

16A SML 2020  
MT13:24-43

What is understood from this morning's gospel, and from life's experience, and I am sure you would agree, is, that, side by side, in the world, are the wheat and the weeds, the saints and sinners. So how and why is that? How is it and why is it, that those who are in the stupor of sin, don't really seem to know it or if they do know, care?

46% of respondents told a 2011 survey<sup>i</sup> that they never wonder whether they will go to heaven. The new group is not atheists, who believe there is no God, and says Fulton Sheen, "Atheism, nine times out of ten," he declared, "is born from the womb of a bad conscience. The new group is not agnostics, who believe you cannot prove or disprove there is a God. The new group is apatheists, who believe there is a God, but who cares? Why don't they care? They don't care because they bought the lie. A lie is still a lie even if everybody is telling it just like the truth is still the truth, even if no one believes it.

Since the time of the original sin, God has been in a place of suspicion and accusation in the mind of man. The genius of suspicion falsifies God. This suspicion shows God as the enemy of man, as a source of threat to man, specifically, to

man's happiness, and man's freedom. In this way, Satan sows the seeds of opposition that God would be considered man's enemy and not his Father. All of this plays out in the Garden of Eden, as it plays out in the field, of wheat and of weeds, in today's Gospel, which is a parable about the world at the time of Jesus, and a parable about the world of today.

Adam and Eve are placed in the Garden where God has given them everything, everything! The serpent accused God to the man and the woman. Did God really say that you could not eat of the tree of good and evil? And the woman answers, "Yes, we can't even touch it." Well, God didn't say you couldn't touch it, God said you couldn't eat of it. She wasn't listening. Neither was Adam. Satan says, you won't die. God is just holding out. He's not the generous God He's made himself out to be. He's a jealous God who will only let you get so close but that's about it. In fact, if you go ahead and do that, if you would eat, you will be just like Him. What the Devil has done here is he has Adam and Eve think that the One who is all good is the enemy. And so they buy the lie, they don't care what God "the enemy" thinks, they eat, they sin, and they die.

This is clearly the image of God among all of those who are indifferent to God today. God is the enemy of my happiness. God is the enemy of my freedom.

The ad that most embodies this for me was in Sports Illustrated. It was an ad for a cable station. It was a picture of a naked midriff of a woman. It was a glossy ad, and on her glistening stomach was written, “our prime time line up is guaranteed to break more commandments than any other network.” As if breaking the commandments is a good thing. The commandments have become the bad thing. The commandments are the great restriction on our freedom, and who gave us the commandments, but God. Implication. Be done with the commandments and let’s find happiness! Why did God give the commandments? Because he doesn’t want you happy. He doesn’t want you free. He’s the enemy of happiness. He’s the enemy of freedom, which makes no sense at all, and let’s use the Ten Commandments as the context.

Let’s go back in salvation history to when God’s people were not free. They were slaves in Egypt. God did some pretty heavy lifting to free his people. If God didn’t want His people to enjoy happiness and freedom, he would have left them in

Egypt. Rather, the Israelites who were in slavery for more than 400 years. God:

1. brings about the death of the first born of Pharaoh and all of Egypt,
2. rescues them from slavery,
3. brings them out of Egypt,
4. splits the Red Sea,
5. drives them through on dry land,
6. drowns the Egyptian army,
7. feeds them with manna in the desert,
8. quenches their thirst with water from the rock
9. and on the way to the Promised Land, He reveals Himself and gives the Ten Commandments,

to keep us from being happy and free? He went through an awful lot if He wanted to keep us from being happy and free. As I said, He would have left them, and us for that matter, in Egypt.

But the Devil says, "If He wanted you happy, if he wanted you really free, He'd let you do whatever you wanted." That's always the devil's lie to you and me since the time of Adam and Eve, and since the time of Jesus, as found in today's gospel. "The weeds are the children of the evil one and the one

who sows them is the devil.” All the tragedies that we go through only serves to give the Devil and the weeds countless rounds of ammunition. Devil means “divider,” and “Satan” means “accuser,” so that Satan can accuse God the Father.

Jesus reveals God to us as Father. In a particular way, He reveals God to us by the word “Abba,” which many translate as “Daddy.” But Daddy falls short. Abba is a term of endearment, of extraordinary intimacy that is a lot more complex than Daddy. Abba has with it tenderness, familiarity, but as much as anything, it has with it stability, dependability, reliability and faithfulness.

Of course the Devil would love to separate us from all of that. Because he knows that if we separate ourselves from God the Father, we will be eternally frustrated which is the Devil’s plan. “The devil hates you and he hates me.” There is no reigning in hell. Hell is sheer mockery. It is eternal frustration of being kept from the end for which we were made, which was happiness. That was the plan from the beginning, that we would be happy, that we would be free.

Noted theologian Phil Donahue, (oh please), said the reason he is not a Christian is because he could never worship

a God who would kill His own son. Now there's a man who's really grasped the essence of Christianity . . .

Jesus came to put an end to the doubts. Because for those who want to accuse God and find Him guilty of being the enemy, Jesus says, "Fine." What's the punishment? Kill God. Can't think of a more punishing punishment than that. Jesus is the promise fulfilled when God said to Moses, "I have heard the cries of my people, and I will come down and rescue them." And He's done it, not by sending a prophet, but by sending His Son who became one of us. So every time I don't feel that God loves me, I can look at the Crucifix and I can see it. Every time I look at a crucifix, and the Enemy whispers in my ear and says, "You think God loves you? What makes you think that? Look at your life for crying out loud! It's a mess! Where is your loving God?" I'll point that voice to the crucifix, and show him. That's the God who loves me, who is not absent, who is not uninterested, who's not removed, who is not unfeeling, who is not uncaring. The stable, dependable, reliable and faithful Father did that for me. If He were uncaring, He would have put me on the cross and not His Son.

He sure does care. Do you? Do you care?

So you want to golf on a Sunday morning rather than go to Mass and say that God really doesn't care because you don't care, you go ahead. Would you then be wheat, or a weed? You want to lie your way to the top and think that God doesn't care because you don't care. You go ahead. Would you then be wheat, or a weed? As I said earlier, a lie is still a lie even if everybody is telling it. And the truth is still the truth, even if no one believes it.

You want to fudge the numbers and think that God doesn't care because you don't care? You go ahead. Would you then be wheat, or a weed?

You want to live with your girlfriend before you're married, and think that God doesn't care because you don't care? You go ahead. Would you then be wheat, or a weed?

As a priest, do I want to preach a milk and cookies Christianity that God doesn't care? And if I did, would I then be wheat or a weed?

Read a few verses down in today's gospel where there's mention of a fiery furnace, and then let me know how not caring works out for you in the next life.

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<sup>i</sup> By Nashville based evangelical research agency, LifeWay Research