

Pastor Jon's Sermon from July 19, 2020 at the Outdoor Worship. The Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat

Text: Matthew 13.

“Can a judgement parable be a parable of grace?”

Today we have another Parable of Jesus. This one is called The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat. Who likes to have weeds in their garden anyway? We pull them to make sure the desired plants get all the water and nutrients. Weeds are bad, wheat is good.

So what can we learn from this parable. First, it is a judgement parable. Something is going to be separated out in the end. We all love judgement parables, don't we? Well, actually, judgement parables have something to teach us about how to live now... a warning if you will. Seeing that it is Christmas in July. Did the warnings Scrooge saw from his late night visitors change him? Absolutely. The grace in a judgement parable is in the warning itself. In other words, you still have time to change your ways.

In the context of the parable in Matthew's Gospel, the people following Jesus can still come to a deep and abiding faith in him. Many rejected Jesus as God's Son or Messiah. They were stubborn or blinded to the gift of God in human flesh standing in front of them. To some, Jesus represented a threat to their way of life, or to the established religion of the time. But there was still time to change.

I stop there for a minute.

Is there something you want or need to change about your life? Most of us would say “yes.” Are there things you've done or left undone you're not proud of and need to repent from? This is a daily battle for all of us. Repentance is when you have a broken heart over something you have done. Psalm 51 says God desires a broken and contrite heart instead of an animal sacrifice, for example.

The audience of Jesus is still the large crowd we heard about last week... primarily peasant farmers, Jesus' disciples, and his antagonists, like the scribes and the Pharisees who are out to get him. The crowds were a very diverse group of people. This week, the

kingdom of Heaven, or the dream of God Jesus came to bring for the world right now is compared to a landowner who sowed good seed in a field. But, when everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat.

If you take the parable at face value, which we should, without the explanation that follows in Matthew, it was believed that another farmer, a neighbor perhaps, who happened to be an enemy of the sower, came and planted weeds in order to dishonor the farmer. So if you are hearing this parable, your blood might start to boil as you think of your enemies. This would paint a picture of a feud with the likes of the Hatfields and McCoys.

The household slaves came to the landowner and said, “didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?” The sower’s response was, “an enemy did this”. The slaves responded, “Should we then go out pluck them up?”

This would be a logical question expecting an answer of yes.

But much to our surprise, the landowner says, “No”. Last week in the Gospel, the sower surprised us by spreading seed indiscriminately everywhere not caring for type of soil the seeds fell on. It seemed wasteful. They didn’t worry about the outcomes, but trusted in God to provide. Now the sower in this parable says, “No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together in the harvest. I will have my reapers sort them out then.”

Let them both grow together in the harvest. Did you catch that? Letting weeds grow among the wheat. As we found out in the children’s sermon, it is hard to distinguish a weed from wheat. It is all in the eye of the beholder. A child could think a weed is beautiful, but the parent knows it is a weed.

Not the answer the slaves were expecting. This landowner appears to have ultimate patience and wisdom in letting them grow together. “In pulling the weeds, you could uproot the wheat.” Perhaps Jesus used this parable to point out that humans are not competent to make the kind of judgements implied in separating wheat from weeds. One

commentary I read suggested the weeds look a lot like the wheat. You could accidentally pull up wheat. Only God can make such judgements. Taken this way, this is a parable of grace.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ who is grace upon grace. He teaches us not to judge others. We need to be more patient with each other. In pointing out the speck in our neighbor's eye Jesus reminds us we have a log in our own eye. In other words, we are blind to our own sin and are not qualified to point out the sin of others. We are not qualified to judge, label, or condemn others. What a message our world needs to hear right now.

We live among all kinds of people: people who are believers and unbelievers; people we consider good and people we consider bad. People who look different than us. Regardless, God loves all and has ultimate patience for us all. God will sort everything out in the end at the judgement day. We just need to see everyone through God's eyes and keep witnessing to our faith. People can change. We can change our ways and our views of others. There is still time.

For example, according to the website, one green planet, they say "In nature, there are no "weeds." All plants have their roles, and if we can start to see the good in our weeds, perhaps they'll be welcome additions, or at least visitors, to our gardens." God does not sow weeds, but we do by our own labels and then we act accordingly.

As a Lutheran, we know that good and bad dwells in us. We are 100% saint and 100% sinner as Luther said. We all have weeds and wheat in us. When it comes to sin, who can stand on their own? None of us. So then what qualifies us to think we are better than others and can make a final judgement about others?

This idea of divine patience means God doesn't give up on anybody, including us weeds among wheat. This is evident when Jesus came into the world. For God so loved the world, the entire world just as it is, that God gave Jesus as a gift. We didn't deserve this gift. Jesus didn't just come for Christians, he came for all.

