

SERMON FOR JULY 23, 2023

TEXT: MATTHEW 13: 24-30. 36-43

THEME: THE WEEDS IN THE GARDEN

**4** He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, **25** but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. **26** So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. **27** And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' **28** He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' **29** But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'""

In the name of Jesus:

A few weeks ago our daughter Emily moved into a new home. Just before Luann and I were about to leave, Luann and I decided that we were going to do a little garden work for Emily. Her front landscaping is beautiful, and in wanting to keep it that way, Luann and I went about the task of pulling the few weeds that were in the landscaping from the flower beds. After a few tugs and pulls, I showed off the big prize, a huge weed..... Or so I thought. For when I showed it to Luann, she lovingly explained to me that what I pulled out wasn't a weed at all, it was a certain type of flower. Well, I thought it looked like a weed.

And therein lies the problem, if you don't know what you are looking for, it is hard to tell the difference. Luann and I had a friend tell us recently to be careful, because the weed that was growing out by the mailbox was actually poison hemlock. You really need to know what you are looking at, and for us as human beings it can sometimes be hard to distinguish.

That is the point that Jesus is making in the parable called the Weeds and the Wheat. In this story, Jesus tells of a field where a farmer has planted wheat, but among the wheat is a bunch of weeds. Now it is easy to distinguish and tell the difference between wheat and weeds, but Jesus says that when one pulls the wheat, care needs to be exercised, because you don't want to pull up the wheat when you pull out the weeds.

This parable is actually a story about the world we find ourselves living in. As we have seen in the Gospel lesson last week and in the Gospel lesson this week, Jesus is the Sower of the seed. Jesus goes about sharing the Good News of salvation that He alone has accomplished for sinners by virtue of His life, death, and resurrection. Sinners are made saints, enemies of God are now made friends because of Jesus. Each of us are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. In the world we live in, there are two types of people, those who believe in Jesus and are thereby saved by the blood of Christ shed on the

cross, and there are those who do not believe in Jesus, and they face an eternity in Hell because they do not believe in the one and only Savior, Jesus.

In the parable there are servants who see evil in the world and they come before their Lord asking if He would root out the evil. The weeds represent the evil sown in the world by the Devil. And these servants have good intentions, but the master's response gives them pause. Don't do that, don't pull the weeds out, because in doing so, they may root out not only the evil that they wish to get rid of, but they may also do harm to the good crop in the field.

When you and I look at the world that we live in, many times we pray, "Lord Jesus, come again, and soon!" That was the prayer of the early church, those early Christians prayed that the Lord Jesus would come in their lifetime, so that the evil in the world and its madness would end and the faithful would then be with the Lord forever living in eternal joy and happiness. But the Lord Jesus in His wisdom didn't return during their lifetime, and the Lord Jesus hasn't returned yet. Seeing as the Lord hasn't returned yet, we either doubt His promise to return, we are impatient over the timing of His return, or we fail to trust in the Lord's will and timing.

This is what Jesus is teaching us in our Scripture today, to have patience and trust in Him. Until the end of time, there will be evil in the world. And

until the end of time, there will always be those who believe in the Lord and seek to do His will. So the Lord instructs us to be patient, patient so that we never lose hope in the Lord, patient in the Lord's will and so that we continue to trust in Jesus and His good and gracious will that we will be found faithful unto death and inherit the crown of everlasting life.

This is God's good and gracious will, that everyone be saved and come to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. To that end, the Lord is patient, not condoning evil but calling all to repent of their sins and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. Today is the day of salvation! Today is the day to confess your sins to the Lord, for he is faithful and just and will forgive you all of your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness. When a person sins against the Lord, the Lord doesn't erase the person, He erases the sin all on account of the life, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus.

And so this then becomes our purpose in life and the mission of the Church, to proclaim the Lord's favor by offering forgiveness full and free. To offer a second and third chance to people who have done wrong. In the New Testament Saul sought to eradicate Christianity. But Saul was offered a new lease on life, he was given a new name, and became the Apostle Paul, who, forgiven of his sin, changed the world by proclaiming Christ as the Savior of

the world. Peter, who denied the Lord three times, boldly confessed the Lord Jesus and dedicated his life to feeding Jesus' sheep.

You too have been given a new life in the waters of Baptism. If anyone is in Christ he or she is a new creation. You are forgiven. You are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live for Jesus, bearing fruit for Him in and among this evil generation. You have been saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus, so that you may share the grace of Christ to those who do not believe in Jesus for their eternal salvation.

Jesus tells us that the end of the world and Judgment Day is coming soon. There will come a time when the weeds are separated from the wheat. Until that time, the Lord calls us to be about His work, focusing on what He calls us to do, loving the Lord with all of our heart, and showing love to those around us. Freely as you have received His mercy, to freely share that mercy with all. To the glory of God and in Jesus' name. Amen