

In recent weeks, we've had a host of opportunities to criticise other people. What with Brexit, the violent events in Paris, Nice and Munich and the killing of a priest during a Church service- there's no lack of targets for our disdain. At a more local level, we know that discord can also arise in churches - between dénominations, congrégations and individuals.

If we believe that we are all made in the image of God, what on earth is going wrong?

I was reminded of such matters, when reading the parable of the weeds among the wheat in Matthew's Gospel, which we've heard this evening..At this time of year, the weeds (rogue plants) in the garden seem to grow up faster than the flowers,(most of us are not growing wheat), and often faster than we can pull them out.

However, we have to be careful when we **do** pull them out, for the roots of the weeds are usually tangled up with those of the flowers, retarding their growth -and its all too easy to pull up the very **flowers** we are trying to encourage.

In the parable we've just heard, Jesus talks of a man sowing seeds by hand. Good and bad seeds are jumbled together and, at this point, its impossible to separate them. Sometimes its best to leave them till later in the year, when its easier to tell them apart and to décide which ones to save.

Similarly, we can't separate **good people** from **bad**. Alexander Solzhenitsyn once wrote that '[the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a pièce of their own heart?](#)' If God were to destroy all those Christians who have a bit of evil in their hearts, how many of us would still be here tonight? So, before we criticize others, perhaps we need to examine our own hearts and motives! '[Judgement is mine](#)' says the Lord.

. We are part of a world-wide Church, which is meant to be united, ethical, inclusive and missionary; but, in reality, we fall far short of perfection. That is because the Church is made up of sinners on the road to rédemption, and none of us is **yet** fully redeemed. But; **make no mistake**, God continues to love and tend his création.

We haven't achieved unity, or holiness yet, - it's 'work in progress'.; that is, we're **working** on it, or rather **God's** working on **us!** God's love is **not** seen in a Church full of goody-goodies, rather does it shine out from a Church made up of forgiven sinners who, through his Holy Spirit, he is trying to change into better people. However, this involves **our** active co-opération in listening and reacting to his love.

He has given us the freedom to return his love or to reject it, and to help **others** grow. We know that there are people who reject that love, follow an evil agenda, and even threaten the lives of others. Thus there are some **weeds** which we know from expérience are **so bad** that they need to be curbed to protect the other plants, and we use the rule of law, God-inspired, to weed **them** out.

God has promised that at the time of **his** choosing, all those who have blossomed, by virtue of seeking to be the people he intended us to be, will be welcomed into his eternal home. Till then we need to work hard on the selfish faults which threaten to choke our **own** spiritual growth and that of those around us, so that when **God** judges the time is right, **we** will be **attractive** enough to find a place in **his**

heavenly garden.