

July 17, 2011  
 Sermon for The Sixth Sunday After Pentecost  
 St Peter Lutheran Church  
 Bowie, TX  
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
 Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

Matthew 13:24-30 (ESV)

<sup>24</sup> He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, <sup>25</sup> but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. <sup>26</sup> So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. <sup>27</sup> 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?’ <sup>28</sup> 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?’ <sup>29</sup> But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup> 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.’ ”

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<sup>36</sup> Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” <sup>37</sup> He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup> Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, <sup>42</sup> and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place 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.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible : English Standard Version.* Wheaton : Standard Bible Society, 2001

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Amen.

As a disciple of Christ, I have to admit that there are times that I get frustrated and discouraged with the world and the evil that resides here. We all get aggravated with individuals, governments, religious groups, gangs, and the list could go on and on. I sometimes even get upset with my fellow Christians who claim to have faith in Christ...claim to be heirs of His Kingdom, but do some very weed-like things. Sometimes many of us feel this way and may want to be like Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane when he drew his sword and cut off the servant's ear. Sometimes we want to take matters into our own hands and just get rid of the evil around us.

This is what the parable of the wheat and the tares (or weeds as this translation puts it) is intended to address, so listen up. Not only does Christ address this to reassure and comfort us but He also is trying to help us understand that in working with sinful mankind, many more souls can be saved by not simply ripping the evil out of the world.

The parable from last week showed us that God's Word works in the hearts of mankind, even in some of the most hardened hearts, God's Word can sprout and bear fruit, bringing them to Christ. In this week's parable of the wheat and the weeds, we see God's Word creating and being good seed that grows good plants, producing good fruit, producing heirs of His Kingdom. But unfortunately there is an enemy of God at work also.

The devil also is at work, sowing weeds. Now the devil cannot create, only corrupt and destroy. He enjoys watching his weeds grow, messing up the perfect wheat field. The weeds talked about in this parable are a form of grain that carried a poisonous fungus that remained with the grain and when eaten can cause sickness or even death. It looks very much like wheat when planted and it is not until it is too late that the weed can be identified for what it actually is, and by that time, its roots are so intertwined with the wheat that you cannot remove it without harming the good grain, so much like that parable we just can't rip out the evil in the world without harming some potentially good people.

The devil's bad seed results in sin. Examples of these results can be seen in terrorism, murder, lying, cheating, stealing...again the list can go on and on. We are born in bondage to sin, death, and the power of the devil. Although God works through His Word and Sacraments to plant good wheat in His Kingdom of Grace, building up His field in the church, the enemy, the devil is still working very hard, even in the church planting his weeds.

Christians are *simul iustus et peccator*, simultaneously saint and sinner and even though we are God's children, we still do some very weed-like things. We sometimes joke of sowing our wild oats, well those oats are sown within us also.

Jesus' parable explains why things are the way they are, why evil is still allowed to be in this world. We are still in the age of Grace. The wheat and weeds are still allowed to mingle because it is not yet harvest and to yank out the weeds, the evil could still potentially harm the wheat or the good.

We are called to look in faith to the Good Sower. Jesus came to the earth to fulfill all righteousness and be the perfect sacrifice for all of our weed-like sins. Through His Word and Sacraments, He is active in making us pure wheat and heirs of His Kingdom of Glory. Through Christ, we are clothed in His righteousness, and our sins are forgiven, perfectly. We are called to be patient, confident that the harvest will come.

We are not to take matters into our own hands, it has been tried before and has had disastrous results. The crusades of the middle ages, the Spanish inquisition, the wars following the Reformation. All with great loss of life and with more damage to Christianity than souls saved.

This does not mean that we ignore false doctrine or openly impenitent sinners (MT. 18:17-19; 1 Cor 5:1-5), we show them their failings in Scripture and let the Holy Spirit convict them of their sins, but we simply cannot force them to repent. We deal with them in love, sowing the good seed of the Bible.

The thing is...God is using this time to work in the lives of sinners. Through His Word and Sacrament, He is calling others to faith in Christ. There are many in the world who are really weeds masquerading as wheat, they might even see themselves as doing the right thing such as the Apostle Paul when he was persecuting Christians in the early Church.

The Holy Spirit will continue to work through God's Word among these weeds. God wants none of His wheat lost in an early harvest. But the harvest is coming.

On the last day, God will send His harvesters to gather the harvest. We must trust in Him as He carefully sorts the harvest, separating the wheat from the weeds. We are clearly shown that the sons of the devil will face the torments of hell...this is why God's Word continues to work on the evil in the world, so that every last grain of good wheat will be ready for the harvest.

We are also called to trust that faith in Jesus will distinguish us from the sons of the devil. As we are told in our text, our righteousness comes from Christ and through Him, we will shine like the sun in the kingdom of our Father. (Mt. 13:43)

We might question what kind of plant we are as we wait for the harvest...An heir of God's Kingdom or a child of the devil? Are we gonna make it through the sorting at the final harvest? Am I patient enough to wait for the harvest so that none of God's intended wheat is pulled us as weeds?

Again, trusting in the wisdom and promises of the Great Sower of the field. Trusting in the promises of God...who so loves us that He sent His only Son to die for us, that who so ever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. Put your trust in the righteousness of Christ and He will save you...He already has!

As you are confronted with the evils of this world, don't give up! Our Lord calls you to patiently trust Him as He continues to reach out to others. He has begun a good work in you, and He will bring it to completion on the last day of harvest.

As you come forward this morning, approach His table as an heir of Christ and receive the full assurance of the forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ!

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus,

Amen.