

Sermon Pentecost 6
Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
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The Rev. Leslie M. St. Louis

Have you all seen the movie Maleficent? It's a wonderful movie and for those of you who have not seen it, you should, but I'll give you the run down. Maleficent as you probably well know is the villain in the story of Snow white and this is her story, the story of how a beautiful pure hearted young woman growing up in a magical kingdom of fairies, with extraordinary powers and incredible black wings falls from grace. It seems that somewhere along the way she befriends and then falls in love with a young man from the outer world who desires to be the most powerful king and he it seems recognizes that he can have that power by taking Maleficent wings and so he tricks her and drugs her and steals her wings away. And so begins Maleficent's descent into evil and treachery a journey whose first steps were cloaked in pain and fear and anguish and betrayal. So it is that some years later Maleficent casts a spell on Aurora, the king's daughter, that before her sixteenth birthday she will prick her finger on a spinning wheel and be cast into sleep from which only the kiss of true love can awaken her.

But it seems that Aurora is not the only one upon whom a spell is cast Maleficent too is bewitched by this wee one whom she christens "Beastie" and so she watches as she grows spying her from a distance as the fairies bring her up in the forest where she has been sent for safekeeping, teaching her, caring for her....loving her. But spells it would seem have a way of coming to pass and so before her sixteenth birthday Aurora is driven back to the castle where she pricks her finger and falls into sleep from which even the kiss of the prince does not awaken her but only the kiss of Maleficent who draws Aurora from slumber.

"I missed you." She says to Maleficent.

"I missed you too, Beastie." Maleficent replies

It would seem that even the most evil of villain's has somewhere in their DNA a desire, a drive to care for the least of them. Jesus most strident demand was "let the little children come unto me." The only arguments he ever lost were with parents who came to him requesting care, salvation for their children.

I had my first life changing experience with the beasties when I was fifteen. The United States was participating in the airlift of children out of South Vietnam at the end of the war and many of the children's first point of entry was through the hospital at Headquarters Eurcom in Wiesbaden Germany. My mother and sister and I went to meet the flights and help get the children settled at the hospital. I remember distinctly how some of them just wilted into our arms seeking any kind of solace from the horror they had been through. Others, I recall stood stiffly at a distance frozen in fear, confusion and grief even if they were too young to know it.

I remember feeling a bit frantic to think of anything that might help them feel less alone, less sad, less alien. We went through our toys and our games and our clothes to take to them. I packed all of my mostly forgotten stuffed animals up to take to the hospital, even my beloved and thread bare Winnie the Pooh, (although I have to admit Winnie came out of the bag before we went into the hospital) it seemed vital to help them understand that they were cared for, that they were not in fact alien.

Some years later, while living in Albuquerque, I had my next encounter with "aliens" as we like to call them, beasties by any other name. This time a cohort of undocumented children living in one of the larger cemeteries in Albuquerque.

Hiding amongst the dead for simply a chance to be part of the living.

Today we encounter another parable, another story about the sowing of seeds. Parables you know are meant to be big mind boggling, earth shattering stories, which is why they are hard to preach, no matter what anyone says, the more we try and the harder we work the bottom line is any time a story says something like the kingdom of God is like.....(fill in the blank) what we are meant to understand is that the kingdom of God is unlike anything we have ever encountered or could ever explain and the more we try, the more confident we are that we understand it and can put it in a nice neat package for people to listen to or to read the farther we are away from the kingdom of God and understanding it.

In today's parable Jesus tells us that "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well."

Not unlike our story of Maleficent someone had sown good seed and had hoped to create an abundant harvest but someone with malintent came in to spoil things.

Explain this parable to us the disciples ask and Jesus tells them this. “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!”

Good seed has been sown into the world in a broad and abundant fashion. Seed that will yield and bring about the kingdom of heaven but that seed is threaten regularly by weeds that seek to overtake it.

You know we so often hear people say the right things, things like we have to take care of the children, the children are our future. I think if Christ were here today he might say that the kingdom of God is like a playground full of children, a place where the beasties laugh and play; where none of them worry about their next meal or where they might sleep or if they’ll be sold or raped or murdered.

It has been a horrendous week for children. Many of the fatalities in Gaza are children, some murdered while they played on a beach, 80 of those killed on the Malaysian flight were children and of course this week the US began deporting children as young as 18 months old back to Honduras. Let’s be clear we are not sending these children back to a place where good seed flourishes; let’s be clear we have condemned these children. The lucky ones may starve or die of dehydration or malnutrition or some opportunistic infection. Those who live will most likely live on streets controlled by drug cartels, both girls and boys will become part of the sex trade and some will be the victim of murder that will go unreported and never noticed. Not me thinks things to which the kingdom of God can be compared.

It appears that we may be better at defining that which is not the kingdom of God that which is weeds than we are at defining the kingdom of God at times. In this particular case I think the weed we are dealing with is the insidious one called greed. We have for some reason many of us come to believe that everything really is a zero sum game. Buying into the myth that if I/we give to someone else, some

alien, than I won't get mine. Buying into the me and mine, versus us and them conversation.

You know scripture talks about the alien. It identifies the other or alien as the one to whom much care is to be given, to feed them and clothe them and give them a place of rest and respite that they might sojourn for a while. Rather than being a mark of exclusion it is the very identifier for inclusion.

Sometimes I think that the kingdom of God might be compared to sharing the excitement of seeing the most recent bug the boy has found, or stopping the washing machine to retrieve the prize rocks he or she forgot to take from their pocket, or to the hugs from the ones who missed you over the summer or to witnessing the shy but proud smile from the one who got into the college of their dreams or got the job they had hoped for or the date for which they had prayed.

But just as I say that I realize that I come awfully close to admitting that I do like the beasties and miss them when they are gone and at the same time come dangerously close to defining that which is simply unimaginable, unfathomable and irresistible. No I think what I am left with is being able little by little to identify the places where my own weeds have choked the good seed that has been planted, remembering that even when covered with hurt and anger or betrayal or fear the seed that is the love of God remains.