



a Kendall Hunt Company

## Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



### Junior High Session

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

Matthew 13:24-43

### Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

Loving God, guide us in the light of your love.

Help us make choices that cooperate with your goodness.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

### Opening Life Reflection

The theme for today is the problem of moral evil. Begin today's session with a weed and wheat activity. Set up the meeting space so that the young people can move around the room. Explain that wheat actions are choices that cooperate with God's love, and weed actions are choices that work against God's love. The left side of the room stands for "wheat" and the right side of the room stands for "weeds." The middle of the room is left open for "not sure." Begin by reading statements and invite the young people to choose whether the statement is a wheat action or a weed action by standing in that section of the room. Begin with statements such as: Giving priority to popularity over friendship. Doing chores at home without complaining. Gossiping and spreading rumors about someone. Listening to your parents and respecting their decisions. Fighting with another person. Allowing a new person to sit at your lunch table. Trying to prove that you are better than others are. Acting as if your thoughts and feelings don't matter. Standing up for what you believe is right. Wanting material things that you don't have. Harming yourself or others by using drugs or alcohol. Discuss:

- How do "weed" actions choke out God's goodness?
- How do "wheat" actions cooperate with God's goodness?
- How can our choices help to bring God's love into the world?

Allow time for discussion. God created human beings with the freedom to choose between what is good and what is evil. We are responsible for our choices.

### Listening to the Word of God

In the Old Testament reading listen to find out how God shows mercy toward all people.

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Read Wisdom 12:13, 16-19.

Allow for silence.

### **Scripture Discussion Starters**

- Why does God show mercy toward all people?
- How does God judge?
- What gives the people hope?

In the gospel today listen to Jesus teach about good and evil.

Read Matthew 13:24-43.

Allow for silence.

- How does Jesus teach about the problem of evil?
- What do the good seeds in the parable represent?
- What do the weeds represent?
- Why does God allow the weeds to grow along with the wheat?

### **Scripture Background**

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings using the **Catechist Background** section.

The first reading from the Book of Wisdom helps us to understand that although evil exists in the world, God extends mercy and forgiveness to all people. In today's passage the difficult question of why God allows good people to suffer and sinners to prosper is addressed. God allows the sinner to survive with the hope that the sinner will repent and change. Although God is all-powerful, Yahweh has been shown to be a God of forgiveness and compassion.

In today's gospel, Jesus once again uses seeds to help us understand the Kingdom of God. In the first parable, weeds try to choke out the good seed but the sower does not get rid of the weeds right away. The weeds are allowed time to change. The good seeds represent the faithful and the weeds are evil doers. Jesus is the sower. This story shows how God wishes to allow time for the sinner to repent and grow in faith. In the end the weeds get separated out and thrown away and the faithful ones, the wheat, enjoy the harvest. Jesus teaches that judgment is reserved for the Lord alone in the final days. Today's stories about seeds, wheat, and leaven, show how the faithful grow strong in God's love.

### **Questions for Deeper Reflection**

- How is God depicted in today's readings?



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- What does Jesus teach in the parable of the weeds and the wheat?
- What helps you grow strong in God's love?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the **Gospel in Life**.]

### **Doctrinal Discussion Starter**

#### ***The Problem of Moral Evil***

We believe that God does not cause evil in the world. There is no quick or simple answer to why God allows evil to exist at all. The Church helps us to understand that there is evil that we do and evil that is not our personal responsibility, such as an earthquake that kills innocent people. Sometimes we choose to turn our backs on God. Moral evil is the evil that we choose to do.

God created us with the freedom to make our own decisions. Free will and reason help us know and choose between what is good and what is evil. We are responsible for the decisions we make. We can choose to do what is good or to do evil. God is on our side, helping us to make good choices. Good moral decisions help us to grow as God's children.

- When do you struggle between good and evil?
- What helps you make a good moral decision?
- Why are we responsible for our choices?

### **Correlation to Faith First©**

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Junior High, Liturgy and Morality, Chapter 12, pp. 146-149

### **The Gospel in Life**

What weeds keep you from growing as a follower of Jesus? How can you pull the weeds from your life this week and allow your faith to grow?