

A Catholic Bible Study, Personal Notes
050717 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 106A
© 2017
Raymond J. Jirran

One way to calm the soul is by getting things right with God. My concern is to accept the mercy of God forgiving sins, forgiving me for the wrong turns into which I have directed my life.

The first reading from Wisdom 12:13, 16-19, is about the Exodus out of Egypt,¹ that God is forgiving the Israelites their sins and allowing them to get back on track. Repeatedly, the Israelites stumble and fall. Eventually, Jesus, himself, becomes their greatest stumbling block, as the Gospel for today points out.

Still full of hope, the Lectionary offers the Faithful Psalm 86. Psalm 86 praises God for his mercy. Psalm 86 is among those used by the Church in Pastoral Care for the Sick.² Psalm 86:5, 15 portrays God as both patient and kind, something dear to the heart of Paul, especially as preserved by the Faithful in 1 Corinthians 13:4.³ Romans, the readings for today, reflects a love of the patience and kindness of God.

Romans 8:26-27 explains that, because of Jesus, the Holy Spirit pleads the causes of the Faithful before the Father.⁴ Just before this section, Romans insists on the rigorous high standards, the New Testament law of the Spirit,⁵ of Christian living. When the Faithful do not meet those standards, the Holy Spirit is prepared to plead

¹ Douglas K. Clark, "Signs in Wisdom and John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 45, No. 2 (April 1983) 205 and 202.

² The Roman Ritual: Revised by Decree of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Published by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum: Approved for use in the dioceses of the United States of America by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and Confirmed by the Apostolic See: Prepared by International Commission on English in the Liturgy: a Joint Commission of Catholic Bishops' Conferences (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co. 1983) 292.

³ Jeremy Corley, "The Pauline Authorship of 1 Corinthians 13," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 264.

⁴ Joseph Plevnik, S.J., "The Understanding of God at the Basis of Pauline Theology," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October 2003) 562.

⁵ Brendan Byrne, S.J., "The Problem of Νομος and the Relationship with Judaism in Romans," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 2 (April 2000) 308.

their case. Paul shares his marvel at the splendor of what God does through Christ.⁶

The Greek for *hearts*, which the Spirit searches in Romans, has a range of meaning from emotions to intellect and will.⁷ Since the Holy Spirit knows what he wants, he knows how to plead the case effectively. The issue is for the Faithful to seek and plead for that forgiveness. Paul is comfortable with that arrangement.

Forgiving sins is one of the functions of the ordained sacramental priesthood. As illustrated from the Lectionary, the priesthood of Jesus reveals that sins can be forgiven. Matthew begins his Gospel presenting Jesus for who he is, the Messiah, Son of God. In the second part of his Gospel, Matthew 4:17—16:20,⁸ including the readings for today, Matthew explores the ministry of Jesus, a ministry paralleling the ordained sacramental priesthood. Besides forgiving sins, another important part of that ministry is teaching.

Parables are among the most undeniably authentic teachings of Jesus. In the Lectionary, Matthew 13:24-43 offers three of seven (Matthew 13:1-52) parables of Jesus.⁹ All of the three are about Israel rejecting Jesus.¹⁰ Matthew has Jesus himself explain the parable about the tares and the wheat. The Lectionary translates *tares* as *weeds*. Tares look like wheat until the harvest, the harvest toward which Josephites work in the Black Apostolate for those unrepresented and

⁶ Robert A. J. Gagnon, "Why the 'Weak' at Rome Cannot Be Non-Christian Jews," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 2000) 73.

⁷ William D. Mounce, Zondervan Greek Reference Series: the Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House: A Division of HarperCollins Publishers, 1993) 262.

⁸ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Observations on the 'Miracle Chapters' of Mathew 8-9," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 40, No. 4 (October 1978) 565.

⁹ Craig L. Blomberg, "Interpreting the Parables of Jesus: Where Are We and Where Do We Go from Here?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No 1 (January 1991) 58.

¹⁰ W. R. G. Loader, "Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 4 (October 1982) 577.

A Catholic Bible Study, Personal Notes
050717 Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 106A
© 2017
Raymond J. Jirran

misrepresented.¹¹ The parable has a threefold shift in power from the enemy to the weeds to the harvest of which God is in charge.¹²

Evil is a carry-over issue from last Sunday. Matthew has a duality of good and evil paralleling Jesus and religious authorities.¹³ The evil one in Matthew 13:38-39 is the Devil, identified with both the weeds and the enemy who sows them.¹⁴

A side issue is violence as an appropriate political weapon. Saint John Chrysostom (354-407), one of the Four Great Eastern Doctors of the Church, saw nothing wrong with closing down heretical schools and forbidding heretics to speak.¹⁵ Under the best circumstances, the academic world counters the abuse of free speech with more free speech, rather than censorship. Censorship is a form of violence.

