honks their horn at you, because you are not going as fast as they would like.

Resist the temptation to pull up the weeds from the wheat, to render your judgments upon the situation. Turn it over to God. Let God sort things out. Give God the time to bring about the kingdom. Have patience with God, and God will have patience with you.