

Waiting isn't as easy as it sounds, and yet God waits for us – perhaps only God can. Many years ago, farmers in Britain were encouraged to set aside fields, or parts of fields, in an effort to reduce the various food mountains and lakes which over-production had led to (one of those cunning EU schemes to undermine British efficiency). Many farmers went along with this, indeed they were being paid to do so, but most were psychologically ill-prepared. The emphasis in Britain, especially since the Second World War, had been to farm every inch of the land in order to counter the threat to food security which had been such a feature of that war; to rely instead on our own efforts rather than on imports of food from abroad. And British farmers had been very good at it, taking on mechanisation and chemical farming to an advanced degree. Leaving fields alone was just not in their nature any more and when 'weeds' started coming up many farmers became acutely distressed and couldn't wait to spray the set-a-side as soon as they could. We see a similar battle today with re-wilding, allowing nature to take its course on a grand scale. And one sees the same in gardens too. And I wonder how much the desire for order and efficiency out there isn't really a projection of our desire for order within. This may go for a lot of human activity. Perhaps we are all a little OCD (obsessive compulsion disorder) in this respect, for our sins, our inefficiency, our inability to have total control of ourselves, is a mark of human nature from the beginning as is the desire to export the problem elsewhere: to an evil one sowing seeds of darnel overnight. And so we concoct a whole system of hell and judgement to finally put our fears, and foes, at rest – as we see in the explanation of today's parable of the weeds which is almost certainly, as last week, a later addition and a sign indeed that the disciples of the early Church were already losing something of the insight and peace which only God's spirit can provide, as the passage from Paul's letter to the Romans makes clear. Perhaps hell out there is really only an evasion of the hell within, but this realisation is the beginning of hope, or as J.D.G.Dunn puts it so well,

*'The Spirit is seen here as typically active not so much in the heights of spiritual rapture as in the depths of human inability to cope.'*

And the Spirit will work in us like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through. Our part is not to worry and fret about a battle we will inevitably lose but to rely on God's mercy, on God's spirit of love, to get to work on those hidden parts of ourselves which will one day need to come into the light and be seen for what they are: grist to the mill of God's loving action.

*'A garden then, is a finite place, in which a gardener ... has created, working with or against nature, a plot whose intention is to provide pleasure... and nature? Nature is what wins in the end.'*

(The Gardeners' Gripe Book Abby Adams)

For 'garden' read farm, for 'pleasure' read food , for 'nature' read God.

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