

“The Righteous Shine like the Sun”

Truth 101. There is a God – only one, true God – and He is in control of all things. There is a devil, a fallen angel of God who continues to rebel and fight against Him and His kingdom. There is a hell, where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Truth 101. Everyone is a sinner. All have rebelled against God and done evil with their thoughts, words, and deeds. No exceptions. Therefore, we all deserve to go to hell. There is a Savior from sin, death, the devil, and hell – Jesus Christ, the Son of God – who by His grace, saves all who believe in Him for their salvation.

Those who do not believe these truths cannot understand the parable the Lord speaks to us today. Truth 101. God desires that all sinners would be saved from the torments of hell, and spend eternity with Him in the glorious bliss of heaven.

This is why God the Father has sent His Son, Jesus Christ – to save sinners. This is why Jesus tells you this parable – preaches His Word into your ears – so that all who have ears to hear, will be saved.

The picture set before us is that of a field, which Jesus tells us is the world. Into this field are sown the seeds of wheat, and weeds. These “weeds” look a lot like the wheat which the Master has sown – but in time, it becomes apparent that they are weeds.

The servants have the audacity to question the Master about what He has sown into His field. Did you do this? Do you want us to take care of it? But its not their field – and the Master tells them to “let it be” – and I’ll take care of it.

The wheat in the field, we are told, are the “children of the kingdom” – and Jesus is concerned that they will be harmed when the servants try to fix the problem.

Now remember, this parable is about the kingdom of God – about Jesus who rules and reigns over His field. He’s in control of all things. He’ll take care of it – at the close of the age – but also, in these days.

As the children of God who live in this field, we prayed in the Collect of the Day that God would “so rule and govern our hearts and minds by [His] Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of [His] final judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with [Him] in perfect joy hereafter ...” In the reading from Romans, it describes how in the sufferings of this present time we long to be revealed as “the sons of God.”

For those who believe that there is a hell, a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” where the weeds will be burned with fire – you can understand why the distinction of the wheat and the weeds is important.

Like the servants, we want to rip out the weeds in order to distinguish ourselves – to justify ourselves before God – to show that we are children of His kingdom. Is that because we are mindful of the final judgment – and we fear being cast into the fire because we know that WE are the “cause of sin” and “law-breakers”?

Does your unholy living encourage others to follow suit? Have you pressured, coerced others to join you in your sin? Have you ever noticed how sin attracts sin?

As one example, some who have divorced their spouse for ungodly reasons often speak of their new life as good, even desirable – leading others who are struggling in their marriage to consider divorce – encouraging and leading them into sin.

Whatever our sin might be – we tend to gather around us similar sinners – so we can pretend that our sin is okay – as if we have not broken God’s law.

Truth 101. All are sinners. The distinction is this – that the children of the kingdom do not look to themselves to fix the problem. God the Holy Spirit leads you to “take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

As children of the heavenly Father, you bear the fruit of your Father. With your evil exposed, you rightly fear your Father’s judgment. But for your sake – so that you do not live in fear – the Father reveals His steadfast love to you today.

His love is manifested in His Son. Jesus, who will take care of the weeds “at the close of the age” – takes care of your sin today – announcing the Father’s judgment upon you when He says – “I forgive you all your sins.”

That's why we sing with the psalmist these words of our Introit for today: "For great is your steadfast love toward me [O Lord]; you have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol ... you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

Inwardly you groan and await your final deliverance from all evil – when, at the close of the age – "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." That's you and all who trust in Christ's forgiveness and salvation.

Today, in the field full of our present sufferings – the righteous confess not only their sins – but that God is gracious, that He doesn't give me what I deserve.

Today, the righteous plead with the Holy Spirit to stir them up to holiness of living. You want to do what is pleasing to your Father in heaven – so you pray – "Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth."

Today, the righteous live – not by sight – but by faith – trusting that the Lord knows the difference, that He faithfully preserves His children so that they will not be rooted up – and will, on the Last Day, deliver them from all evil once and for all.

Dearly beloved, you are children of the heavenly Father. He has given you new birth in Holy Baptism. With ears to hear the Holy Spirit leads you in holiness of living. You forsake your own righteousness (confessing that you can't fix the problem) – and trust solely in Christ as your righteousness before God. You hold fast to the promises of God – that Christ's Body and Blood is "for you" – for the "forgiveness of all your sin."

Truth 101. God is faithful. By His grace, He delivers you from the hell you deserve, to the heaven He has prepared for you. He delivers you from evil now – and will deliver you to dwell with Him in perfect joy hereafter. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.