

LOCKDOWN DAY 117 – 21 JULY 2020

Molweni dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese *on this beautiful winter's day,*

There is a glimpse of hope that new Covid-19 infections are slowly decreasing in the Western Cape but South Africa has the fifth highest number of confirmed cases in the world; Oxford clinical trials for vaccine is showing promise. We pray for a speedy recovery for all Covid-19 patients in hospitals, clinics and self-isolating at home.

Scripture: Matthew 13:24-43

Song: *God forgave my sin*

We continue with our reflection on the Parable of Weeds among the Wheat.

The parable contains a very important message for all of us to understand. It is quite a simple story about good seed being planted in the earth and the enemy planting the bad seed. This parable is rich in Biblical symbolism and Biblical language. The gospel speaks of a landowner who owns the soil of the earth, the field. We are created from the soil of the earth ... *from dust you are and to dust you shall return.* (see para 27 on page 542 of An APB). *It is so sad that during Covid-19 we cannot get close enough to the coffin to throw a clod of soil.*

The parable begins by confirming that God is God who created us human beings out of the soil of the earth. God is the landowner, the one who owns the earth, God is the soil owner. This is the hinge upon which the parable turns. God knows his creation and he knows us human beings better than we know ourselves.

In the gospel of Matthew, this parable is addressed to the early church. It is a plea to the early church leaders to show restraint in judgment and becomes a cautionary tale for all of us.

In the Biblical language that Matthew uses, **'good'** is not just the opposite of **'bad'**. Good here means **attractively good**. **Good** that inspires us, motivates others; **good** that embraces what is **beautiful, lovely, praiseworthy**. In other words, God planted us in the soil of the earth to be the **good seed** that would attract others to embrace what is beautiful, lovely and praiseworthy. We need to remember that we are on earth to **attract** people to God. *That is the role of every clergy person, every organisation leader, every lay minister, every educator in school or church, every parent or care giver, everyone who has any position of shepherding the flock of God.*

The Biblical word used for **weeds**, refers to a particular **weed** that looks almost identical to wheat when it grows and it is very hard to see the difference while it is growing.

The landowner tells his servants not to pull out the **weeds**, as they would not be able to tell the difference between the weeds and the wheat. One would have to be an **expert** to know the difference between the **wheat** and the **weeds**. Because they are so similar, only an **expert** would be able to see the difference. The **expert** is the landowner, the soil owner. The landowner is the one who has created the human heart, the human soul, the human mind, the human person. The landowner knows what the servants do not know. He tells them to leave the **weeds** with the **good seed**.

This parable is an important insight into the **nature of God**. Only God knows our human nature because God created us out of the **soil of the earth**. What God wants is for us to be a **good seed**. Not just **good** in the meaning of not being **naughty** but **attractively good**. In being **good**, we inspire others to embrace what is **beautiful, lovely and praiseworthy**. That is why the landowner tells his servants to leave the **wheat** with the **weeds**. This is the **wisdom** of God because **God's Grace** is given to us in such **abundance** that it can **transform weeds** into **wheat**. The **abundance** of the **Grace of God** can turn **sinners into saints**. Only God can be the judge of the human heart at the end of time.

Unfortunately, in our Christian community, we have plenty of **weeds**. People behave in illogical ways. Their behaviour is alien to their human nature, Christian nature. Another element of the parable is that

the landowner knows that the **wheat** will survive the effect of the **weeds**. It is not for us to **judge who is righteous or unrighteous**. God says to the servants 'let them grow together'. God will take care of the final sorting out. We do not know the state of the other person's **heart**. The human **heart** may be small but it rises to heights beyond and out of its very frailty when it **hopes, loves and believes**. This is what the Reign of God is all about. It is in our **hearts** that the Spirit of God moves, groans inwardly and pleads for us before the throne of God when words fail us (See Romans 8:12-25).

Another deeper element to this parable is that we all have **wheat** and **weeds** in our **nature**. Sin is a **weed**. None of us is **weed** free or **sin** free. We are good because we are created in the image and likeness of God. None of the **weeds** growing up in us are wonderful but they are a part of who we are: When we urge to impress others falsely; to get what we want no matter what, to be lazy. They are not the full description of who we are. The crimes we commit do not really agree with our inner self, which is **good**. Those **weeds** will be dealt with by God. That is what **grace** does. **Grace** is a **weed killer**. It rounds up all our sins and nails them to the cross where they are cleansed by the blood of Jesus. The **weeds** may be in us but we must ask ourselves whether it is possible that the one part of me that has gone haywire determines who I am, really? Can the good that is in me not be brought back to life? Within our human nature there is always a part of us saying 'I wish that I could stop this ugliness and be pardoned'. We must allow God to **love** us back to communion with God. This is the reason Jesus came to live among us. To take on our human nature, to die in that human nature and to save our human nature.

Forgiveness is the key here. When we endure someone who hurts us with their wrongs, maybe we can avoid rushing up to **point out** and **rip out** all the **weeds**. **Mixed with all the weeds** are lovely **flowers** and God loves very much **all** that we are. God will **love** us back to communion through **God's Grace**. We need to become the **good seed, the attractive seed** to draw others back to what is beautiful, lovely and praiseworthy. That is how the **Grace of God** works, using us as instruments to draw others back to God.

We are not to condemn others. If we condemn others, we are like the Pharisees. Our own **weeds** within us are treated with care by God. God is the judge and God **did not** condemn us to hell forever, to be **weeds** forever. Jesus did not say from the cross, '**Father, condemn them to hell forever for what they are doing to me**'. **Instead**, Jesus said, '**Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing**'. Jesus knew that there was good **wheat** in them even alongside terrible **weeds**. God, the **landowner**, the **soil owner**, knew that we are **good wheat**.

We are encouraged to let go of an **angry injury** and give God a chance to love? Would we not want to be **loved and forgiven** in this way?

Who do you need to **reach out** to, to draw them back to God?

We **ponder, pause and pray to listen** to what God is saying to us through God's Spirit in today's reflection. Conclude your prayers by saying or singing the hymn: Amazing Grace.

I am, Because We Are, Because God is.....Opening hearts to heal God World. *The Grace of God can turn sinners into saints.*