

**Ninth Sunday after Pentecost – August 10, 2014**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

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**Matthew 13:24-30**

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25) But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26) When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. 27) **"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?'** 28) "An enemy did this," he replied. **"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'** 29) "No," he answered, "because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30) 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."

Dear friends:

Weeds – anything that grows – where you don't want it – that's my definition of a weed. They grow in our lawns. They grow in our vegetable gardens. They grow in our flower gardens. They grow just about anywhere. They even grow in the cracks in our sidewalks, driveways and parking lots. So what do you do about the weeds? Some people use *Weed and Feed* on their lawns – it helps but the weeds still grow. Some people use *Preen and Green* around their flowers and put mulch around them. It helps too. Landscaping fabric helps keep weeds from getting out of control. *Round Up* kills weeds dead. But they'll be back! Sometimes you've got to dig them up or hoe them or cultivate them or use a *Garden Weasel*. I've even heard that you can use vinegar to get rid of some weeds.

So what do you do about the weeds? People have been asking that question ever since the fall into sin – when God told Adam, **"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. 18) It will produce thorns and thistles for you...** (Genesis 3:17-18)

That's why each of us can so readily identify with the parable that Jesus told in our Gospel reading from today. With this story or illustration Jesus uses a common experience to teach us a spiritual lesson. So how does Jesus answer the question:

**Theme:** What Shall We Do With the Weeds?

1. Recognize their source
2. Accept their presence
3. Be sure of their destiny

**Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25) But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26) When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.**

Jesus' story aroused the curiosity of his disciples. When Jesus left the crowds of people to go into a house – they asked him to explain the lesson he was trying to teach with the parable of the weeds in the field. **He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38) The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39) and the enemy who sows them is the devil.** (Matthew 13:37-39)

Jesus speaks of himself as the one who planted the good seed. The good seed is identified as the sons of the kingdom – the members of the family of God – believers, Christians. What a wonderful reminder of the fact

that our place in the family of God is a gift of grace. Jesus puts us in this world for a purpose – to live fruitful lives that give him glory. Just stop and think what it would be like if the world was filled with Christians who were alive and growing in their faith. Think of the love, the concern, the expressions of help and kindness, the harmony that would fill the world. What a contrast that would be to the expressions of hate, intolerance, discord, injustice, greed and indifference which we often observe in our world today. They pop up everywhere – just like weeds!

Where did these attitudes come from? The weeds are “children” of the evil one planted by the Devil to ruin God’s wonderful creation. When Jesus spoke of the weeds planted by the enemy he was talking about a plant called *zizanium* that closely resembles the weed. In fact sometimes it’s called “false wheat.” The grains of *zizanium* are black and harbor a poisonous fungus making them inedible.

Because the devil hates God, he takes pleasure in hindering and destroying God’s work whenever he can. Those who believe in Jesus and are members of the kingdom of God become special objects of his attention – he seeks to devour us, to rob us of the life giving nutrients of God’s word. He uses unbelievers to tempt us, to trouble us, to torment us. Whenever Jesus is busy sowing good seed, the devil is right there sowing his own seeds – children of the evil one, unbelievers. These unbelievers may be outwardly righteous, appearing like the wheat, but they really want to carry out the desires of the devil rather than the works of God.

In this world believers and unbelievers exist side by side. They may look very much alike. They work the same jobs, they have the same customs, they celebrate the same holidays, they may have similar political goals and share many common interests. And yet they are entirely different. True Christians are wheat – producing works and fruits – to glorify God. Unbelievers are weeds, producing poisonous fruit – which glorify themselves and dishonor God.

Jesus’ words are a powerful reminder that the Devil is the source of the evil which confronts us in this world. When the temptations of unbelief cross our paths – it helps us to remember their source – they come from the evil one. Why is it that even where the gospel has been proclaimed for many years that wickedness still abounds? Jesus explains: **An enemy did this.** This is the Lord’s explanation for the spread and increase of wickedness. Even though the Devil tries to carry out his work in secret the Lord knows all about it. More importantly the Lord already has in mind how he will use the evil for our good. We can think for example of how the devil schemed and plotted to put Jesus to death. But already before creation God planned to use this for our eternal salvation.

