

**Parables of Growth:
God Sees the Truth But Waits**

Texts on Sunday, November 7, 2004
Reading: Psalm 1; Matthew 13: 24-30
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Simone Weil, the French contemplative, wrote: "One of the principle truths of Christianity is that looking is what saves us." Just looking. Seeing what is so. The natural way of thinking and believing cannot accept this. The usual way of thought aims to execute correct actions resulting in good consequences for itself. Everybody thinks like this, of course. We want to race down on evildoers and enemies and get rid of them all, and be safe, and be saved. We are certain that we can judge between the evil and the good, and take the right action.

In the parable of the wheat and the weeds, Jesus says *No, you can't*. To be sure, on earth as it is, you can do whatever is in your power. But on earth where "thy will is being done, as it is in heaven," the spiritual understand the limits of their powers. The unspiritual part of us—the "natural man" as our scriptures sometimes call the ego—is what makes the world go round—always at war, generation after generation. Are you part of that? Yes. You can see that. But do you want to be part of the transformation of the world? Then learn how to see, says Jesus. The kingdom of heaven may be compared to the space where evil and good are discerned clearly and well, but humans are not quick to assert their power and their authority on their own time clock. Just seeing—giving full attention to what is really going on—is required for salvation. Again, Simone Weil:

In attention, all that I call "I" has to be passive. It is by this discipline that the mind turns against itself, toward God. It is by attention that one must approach his sin—a pure awareness untainted by the self's greed for perfection. Attention is without reward, not fixed on a problem for solution, but out of obedience.

No spiritual person, that is, no one who practices looking hard at life, even in the dark, is surprised when a great nation like America is inspired to make more war in the world, to toss tens of thousands of Iraqi lives into the fires of history as so much rubbish. We are a violent people, who pay no more than an hour's attention to the shrieks of those whom we abuse. This is not surprising. It is the oldest way

of a war-washed world. See it.

Then look at our recent election process—not the winner or loser, but the process. It reveals a large proportion of the American church who simply ignore Jesus the Peacemaker on the way to uprooting their chosen evildoers. The notion has become normative for many Americans, especially church-going Americans, that selective destruction of chosen evils is not only possible, but unambiguously good.

This too is predictable. The ego is very hungry to be right and to have its own way. Today's news tells that the Canadian province of Saskatchewan will begin licensing marriages of gay and lesbian people. Now more than half the provinces of Canada approve that measure of peace for their gay citizens. In our country, the battle tips the other way. Which is the position of the wise, who are willing just to look, but not in haste to pull out what they suppose to be the weeds?

In the recent election process, we have seen voters motivated not only by a desire to restrict the rights of gay people, but also to limit advocacy for women's rights over their bodies, while we, with Israel, lean heavily into the practice of killing our chosen enemies as the means to peace on the earth!

The spirit of looking and learning and waiting—this is rare on earth and rare in the churches. The natural mind swallows religion whole and passes it through its system without receiving spiritual nutrition in the body at all. This is the way of the earth. It is evil. What is to be done? See it. And see also that Christian faith was not supposed to be for saving nations. In the Bible, the good news of Christ is explicit on this subject. A god designed to save a nation belongs to the violence of the old order, when all supposed that their god stood with them against their national enemies. Jesus Christ reveals God who needs no nation to establish the divine Word; who is able to raise faith up from stones; who sees no favor whatever in bloodlines and nations and armies. Jesus Christ reveals the God of Light, who brings wisdom, and insight and healing and vision for the Kingdom to individuals, that things on earth might be transformed “as it is in heaven.”

The invitation to discipleship is not to a nation. It isn't even to a congregation. It is just to you: to wake up. In today's parable, Jesus tells that it was *while everybody was asleep* that an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. Our sleeping is when we are not paying attention. Then evil is sown—in our own behavior, in our own communities, and in our national will. Evil is *here*, not just out there

in them. Jesus said, "See first the log in your own eye, before you reach to remove the speck from your brother's eye." This sober word about sin is found everywhere in the gospels: See! And do not suppose that you know how to remove what seems evil to you. First practice seeing. Do this with others' help. Speak about what you see. Learn from others.

Seeing in this inner way is the heart of meditation. Awareness. Consciousness. Commitment to seeing what only God can reveal. This is why we are teaching meditation here on November 20th. Come and learn a new way of seeing, unlike any your intellect is used to.

Come now to the table of the Lord's Supper. Consider the body and the blood. They are signs of violence at first glance. A broken body and spilled blood. These are warnings that the world will not end from its brutal violence as long as individuals stay stuck in their natural way of splitting right from wrong and undertaking to kill the chosen enemy.

Consider Jesus. When his own body was to be broken and his own blood spilled; when he saw the evil and the good, what did the one with the Eye of Spirit actually do? He was silent. Pilate thought he was crazy! "Don't you see I have the power to kill you?" At length, Jesus spoke. "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above." *What have I to fear? Whatever God is up to, I am up to. I cannot be harmed. I can only see.*

When you hold the one bread today, when you drink from the one cup, see in them an insight into the end of the world's war. An invitation to the end of mere right and wrong, so that you yourself can begin to see your enemy. To love your enemy. To be in that number of the saints who are seeing and bringing life, on earth as it is in heaven.

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