

**Gracious God - bless now the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts. Breathe your Spirit into us and grant that we may hear and in hearing be led in the way you want us to go. Amen.**

### **“Taking Care with the Wheat & Tares”**

Farming takes time. You can't speed up nature. Patience is a required virtue for a farmer. Patience is a needed virtue for life. Some things just take time. Some things dictate their own schedule. A baby will learn to walk when the baby is ready. Not before. All of us have endured small disasters because we tried to do something before the moment was ready.

The farmer knows the importance of good dirt. Rocks are removed from the fields. Ph must be balanced. Dirt must be turned over, and sometimes, fields need to rest. The farmer knows how to look at the dirt, and maybe runs some tests to make sure the dirt is ready to grow crops.

I'm not sure any of us spend enough time checking the quality of the soil in our own lives. When Jesus told the parables of the soils, it didn't take long for His listeners to understand all the soils were in the same field. There are parts of our lives that need a different kind of attention. Grudges, like rocks, must be carried out of the field. Weeds of resentment and disobedience must be pulled out. There are parts of our lives that aren't ready to be planted. There are fields not ready to be cultivated. Our lives, like the farmer's fields, need a little work before the seeds are planted.

You can't skimp on the quality of seeds. Weeds grow everywhere and all the time. The farmer has something to do every day.

Last Sunday we heard the parable of the Sower and the seed – and discovered that God has some peculiar farming techniques. This week - with the parable of the weeds in the garden we discover once again God's method of farming is different than ours - and I am for one am very glad of it.

Today's "Parable of the Wheat and Weeds" is about the field that God plants in the hope of gaining a rich harvest of blessing for himself and for the world that God made.

We are the field of God - we are the ground God works - the plants God nurtures - the people God rests God's hopes upon - the folks God plants God seed in, the congregation God anoints with the Holy Spirit.

The farmer's parables are parables about us - about you here in the church - you who are called by the name of Christ - as much as they are about God and what God does.

There is almost no explaining why God allows the Devil to cast his horrid seed in his garden.

But the Word that God gives God's servants about it is very clear - do not disturb it! Do not try to pluck it out - because if you do - you're going to wreck the whole crop; you're going to end up pulling up wheat as well no matter how careful you are, you're going to develop an eye of judgement - and while you may be very infrequently correct in that judgement -you will end up doing wrong.

The weeds will be burned at the time of harvest. The weed will perish - and the wheat stored in the granary of heaven.

God reminds us: wait for the time I have set....

It's hard to wait. And it's hard to understand - especially when you see such terrible things happening; but when it comes to dealing with other people; with other folk - both in the church. and the world, God calls us to plant; not pluck up; at least not until its harvest time.

We are called to recognize evil and to name it. Pray to God that God will take care of it, much as the farmer told his servants in the parable that he would take of it.

BUT most of all we are told to do good instead of evil:

- to bless instead of curse
- to praise instead of criticizing
- to help instead of not getting involved
- to love instead of hate
- to forgive instead of resenting
- to tell truth instead of lies.

It seems that there is a plan, that God does have a system, but still - when you look at it with only the dim light of human wisdom, or the closed eyes of human doubt and human pride, there is almost no explaining why God allows the Devil to cast his horrid seed in God's Garden.

Why, O why does God allow weeds in his field?

In this strange system of divine agriculture, in this field that is so mixed and cluttered with weeds; I am sure glad that God waits a while and that God tells God's Angels to hold back.

You see, every now and then we must admit that perhaps "I'm" being a weed right now. And I know for sure that "I've" been a weed in the past - that some things I have done or failed to do -were more of the evil of Satan in me than the aroma of Jesus.

And knowing that and knowing what God has done; can do; and will do with and for us when we let God; I'm rather content to have the weeding put off to the end!

How about you???

How often have you been a weed in the garden of the Lord? Would you - with what you know now - fancy being plucked up at those times?

My friends, God is so merciful that God allows evil to exist so that what is good might grow. God allows it to exist because so many times God can turn it to the good. God can even turn death to life.

There is almost no explaining any of these things, but there is a truth, there is a substance to it, that can be touched and experienced much as the Disciples touched the risen body of Christ; and that truth is a saving truth, a healing truth, a truth that can only be found in that crazy mixed up field in which God plants God seed, in the love of Christ Jesus our Lord, who gave Himself over to death so that we might live and who lives so that we might never die. Amen.

**Prayer:** We are such a rag-tag group of people. Some of us are at the "top of our game" and others just struggle to get through each day. Yet you draw us here where we will find friendship, peace, and hope not only for our lives right now but for all the times to come. Stand us up again, O God. Dust us off and put us back on the pathways of service and reconciliation. Warm our hearts with your love; lift our spirits with your power, for we ask these things in the Name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.