

If you were with us last Sunday, you'll remember we had the Parable of the Sower, where some of the seed fell on the path and the birds came and ate it all up; some fell on rocky places and the plants withered because they had no root; and some fell among thorns that choked the plants. And some seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop.

Today we have another parable, and again it's illustrated with agricultural imagery: the Parable of the Weeds. Anyone who has ever had a garden will know just how frustrating weeds can be, distracting the eye from the beauty and perfection that was intended. And just like last week, Jesus goes on to explain the meaning of his parable to his disciples – how it isn't really about actual gardening, but about the evil that exists in the world alongside the good – and if there's anything we can all agree on, it's that there is both evil and good in the world. The Son of Man sowed good seed – the children of the kingdom; and the enemy sowed the weeds right there among them.

God allows good and evil to coexist until the harvest – the Kingdom of Heaven exists in the world, and at the end of the age there will be judgement: Christ himself will do the weeding – he will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all that is evil, and so evil will be overcome by good.

If you're like me, just might wonder from time to time why God allows evil to exist - and why can't people just be good? And I recognize at that moment that even within *my own self*, evil exists alongside the good, and I wonder why I can't just be good? Wheat and weeds in the world, and wheat and weeds within each one of us.

St. Paul admits to the frustration that we can feel, in our reading from Romans this morning in which he writes, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now." It is painful. Evil and good co-exist in the world and in ourselves. But Paul wants us to know: "that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Jesus says, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" – like glorious sunflowers!

Until then, our faith calls us to cling patiently to the hope of the promises of Jesus, that we are redeemed and are being saved by our faith in him.

And until then, we must turn from the temptation to sit in God's judgment seat – judging others and excluding those who don't fit our standards of behavior – Jesus himself says in John 3:17, "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." When we exclude people, we're judging them unworthy of God's grace and Christ's power to save – and we're certainly not in the position to do that! It's a difficult truth, that "God's love is broad enough to include evildoers, the worst of them. We know this because Christ died for their salvation no less than for the salvation of the rest of us who are one and all by nature God's enemies" (*Miroslav Volf, "Evil and Evildoers"*).

Jesus died for the sins of the whole world – and in the end, only God knows what is in our hearts. Meanwhile, we are called to live and work together, trusting that one day, evil and injustice will be removed from all of creation. We may not see the fulfilment of our hopes and dreams for justice and peace in our world, but we cannot let that stop us from working towards this vision, bearing the fruit of the Spirit as followers of Jesus. God has strengthened and empowered us to endure; he has given us his peace and shown us the way in which we are invited to walk alongside him.

I was shown a great poem called "Weeds & Wheat" that I want to finish with.

**Weeds and wheat**     *By Steve Garnaas-Holmes July 17, 2020 [www.unfoldinglight.net](http://www.unfoldinglight.net)*

*Let weeds and wheat grow together until the harvest... - Matthew 13:30*

God, I meant to be a good person;  
I wanted to produce wisdom and justice.  
How is it I am so compromised?

There is goodness and mercy in me,  
and there is selfishness and fear,  
privilege that serves only my fake desires.

I've been asleep! I missed it,  
when my ego crept in  
and sowed all this junk in me.

I want to march through the field of my life  
and tear out all the weeds.  
I want to be better. Now.

But, look how harsh I am, judging myself.  
My hands are full not of the fruit of love  
but shame and a scythe.

Some of me that I am disappointed in  
hides your blessing, wheat among the weeds.  
Only you know the true fruits I bear.

I set aside my weapons.  
I let go of accusing myself.  
I accept myself as I am, weeds and wheat.

I trust you to glean the grain from my field  
and remove the rest –  
gone, cleansed, burned forever!

May my peace and acceptance  
be the seeds I sow  
for the next harvest.