



Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 - <sup>24</sup> Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. <sup>27</sup> “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ <sup>28</sup> “ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ <sup>29</sup> “ ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’ ”

<sup>36</sup> Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” <sup>37</sup> He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. <sup>40</sup> “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. <sup>42</sup> They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

***Live as wheat among the weeds***



*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen*

*(Revelation 1:5b-6)*

Living in a part of the world that's very familiar with agriculture, I think the parable Jesus told today in our gospel lesson might resonate with some here more than in other places – the parable of the wheat and the weeds. When I was growing up, working my way through school with a series of summer jobs, those jobs usually had one thing in common: physical labor - unpleasant tasks for not that much money. One of the tasks that I did quite a bit was being on my hands and knees in the hot summer sun, picking weeds. I learned from first-hand, personal experience about the inevitability of weeds. You could do all you want; you could put down that neat little black barrier, you could dump rocks all over it, you can put down mulch six inches thick, but eventually it happens. The little green thing starts shooting up through the soil and whatever else you try to put in its way. What once was a beautiful flower bed is now overcome with grass and thistles. Somebody – usually the lowest guy on the totem pole (me) – had to go and pick them. After sweat and backaches, there it was – my work was done. There were only flowers in a flower bed, and it was great...for a couple days. Then they came back, and I started the whole process over again. Weeds are inevitable.

In last Sunday's gospel lesson, we heard Jesus' famous parable of the sower and the seed. He ended his interpretation of the parable with these words, **But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown.** This illustration showed us how important and powerful God's word is – the word works! We saw what happens when the seed of the word is sown – some is snatched by the birds, some is scorched by the hot sun, some is choked out, but some takes root. By God's grace and his Holy Spirit's power, he's planted the seed of his word into our hearts, watered that seed with the washing of rebirth and renewal of Baptism, fertilized that seed with the nourishment of his Holy Supper, and set us in place in this world to bear fruit. The word works! But just because the seed has fallen on good soil and, by God's grace, has grown doesn't mean that the life of Christians in the world will be a Sunday stroll in the park – far from it. This brings us to the parable Jesus told in today's gospel lesson – the parable of the weeds among the wheat.

In this parable of Jesus, we see how those plants Jesus talked about in the parable of the sower and the seed interact with the world around them. You'll notice, those tender shoots of wheat aren't alone in the field of this world. **Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared."** In Jesus' explanation of the parable later on, we find out that this field is the world, the sower is the Son of Man, and the good seeds are children of the kingdom – believers. From the time God created the world, he intended to have a weed-free wheat field. But from the beginning, the enemy (the devil) thwarted God's intentions by sowing the noxious seeds of his half-truths, temptations, and evil, causing ugly weeds – unbelief and sin - to pop up right alongside the good wheat.



How many believing stalks of wheat throughout the centuries have looked at the weeds of the sinful world around them and wondered with those farm-hands in the parable, **“Didn’t you sow good seed?”** *Lord, why do you let the evil weeds of this world live and grow while your people are so often seen as the weak losers?* The life of the Christian living in a world that is decidedly and naturally anti-Christian is not always such smooth sailing. We’ve all seen the devil’s work in the field of this world. Sinful influences are all around us, and the devil isn’t about to take a day off. The wheat feels the deadly pull and sees the devastating effects of the weeds in this world. Noxious seeds of anger, addiction, absenteeism, or abuse wrap their poisonous roots around the healthy wheat. How many Christians have seen loved ones and their faith choked out by the lures of the sinful world? Sometimes slowly, sometimes remarkably quickly, the weeds of sin and the lies of the devil tighten their deadly grip. How many Christian marriages are on the rocks because the devil appealed to a basic human desire like pride or anger or lust? How many groups of Christians much like this one have their gospel-unity threatened by the toxic temptations of the devil? Soon, I’m not working for the glory of God and the salvation of people, but to massage my own ego or sense of self-importance.

