



ST. PATRICK'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

4797 Curtis Blvd Port St John FL 32927

**Epiphany 5
February 6, 2022**

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.**

The passage selected for the sermon this morning is taken from the Gospel:

“Let both (the wheat and the tares) grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”

As a priest, I hear one argument against God's gracious kindness more than any other. You all probably hear the same one. If God is so good, why does he let such bad things happen. Why is there a pandemic, or a war. Why do I struggle with my addictions and broken relationships. Why do the people I love get sick, and even die.

The truth is that when God made us in His image, when he planted our seed, His expectation was that there would be a bountiful and good harvest. Because he loved us, He allowed us free will, because love that is commanded is not love. Love has to be given freely to be love. That free will is the opportunity for the devil to sow evil seed in God's good garden.

And God, in His goodness, because He is not willing to lose the good seed of His creation, allows us to have these lives in which we have His grace and love, but which are crowded by the weeds of pride, disobedience and selfishness, which is the evil that co-inhabits our lives.

At the end of his life, Moses addressed the Israelites that he had led through the desert to the Promised Land. Let God be my witness, he proclaimed, that I have set before you good and life, and evil and death. You must choose your path. It would seem to be an obvious choice, and yet how often do we witness, in our community, our families, and to be honest, within ourselves, the willful choice to embrace the unhappiness and bitterness of sin.

The roots of the weeds the devil has sown in our lives are intertwined with our good roots and pull us powerfully away from the grace of God. How easy it is to indulge in telling a lie, envying others, being angry because our pride is offended, doing what we know will compromise our lives and destroy our relationships rather than to choose being good, doing good and persevering to everlasting life.

I often include my grandmother's passing in my sermons. I describe how she was attended by angels and family that had gone on before, and how she left blessing us and telling us to be joyful for her that she would pray for us to join her in that eternal joy. I was also with my other grandmother when she passed. She was a hard woman, raised in terrible times in a broken family, working in the shoe factories from 12 years old until her mid sixties. She was incredibly kind to me, helping raise me when I was at my most affected by the polio. But she did not forgive easily, and she had many grudges, often rightly deserved. As she faced her passing, I remember her last hours with her silently mouthing her apologies and granting her forgiveness to the long list of people with whom she had to make peace before she could go. It was not an easy passing, and though, when she had finished, she breathed easily and passed gently to her reward, the litany of grief she had to untangle before she could go, left a strong mark on me for the rest of my life.

I think we should understand this Gospel in the light of her experience. God will not only separate the sheep from the goats, the good people from the bad, at the end of time, he also separates the good we have done from the bad we have indulged in our own lives. We can't stand before Him in judgment with the sins and anger and offenses we have carried through our lives. They have to be purged before we can abide and live in his Light and Love.

The only way they are purged is the heartfelt petition for forgiveness, and the hard work of asking forgiveness to those we

have wronged and giving forgiveness to those who have wronged us. We have to make peace with those we leave behind, and we face the people who have gone before. Resolving an angry, proud and sinful heart is not the way we want to spend the time we have preparing for meeting our Lord and judge.

We want to keep our Godly roots strong, unencumbered by the twisted and entangling roots of evil. We want to push back against temptation by living lives of grace and charity of love. Simply put, it is better to choose goodness and life now, than to be faced with carrying our sins into our Judgement and to the unhappy and eternal consequences of Hell.

Jesus gave us the instruction we need in the Great Commandment. Love God with all our heart and mind and soul, and love our neighbor as ourselves. In the Epistle today, St Paul gets more specific for those of us who have trouble applying the Great Commandment.

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen