

SERMON

+ Lectionary 16 A (8 Pentecost)

July 19, 2026

There was a rich man who lived in a small village
who never gave alms to the poor
or contributed to charitable causes.
People in the village called him The Miser.

In the same village there also lived a poor shoemaker.
He was a most generous man
who responded to every person in need
and every charitable cause that was brought to his attention.
No one was ever turned away from his door.

One day the Miser died,
and they buried him at the edge of the cemetery,
away from the other graves.
No one mourned his passing
or followed the funeral procession.

But as the days passed,
disturbing news began to spread about the shoemaker.
“He no longer gives alms to the beggars,” reported one man.
“He refuses every charity,” declared another.

A village leader asked, “Has any one asked him about this?”
They answered, “He says he no longer has money to give away.”
So the village leader went to visit the shoemaker.
“Why have you suddenly stopped giving?” he asked him.

And the shoemaker told his story.
“Many years ago, the man you called the Miser
came to me with a huge sum of money
and asked me to distribute it to beggars and charities.
“He made me promise
that I would not reveal the source of the money
until after he died.
Once every month, he would visit me secretly
and give me more money to give away.

“I became known as a great benefactor
 even though I never spent a penny of my own money.
 I am very surprised that no one questioned me earlier.
 How could anyone who earned the wages of a shoemaker
 give away as much money as I have all these years?”
 (William White. *Stories for Telling*. “The Miser”, p. 101)

You just can't always tell about people, can you.
 We can't.
 But God does.
 And that's the point.

This world is filled with good people who do good things,
 good people who do bad things,
 bad people who do good things
 and just plain bad people who do bad things.

The church, being a community of worldly people,
 is the same.
 And it has always been that way.

And so even Jesus
 felt a need to tell a parable
 about the good and bad of humanity
 and our desire to judge others
 in the community of believers.

It's impossible for us to tell.
 When the wheat and the darnel weed
 first pops up out of the ground,
 they look alike.
 And as they grow, they still look alike.
 Until the wheat produces its grain.

A good deed done by a bad person
 looks as good as a good deed done by a good person.
 And a bad deed done by a good person is still a bad deed

and looks like a bad deed done by a bad person.
 They look alike, the Wheat and weeds.
 You just can't always tell.

Think about his disciples who are listening to Jesus tell this parable.
 There's Judas who would betray him,
 and Peter, the rock, who would deny him,
 and James and John who seemed to be more concerned
 with their own status than with the kingdom of God.
 Yet all of them are chosen by Jesus
 and, except for Judas,
 they are bestowed with the title, "Saint," by the church.

Sometimes it's impossible to tell.
 But the point is, it's not our job to tell.
 And yet, we are quick
 to perpetuate stereotypes we form
 based on our own judgement, or on the judgement of others.

That's where all those "isms" come from –
 racism, sexism, ageism, classism –
 however we separate people into groups
 and make judgments about them.

And so Jesus tells this parable
 with two points to remember:
 Patience and faith.

Patience with those who fail to meet our standards,
 patience with those who appear to be different,
 patience with our desire to judge others,
 patience with our own quick evaluation
 of who's in and who's out.

The Master calls the servants
 to let the wheat and weeds grow together
 for the sake of the wheat!

“Do not pull up the weeds,” he says,
 “for in gathering the weeds
 you would uproot the wheat along with them.”

More than once,
 Jesus has called these disciples “little children” –
 those young in the faith –
 because sometimes the faith of Jesus’s followers is very fragile.
 But God will not lose even one
 of those faithful souls.
 So God calls us to be cautious
 about losing them for him.
 And to grow together. With patience.

Not to suffer abuse or violence.
 But to offer the same grace
 we wish to receive from others.
 To catch ourselves from judging or excluding.
 With patience.

And faith.
 Faith that God will take care of it at the right time,
 faith that God can discern good from bad,
 faith that God will be God,
 and in mercy and justice
 bring the bountiful harvest of wheat
 into his barn for eternity.
 Patience. And Faith.

We just don’t know. But God does.
 And the good news is that the judge
 will be the one who went to the cross and died
 for us and for our salvation.

The judge is the one
 who gives himself – his own presence –
 to the end of the age
 in the word proclaimed,

in the sacrament of his body and blood for you,
and in the community of his believers
and their loving deeds for the needy.

In the meantime,
we turn it over to God to judge,
trust the God who raised Jesus from the dead,
and live as children of the kingdom together
with patience and faith.