

Proper 11A Track 2**Trinity, Bend**

Isaiah 44: 6-8

Psalm 86: 11-17

Romans 8:12-25

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

We have another familiar parable. This week it is the one about the wheat and the weeds. As one who has been gardening a bit more this summer, I can tell you I'm tired of pulling weeds. 12 years ago I started a perennial garden. This year I went looking for it. There is one native plant which loves our space. So much so that I could barely find what I had planted.

I now have a gardening assistant. This young lady is going to be a Freshman in high school, who says she likes manual labor. That is a great relief. We work, ~~then~~ have lunch, then do something fun.

I believe that Jesus told parables so those who heard ^{his} ~~those~~ stories, could apply them to themselves. Where do we fit? Are we weeds or wheat? I believe there are parts of both in each of us. Personally I don't dwell on evil much but if I'm honest there are times when I recognize evil and I become aware that I sometimes wish for evil.

There is a piece of me that would like to just wipe out the evil on this earth. But then where would our free will go? I often look at the evil I see out there, rather than look at the evil that I do. It's easier to blame someone else.

This summer I reread *Born a Sin* by Trevor Noah. This book was recommended by Ian Markham, the Dean of Virginia Seminary. When I first saw that recommendation I wondered why would the Dean of my seminary recommend a book by a late-night comic. Trevor Noah is the host of the *Dailey Show* on Comedy Central. He followed John Stewart.

Trevor is South African. He was Born a Sin because he is colored, he has a white father and a black mother. That was illegal, before Apartheid ended. As a little boy he was raised by his single mother, his white father was afraid to marry her.

His mother was a woman of deep faith. On Sunday they went to 3 churches. As Noah says, "Jubilant church was mixed church, analytical church was white church and passionate, cathartic church that was black church."

*(Maybe Anglican
or Episcopalian)*

Later in his life his mother married Able. A marriage with problems. Able was from a different tribe. In his tribe the men went away to work for months on end then brought home money.

When they were home the women waited on them, did all the housework and caring for the kids, while the men went to the village square where they sat around drank alcohol and smoked. Trevor's Mother was an educated secretary who worked outside of the house every day.

But the real problem was when Able was drunk he become violent. As Noah says, "I always thought of Able as a cobra: calm perfectly still but then explosive.....the eyes were my only clue to stay away. His eyes were everything. They were the eyes of the Devil."

One day ^{after} when Trevor had moved away he woke up to his phone flashing. It was his Mom's phone. But when he called back it was Andrew, his brother who answered.

It was then that he heard, "Mom's been shot" Trevor raced to the hospital. When he arrived, he asked, "Andrew what happened?"

Andrew replied “ We were on our way home from church, And Dad (Able) was waiting for us at the house, he got out of the car and started shooting.”

“But where did he shoot her?

He shot her in the leg

And then he shot her in the head.

When he said that Trevor cried a cry of raw pain.

As he went into the emergency room she was in the triage unit. Covered in blood. She had difficulty speaking due to the blood in her throat.

“It’s OK , baby,” she whispered, “No, no, I’m okay, I’m okay”

This woman of faith knew within herself that it was OK.

It turned out she lived. The bullet went through the back of her neck missed her brain and vocal cords and came out below her eye. She was back to work as a secretary in just 7 days.

This may sound like something can just happen in Africa, but in reality, in the last 2 weeks there were 2 fatal shootings in Deschutes County, as a result of Domestic Violence. In one case the shooter realized what he had done then shot himself.

Evil does exist. But we are children of God adopted by God. As St. Paul says in Romans "The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us."

Yes, we are living in difficult times as a friend said this week, we are living in 2 pandemics, the first being COVID-19, the second the awareness of racism of all types in our country. That's the way it has always been.

It's time for us to learn new things and develop new habits. Simple things like never leave the house without a mask and don't leave it in the car when you get to your destination. That is the way of love. Love that shows we care about one another. It will take a while to develop that habit, but the countries that do wear masks had a lot fewer cases than we do.

Or maybe it is time to stop complaining about what we can't do and celebrate what we can do.

Also when we see someone different, even in almost 'lily white' Bend, it's time to check our thoughts. How did that person get here? Or what is that person doing? Such an embarrassment to have panhandlers on our streets. Maybe it's time to recognize all of those different people as children of God as well. Or as St. Benedict would say, "treat each person as Christ himself."

It's time for us to become better individuals. Most of us will not go out and shoot someone but we are more subtle about how we treat people. We may know an individual who we don't agree with so we avoid them. Or we just avoid certain topics. No need to start an argument. But do we change our ways and model loving Christian behavior. Do we live the way of love? Not easy to do that all day, every day.

As the choir sang on their YouTube video: **I felt the Voice of God in Your Hands**

The 2nd verse that goes like this

I felt the voice of God in your voice

Singing praise you have taught me to rejoice

Your voice of comfort caused my grief to end

When my faith was gone you called me home again

When you spoke God's voice called to me

I heard the voice of God in your voice

None of us will ever be perfect. But we are gifted with an ability to work on just one thing at a time. Be gracious for what we have. Be thankful that you are still well and working to stay healthy. Remember those in prayer who are not as blessed as we are, the unemployed, those who are ill, those in prison.

We have a choice will our lives be productive wheat or tares to be burned.? Each of us can decide.