

July 19, 2020

Sermon by Rev. Tab Ottmers

God's grace mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father, from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The text for our sermon is the Gospel reading just read. Another parable spoken to us by Jesus.

Last week we heard the parable of the sower; how the sower cast his seed in some of the most undesirable places. In the ways of the world, God is not a good nor an efficient sower. Today, again, if you evaluate God according to man's standards or man's logic you will never understand his mercy.

The parable of the weeds among the wheat begs the question; what kind of farmer would not pull weeds out of his field? What farmer is just going to allow weeds to grow alongside of the good wheat? Letting the weeds take away the much-needed nutrients for the survival of the crop. Doesn't he know how much those weeds steal from the wheat?

Why let those weeds enjoy the water and the rain that falls from the heavens? Why not just take care of that wheat and let the rest just... go to hell?

You could boil this thought down to one question, and in the parable and Jesus' explanation and the disciples asking for an explanation they kind of get to it; why are there bad people in the world and why doesn't God do something about it?

We've heard Jesus' explanation and a lot of it makes sense to us; the sower is, again, the Son of Man; the good seed the sons of the Kingdome; the weeds the sons of the evil one; and the devil is the one who sowed the bad seed.

Part of the parable that causes us to scratch our heads is, why doesn't God just destroy the weeds as they begin to grow alongside the wheat? Just take care of it! Pull them up! It would sure make my life easier. It's not as if God can't see who are the weeds, who's the bad seed. I mean, even you and I can see that. Wouldn't the world be a better place without all those bad people?

You've seen the sticker that was popular - the little yellow happy face, and it sums it up rather succinctly; "mean people suck."

That's kind of a mean thing to say.

Where did they come from? Well, Jesus makes it pretty clear that evil has come from the devil. The angels saw that there were weeds among the wheat when they start growing. We assume we're pretty good at identifying weeds too. All those bad people. Those who should be pulled up, cast into the fire. Thieves, drunks, liars, gossipers, dictators, murderers, those who don't love God with their whole heart.

Would that be a good definition for a weed? People who love themselves more than their neighbor. Those who act as if God doesn't matter.

And of course, we know what God should do. The disciples, too, expressed this thought. They knew what to do when people didn't listen. When people didn't listen to Jesus nor their preaching, they said, "Lord, should we call down fire from Heaven to destroy them?" This is more often than not our solution to our own selfishness.

When others have better health than us and yet they live life recklessly we wonder, "why doesn't God just take care of them?" I wore my mask every day, washed my hands, I socially distanced, and I still got sick! Why not all those protesters? Serves them right!"

Or we, who know that every good gift comes from God, when we can't afford what we want in this life we see unbelievers, movie stars, professional athletes - they don't have a care in the world. Why does God give them all that great stuff? Why do weeds enjoy the same blessings that the wheat do? And then some?

He makes his sun rise on the evil and the good, and the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike. Yes, we may think we're pretty good at seeing the weeds and how we would pull them up; to help God, of course, you heard that in the parable; "do you want us to pull the weeds up?"

But what about if you saw someone like Saul - who you know better as St. Paul. What if you saw someone like Saul running around and destroying churches, killing Christians - would you have pulled that weed?

Or what about Nicodemus in the Gospel of St. John. He wasn't so sure about Jesus. He was so wary of Jesus at first, he didn't even want to be seen talking to Him. Would you have pulled that weed for being embarrassed?

When everyone was disappointed with Jesus, that He didn't destroy the Roman government, didn't bring freedom and peace to His people - would you have even weeded Jesus Himself?

Or what about you? Weeded as a rebellious teenager when you were in college, those wild days perhaps? The day you were angry with a loved one. The day you cursed your enemy.

When you yelled at your parents, you thought those evil thoughts about your neighbor, your fellow church member - "If they would just leave."

Weeds are those who never help a neighbor in need. Perhaps you can think of a time when you were a weed. Or maybe you've always considered yourself a wheat. Because you've lived the good life.

Well, your case is worse than the weeds. We, like the servants in the story think we know what God should do. Pull the weeds, Lord. Solve the problems of this world so that we can have the reward for our good life now.

But remember, God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that all would turn. That all would repent of their sin and live. God doesn't destroy sin by destroying sinners, for that would bring him no joy. God doesn't pull the bad weeds because God doesn't want to lose any of his precious wheat. And if that means that we need to suffer for a little while then so be it.

The devil is the one who rejoices over destruction. God would rather his Son die, that in him and on Jesus Christ would be funneled all the sins of the world, and at this one point the Son is destroyed for you. Because in giving up his son Jesus, he doesn't lose any of us.

Your Heavenly Father would rather be merciful than to pull weeds with haste. Your Heavenly Father would rather than we'd grown for a little while in our lives than lose us forever.

So, we wait with patience. God allows this world to continue to exist in ways we consider; well, we think it's a little foolish. God doesn't conquer evil by destroying evildoers. God has another solution.

Forgiveness. Forgiveness won on the cross. Forgiveness poured out in Baptism. Forgiveness given out in Absolution. Forgiveness placed in your mouth in the very body and blood of his son Jesus. For that is what has made us who would otherwise be weeds be changed into sons of the Kingdom.

And yes, we still act like and look like weeds, so we still need this ongoing forgiveness. So, Christ gives that forgiveness in plenty. Forgiveness and encouragement for you when your sins weigh your head down. Or when you are sinned against. When false accusations are brought against you. When your body or your spirit is afflicted by the devil and it's pretty easy to begin to lose hope.

Don't give in to the devil. Don't give into the devil when he wants to lead you astray. Don't lose hope. The Lord is patient. The Lord is patient with all. The parable is about a patient

and loving sower who does everything for the good of the wheat. The loving sower is willing to let the weeds and the wheat grow together for a time.

It's a matter of fact that in this world that we are surrounded by weeds, but we have the promise that they cannot choke to death the sower's harvest. The enemy has failed. Christ is victorious. The death of Jesus whose blood covers your sins has made you righteous. It's made you sons of the Kingdom.

And we shine, even now in this dark world. This dark and dirty field that we call the world. Sometimes surrounded by weeds on all sides.

This forgiveness is given to you to give you hope. Hope as we wait for the harvest. Forgiveness that keeps you from getting lost in the weeds. Forgiveness through the Spirit which even prays for us when it seems as if we're being choked out by evil.

While no farmer likes putting up with weeds, Christ does so for your sake. Christ has delivered us from evil even already now while we're surrounded by it. Don't be scared when it looks as if the weeds are going to grow over your head and block the sun.

Take courage in Christ who has defeated even the darkness of death! One day we will see all evil removed. In this world, sometimes it might be discouraging to be surrounded by weeds. You may feel as though you have to put up with weed, after weed, after weed, whether people or sickness. The wickedness that the devil has brought upon our world and we have do often contributed to.

Don't give up. Stay faithful. Don't forget you were at one time a weed too. Don't give up, but remember to endure in this life, sometimes feeling as though the weeds will choke you out. Look what Jesus says. We will shine like the sun.

So, Christ now is content to let us live a little while among the weeds until that great day, when the Lord of the harvest returns, he delivers you from all your sins, and delivers us from evil. For every time you pray the Lord's Prayer this week, you are asking him to deliver us from evil. And he will, in his good time, answer your prayer.

Until then, keep growing in the field. Keep your eyes fixed on him. Keep your ears fixed on the word of forgiveness and keep your lips proclaiming that forgiveness to others.

For as the rain comes to the earth and does not return to the Lord empty, so too will his word.

May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.