There’s another lesson that Jesus wants us to take away from this story. He wants us to recognize the source of the unbelievers in this world and to accept their presence.

In the parable that Jesus told, the faithful servants of the one who planted the good seed wondered what to do with the weeds. **"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 29) "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. 30) Let both grow together until the harvest.'"**

Our Lord is interested in having faithful servants who are willing to go to great lengths to serve him and extend his kingdom. Pulling weeds is hard work but the servants were willing to do it if this would be pleasing to the Lord. Before they went into action they came to him for his directions. Before you and I set about to work for the Lord it is important for us to first find out from the Scriptures what the Lord wants us to do to counter the attacks of Satan and to spread his kingdom.

The “planter” told the servants to let the weeds grow along with the wheat so that they would not accidentally pull out the wheat. Under most circumstances it makes sense to remove the weeds from a garden but there are times when it’s best to leave them in. In a similar way it might strike us as logical to do what we can to get rid of the unbelievers in this world. Just as weeds hinder the growth of the good plants so the unbelievers hinder the growth and flowering of the Christian church. Jesus calls the weeds everything that causes sin and all who do evil. The world tempts Christians, and some fall, to be replaced by weeds. It makes sense that the weeds should be pulled out – yet Jesus has a better plan.

It’s hard to tell the difference between the wheat and the weeds – in a similar fashion if we were to try to rid this world of all who are unbelievers – we would not be able to tell which of the unbelievers might become believers. The Lord does not want us to cut short anyone’s time of grace. He wants the believers to let the unbelievers live in this world and to share the gospel with them with the hope and the prayer that they will come to faith in Jesus. This means that as believers we may have to suffer and endure some of the troubles caused by unbelievers but the Lord will give us patience. He will use those trials for our good. The fact that his church grows and flourishes in the midst of the wicked world shows the great glory and power of God. The daily temptations from the world serve to test our faith and make it strong. The wickedness of the world makes us long all the more for the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

When our Lord says, let the weeds and wheat remain together he wants us to understand that the church has no business forcefully uprooting believers from the world but we are to remain as wheat testifying to the truth, avoiding and exposing fruitless deeds of darkness. We are to spread the Gospel which liberates and sets people free from the curse of sin and turns sinners into a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

What Shall We Do With the Weeds? Jesus answered: **“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.”**

As long as this world stands believers and unbelievers will live side by side. But this situation will not continue forever. The time of the harvest is coming. Our Lord points us to the harvest to comfort us and to assure us of the eternal destiny of the believers and the unbelievers. On the day of the harvest – which we commonly call the judgment day – the Son of Man will come in all his glory and all the angels with him. The angels will be the harvesters and **"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41) 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. 42) They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** (Matthew 13:40-42 NIV)

The temptations presented by unbelievers plague Christians now but at the final harvest Christ will put a permanent end to all temptations from the devil and the world. The devil and his weeds will spend eternity in hell – separated from God and his kingdom.

Then the believers will be freed once and for all from the sinful influences of the enemy but even more exciting will be the change that takes place in our own lives. As long as believers are alive in this world they will carry their own sinful flesh wherever they go but at the harvest the Lord will even rescue us from our own sinful flesh; the Lord says that we will shine like the sun in the kingdom of our Father!

The righteousness of Christ that has been credited to us becomes our permanent and eternal possession. Jesus will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body. No longer will we have to wrestle with our sinful old self. We will be holy and sinless. We will be able to glorify our Savior God for all eternity.

The next time you're wrestling with weeds – either the weeds in nature or the weeds of unbelief – take heart from the promises the Lord makes to his faithful servants. Don't be discouraged – know that the weeds are from the evil one, accept their presence as evidence of God's desire that all come to faith and be saved, and be assured that the day of the harvest is coming when the differences between the believers and the unbelievers will be strikingly clear. The weeds will not plague us forever – but as long as they do – go to the Lord with your troubles and seek his strength and comfort to continue on until the glorious harvest day. Amen.