Saint Isidore of Pelusium (c. 375-450) pointed out that Jesus did not act violently against Matthew for exacting tribute from the Jews.¹⁶ This Isidore was an abbot and theologian, born in Alexandria, Egypt. Pelusium was an ancient silted-up city of Egypt, on the easternmost branch of the Nile River.¹⁷

¹¹ See Peter E. Hogan, S.S.J., Robert E. McCall, S.S.J., and Peter E. Kenny, S.S.J., The Josephites: A Century of Evangelization in the African American Community (Baltimore: St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart, 1993) 96 pages.

¹² Craig L. Blomberg, "Interpreting the Parables of Jesus: Where Are We and Where Do We Go from Here?" the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No 1 (January 1991) 62, 66.

¹³ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Developing Conflict between Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew's Gospel: a Literary-Critical Study," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 1 (January 1987) 60.

¹⁴ Mark Allan Powell, "The Magi as Kings: An Adventure in Reader-Response Criticism," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 3 (July 2000) 468.

¹⁵ Chrysostom in "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 332.

¹⁶ III. St. Isidore of Pelusium: on Evil Thoughts," PG 77, 184-185 in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 339, 340.

¹⁷ <http://www.answers.com/Pelusium> June 8, 2005, 9:10 a.m.

The violence at the end-time of the tares and the wheat seems contrary to the attributes of the Sermon on the Mount, also in Matthew. The difference is that the Sermon is about how humans ought to treat one another; the end-time for the tares and wheat is about what God will do.¹⁸ In the novitiate, the Novice Master admonished us not to test one another, because the vicissitudes of life would offer enough of that.

The Fathers of the Church point out that tares and wheat resemble one another until they develop seeds.¹⁹ Discernment is difficult, important, and in many ways best left up to the Almighty.

Another side issue is the bodily resurrection, required for the *grinding of teeth* in Matthew 13:42.²⁰ There is also something to be said about the legitimacy of owning anything, e.g. the field into which the man sows the wheat (Matthew 13:24, 27, 31).²¹

A final side issue is that since 1991, at least, scholars are shifting their understanding of parables. First, scholars are understanding parables more as allegory and less as history. An allegory is a symbolic representation, like an emblem. An allegory can have a hidden spiritual meaning that transcends the literal sense of a sacred text. In this instance, Jesus explains the meaning of his allegory

¹⁸ Barbara E. Reid, O.P., "Violent Endings in Matthew's Parables and Christian Nonviolence," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (April 2004) 237, 251-252.

¹⁹ Chrysostom, "25. But while the men were asleep, his enemy came, etc." in "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 329; Jerome in "Exposition from the Catena Aurea," in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: Volume One: From the First Sunday of Advent to Quinquagesima, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 321.

²⁰ Ben Witherington III, review of Howard Clarke, The Gospel of Matthew and Its Readers: A Historical Introduction to the First Gospel in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 66, No 4 (October 2004) 644.

²¹ Robert H. Gundry, "Mark 10:29: Order in the List," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1997) 472.

of the wheat and the weeds, though some scholars regard the explanation as the work of later redactors, rather than the original words of Jesus.²²

Second, parables often make more than one point, aligning with a central character in the narrative. For example, at one level, the parable of the wheat and the weeds expresses solidarity with the outcasts of Israel, with whom Jesus was eating. At another level, the same parable justifies the behavior of Jesus before his critics, and at yet a final level the reason for the parable is to invoke the coming of the Kingdom of God, here at the end-time. Such a threefold level of consideration has merit before all parables.²³ Meritorious as such a threefold consideration may be, the other two parables in the readings for today are left for another time.

These readings are about recovering from the effects of sin, recovering through the graces of the Exodus, through the praise of the Father, through the intercession of the Holy Spirit, and through grace earned by Jesus Christ, leaving the Faithful a promise that in due time they “will shine like the sun” (Matthew 13:45).

These A Catholic Bible Study, Personal Notes and some others are already on the web site at <http://www.western-civilization.com/CBQ/Personal%20Notes/Personal%20Notes.htm>.

For more on sources see the Appendix file.

²² Craig L. Blomberg, “Interpreting the Parables of Jesus: Where Are We and Where Do We Go from Here?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No 1 (January 1991) 51.

²³ Craig L. Blomberg, “Interpreting the Parables of Jesus: Where Are We and Where Do We Go from Here?” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 53, No 1 (January 1991) 61.