

THE FIRST READING IS FROM THE BOOK OF WISDOM

Neither is there any God besides you, whose care is for all, to whom you should prove that you have not judged unjustly. For your strength is the source of righteousness, and your sovereignty over all causes you to spare all. For you show your strength when men doubt the completeness of your power, and you rebuke any insolence among those who know it. You are sovereign in strength but you judge with mildness, and with great forbearance you govern us; for you have power to act whenever you choose. Through such works you have taught your people that the one who is righteous must be kind, and you have filled your sons with good hope, because you give repentance for sins.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE RESPONSE TO THE PSALM IS

O Lord, you are good and forgiving.

O Lord, you are good and forgiving,

full of mercy to all who call to you.

Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer,

and attend to my voice in supplication.

O Lord, you are good and forgiving.

All the nations you have made shall come;

they will bow down before you, O Lord,
and glorify your name,
for you are great and do marvellous deeds,
you who alone are God.
O Lord, you are good and forgiving.

You, O God, are compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, O Lord,
abundant in mercy and fidelity;
turn and take pity on me.
O Lord, you are good and forgiving.

THE SECOND READING IS FROM THE LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Brothers and Sisters: The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

THE GOSPEL ACCLAMATION .

Alleluia, alleluia.

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,

you have revealed the secrets of the kingdom to little children.

Alleluia.

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW

At that time: Jesus put another parable before the crowd, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?” He said to them, “An enemy has done this.” So, the servants said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” But he said, “No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, ‘Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn’ ” .

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.’ He answered, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place

there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.'

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

It helps to know that bad things might happen, but they will be burned away. It is about bad people when you consider this parable. It is about the evil things that are done by people and how they will ultimately lose out. Jesus reflects on this human reality, and it is easy to see the evil that is done by an enemy. He was well aware of the hurt that can be deliberately caused, by pharisees bullying people that they were not good enough, by the Temple High priests wanting to destroy him and the Romans who were just awful. The people of God have always been conscious of personal sin, from Adam and Eve, Darwin wrote of the 'survival of the fittest' recognising evil done by some species to others, Attenborough never shielded us from the brutality of nature.

For Reconciliation to work, to forgive each other demands time and patient understanding or to recognise it and refuse to think of revenge or destruction. Matthew's gospel includes strictures against this recognising anger can be so destructive. Sometimes we cannot change things and have to trust in God at the end of time to destroy evil and collect the goodness in us.

Perhaps too this parable is about empathy. Franklin D Roosevelt was a successful and much-loved president, rich handsome and politically articulate he could have personally profited from this power. At the age of 30 he contracted polio, a disease which would lead to partial paralysis and an early death. His life changed as did his attitude. He began to reflect on what it was like to be deprived. His politics became more focussed on the poorer people, his "New Deal" creating opportunities after the depression.

Nietzsche the weird but sometimes brilliant German Philosopher wrote "what doesn't kill you strengthens you" indicating a positive attitude after setbacks. That does not always work. Perhaps it's better to think the Latin phrase "Nil Bastardi Carborundum" (Nil means Don't let, carborundum means grind you down). It is not swearing because it is in Latin.