

Zula Karuhimbi, an 80 year old grandmother – known in her village as Mama Zula – will never forget that April Friday in 1994. Hutu militia entered her village and began burning houses, looking for names on their hit list. As a Hutu, Mama Zula was safe from their savagery. A terrified little boy ran to her house and begged her to help rescue his mother who was trapped in their burning house. Zula managed to pull the woman out of the house in time. Along the way, they rescued another neighbor whose house was set ablaze as well. Mama Zula brought the three to her own house and hid them there.

Word got around that Mama Zula was sheltering Tutsis. As the violence spread, her home became a safe haven. She cooked for them everyday and comforted and encouraged her terrified neighbors. The Hutu thugs suspected Zula was hiding people and they demanded she hand them over – if not they would burn her house down too. But Mama Zula stood in the doorway of her locked house and berated the soldiers, “Don’t you know you are brothers? You played together as children. We are all the same, we all have the same ancestors, we have the same blood.”

After three long months, the genocide ended. Many of Mama Zula’s friends and neighbors had been killed but thanks to the extraordinary bravery of this kind and compassionate grandmother, one hundred Tutsis escaped.

When we hear Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds, we first think of good people (wheat) and bad people (the weeds) coexisting in an imperfect world until the coming of God's kingdom. But every individual possesses something of both the "good" wheat and "evil" weed. Every one of us possesses the ability to do compassionate and just things out of love - but there exists within us the same ability to do destructive things out of selfishness and greed. We all can respond to any situation taking the moral and ethical high ground -or we can find some justification for acting out of our own self-interest or devise some rationalization for taking a less demanding and more profitable approach. Discipleship recognizes that struggle existing within each one of us.

Today's Gospel calls for patience and mercy, rather than be at odds with one another. The kingdom of God will come, Jesus tells us, when we have learned to love one another as He has loved us.