

Different denominations have different ideas about what the Kingdom of God is. Last week we saw that – according to Jesus – it’s something deep within ourselves. He uses images of buried treasure and hidden pearls and seeds in the earth. So it’s not so much what the Kingdom *is* – it’s what it *means*. Some Christians believe that it’s a literal, ‘out there’, concrete kingdom of justice and peace where all the wicked are swept away and everyone lives together in equality and harmony.

I can’t believe that.

In today’s gospel Jesus uses the metaphor of a field sowed with wheat; then an enemy comes along and sows weeds, and they grow up together. In the end, at harvest time, the wheat is gathered in and the weeds are unrooted and burned. Jesus himself even gives an explanation of it: in this world, the wicked flourish alongside the good and sometimes the good don’t really flourish very much at all. But at the end of time the good will be saved and the wicked will be cast into the fire – forever and ever, I presume. Yes: all very satisfactory, very pleasing, very neat... provided, of course, that you and me are the wheat, not the weeds.

We can go into this parable more deeply by internalising it – this means understanding it as a picture of what’s going on *inside ourselves*. We’ve all got one foot on earth and the other one in heaven; we’re like frogs, living half in the water and half out of it; we’re half animal and half angel, one face turned towards this

world and the other face towards God. This is what the parable of the sower means: the wheat and weeds grow together. In other words, the good seed and the bad seed are growing together *in ourselves*. St Paul couldn't stand this: he writes in his Letter to the Romans:

“I do not do the good that I wish to do; instead, I continually do the evil that I do not wish to do.”

He says he felt wretched about it, but I think he was just being a bit neurotic – and I do speak as a psychologist, after all. Because it applies to all of us, surely? We all want to do good and sometimes end up doing quite the opposite – but this is precisely because the good seed and the bad seed, the wheat and the weeds, growing together in the field of our soul.

Our hope and our consolation is this:

When our particular allotted time comes, God will pluck the weeds out – all our faults and failings, our bad habits, our cruelties and our lack of kindness, all our grudges and jealousies, impurities, gossiping and dishonesty – God himself will pluck them out of our soul with a gentle hand and will gather us to himself and store us in the barns of his infinite love.

There's a beautiful Irish poem called *Ag Criost an Siol*, set to music by Sean O'Riordan, which uses nature imagery, as most Celtic poetry does, and the last two lines, in translation, say this:

*Christ's is the seed, Christ's is the crop; in the barns of Christ, may we be brought home at last.*