The sinful weeds of the world are usually pretty easy to identify, aren’t they? Just take a quick glance at God’s unchanging will for all people of all time, and then flip it on its head. The weeds are those who put their fear, love, and trust in anything other than God – even seemingly good things like love, family, and success. The weeds are those who use God’s name in ways that aren’t pleasing to him; they don’t gladly hear and learn his word or particularly respect those who proclaim it to them. The weeds are those who are disrespectful of authority, haters of their fellow humans, given to lustful thoughts and desires. The weeds are those who will do whatever it takes to provide for their own physical well-being even if that means the work of the gospel or the good of the neighbor will have to take a back seat. When you hear that description of the weeds of the world, does it make you stop and think? Or do you simply hear a pretty accurate run-down of what’s wrong with everybody else? The weeds are pretty easy to identify – but do I look like a weed? The devil has done a damnably good job of sowing his weeds into God’s wheat field. What’s even more alarming is that so many of the devil’s poisonous seeds resonate with what I find in my natural, sinful heart. The temptation is to give up and give in to be just like the weeds in the world, rather than living like wheat. Soon, I start to wonder whether at the end of all of this I’ve got a place in the barn with the good wheat or a spot in the **fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

When you look at the world around you and see the devil’s weeds threatening to choke you out; when you look at yourself and see your own weed-like tendencies of devilish design, don’t despair. Instead, repent and remember. Repent - turn away from the devil’s lures and lies that only want your eternal destruction. Remember – remember that you’re not alone in the field of this world. The sower didn’t just sow one seed – he planted a plethora of fellow Christians who are fighting against the same worldly weeds as you are. He planted those fellow Christians so you can gather with them, lean on each other when the weeds weigh your down, and rejoice in living like wheat among the weeds. But how do you rejoice in living like wheat among the weeds? You need to remember something else – really, someone else. Remember that Jesus wrote himself into this human story – by taking on human flesh so that he could fulfill every one of God’s laws where you failed. Jesus never once gave in to the pull of the



weeds or the devil's temptations – and he did that for you. Jesus wrote himself into this human story so that he could be written out of it in the most shameful way – carrying every one of your sins and mine, dying to pay for them, but rising from the dead to prove his victory over every sin, over every temptation of the devil, and victory over death itself.

Even though the devil has done a thorough job of spreading his weeds in the world, that doesn't change the fact that the world is still God's property. Even more, we have his promise – **We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him**, meaning you dear fellow stalks of wheat! What an astonishing truth – God promises that even the wickedness of this world and the hardship of your life will somehow work for your eternal good. The devil may have scattered dissent, but he's no more than a trespasser in God's world. Notice, the Son of Man sowed good seed in *his* field and orders his servants to gather the wheat into *his* barn. Even as you live as wheat in a weedy world, you're still under the loving protection and promise of your Savior God.

So, what should we do about the weeds? Jesus' parable answers that question, **The owner's servants came to him and said, [about the weeds] 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'** We might think the pious sounding Christian reaction to weeds in the world well be, "Tear 'em all up!" But believers have tried this in the past – do you remember the Inquisition? "*Convert to Christianity or die!*" Or how about the Crusades – murder, war, and conquest supposedly in the name of Jesus. Maybe in more modern times, vigilantes trying to bring down God's justice against criminals or murderers. Or some supposing that the work of the Church is to get our government to pass more "Christian" laws...then we'll be a truly Christian nation! But is that what Jesus wants us to do about the weeds in the world? Is that the work of the Church? God said, **Vengeance is mine**. In our parable, Jesus reminds us, "**The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.**" The Lord Jesus certainly has a plan to separate the weeds from the wheat, but he'll do it on his timetable, not ours. The Lord Jesus has servants standing by to do this work, but it's not us.

So what's the point? While you live as wheat among the weeds, rejoice in the forgiveness you have because of Jesus and what he's done for you; rejoice in the fellowship you share with fellow wheat in this world – cherish that bond and set aside any personal baggage that the devil wants to use to keep you apart. And when it comes to weeds in the world? God hasn't given us a physical sword to cut them down, but he equips us with the sword of the Spirit, the gospel. We can share the good news of Jesus with people we know who are in the weeds of this world. When it comes to weeds in the world – don't pluck them...preach to them! Living as wheat among the weeds means looking forward to the day when God sorts it all out – when he gathers you, his sons and daughters, those who have been declared righteous through Christ, and brings you into his heavenly home where he promises **[you] will shine like the sun in the kingdom of [your] Father**. God bless you – living as wheat among the weeds! Amen

*To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 24-25)*