Our lectionary texts always carry with them the theme of God’s judgment, of God making things right for the world. Our parable this morning is no different, it carries that same theme, “Will there come God’s justice for the world?” When Jesus tells the parable of the wheat and weeds, or tares, he has in mind a particular tare called darnel

In its early growth, it so closely resembles wheat, that even a trained eye has a hard time distinguishing between them. Only when they begin to mature and produce their heads, is it easy to do so. But by then, their roots are so intertwined that you cannot weed out the darnel without tearing out the wheat, too. So both must be left to grow together until the time of the harvest when it all comes up.

First, the parable teaches us that there is in the present time an evil and hostile power in the world. Evil, injustice, sickness and death, symbolized by the tares, they exist in contradiction to God’s kingdom and will for the world. There is an enemy. God’s work in history has always been opposed. What are we to do in the face of evil?

So secondly, because the parable implies the complexity of evil, it is really impossible for us to distinguish between those who belong to the kingdom and those who are not. One may appear to be good and may in fact be bad; and another may seem bad and yet be good. Many Christians are too quick to classify people and label them simply good or bad. So the parable warns us not to be so quick to act with our very limited judgments.

If the reapers in the parable had their way, as they tore out the darnel, they would have torn out some of the wheat also. Right judgment has to wait until the harvest. A person may make a great mistake, and then redeem themselves and, by the grace of God, amend for it by making the rest of their life a wonderful thing. A person may appear to live an honorable life, but then in the end prove false by having lived life very differently in reality.

 In the end, a person will be judged not by any single act or stage in life, but by their whole life. No one, and that’s all of us, who sees only part of a person’s life can judge the whole person. As N. T. Wright has said, “The line between good and evil does not lie between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ between the West and the rest, between Right and Left, between rich and poor. That fateful line runs down the middle of each of us, every society and every individual.

This is not to say that all humans, and all societies, are equally good or bad, far from it. Merely that we are all infected and that all easy attempts to see the problem in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are fatally flawed. This parable includes the element of waiting. And waiting is often difficult for us. The farmer must wait for harvest time, and in this parable, must wait in frustration as the tares grow in the midst of the wheat. Jesus’ point in the parables is that the element of waiting is part of what God’s kingdom in this world is like, too.

Jesus’ followers, of course, didn’t want to wait. If the kingdom was really present where Jesus was, and as he proclaimed, and coming into reality in what he was doing, then they wanted the whole thing at once. They had a timetable of their own, and expected God to conform to it. So often do we as well.

God calls the church, calls us, to build a faithful community of discerning people who persevere in hope of God’s ultimate justice through Jesus. And for now, we have to stay in and strive to grow in the field, and seek the kingdom of justice, joy, righteousness, and love.