

The 8th Sunday after Pentecost, July 23, 2023

Rev. Gerald Luck

Text: Matthew 13:36-43

Theme: Growing With Weeds

Précis: While we long for Christ's harvest, we nonetheless wait with Him who is patient, until everything He's sown is ready.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Heavenly Father through our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 1:2)

Matthew 13:36-43

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." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in

Thy sight O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

If you've ever dealt with weeds, you'll know the problem of the sinful heart. You'll know, for instance, that the heart can be quickly choked out by sin. And you'll know about roots, too. Check your flowerbeds and your gardens, especially around here this year... all this heat and these fantastic summer rains have caused the weeds to shoot up almost as fast as the corn. Some of them you can pull up by hand... they're easy enough to handle, but then there are those weeds with the really deep tap roots - ones where, even after you've sunk your spade into the ground as deep as you can and lever the soil, the weed doesn't even move.

Sin's like that. We, on our own, can't dig deep enough to get to the very bottom of that root to remove it fully - not even if we were to apply every one of God's Holy laws to the problem. And then there are those runners - those roots that go sideways to make the next weed and the one after that and so on down the line. Sin can be like that too. It can be like living in a photocopier with no off switch - doing the same thing over and over again.

Any way you cut it - none of us can defeat sin... it runs so deep, and spreads so wide and is so pervasive that we cannot escape it. And, of course, there's still that rotten "original" seed that we have to contend with.

Original seed. When we first moved into our house in Fullarton, the front and back lawns were nothing but topsoil - the builder did the final grading on the lot and then left. He didn't plant any lawn or lay up any flowerbeds, because that wasn't part of the contract that we had with him. But things still grew -

particularly that wild mustard.

Did you know that wild mustard seed can remain dormant in the ground for upwards of forty years and still sprout once brought up to the surface? This is true of many seeds, especially, it seems of weeds. The seed of our original sin is always going to be with us. Right from the fall, all the way through to that final day when Christ returns, those born of Adam will be born with sin in their souls. That's why in the 51st Psalm, king David said, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

So we cry out together with the apostle Paul: "Wretched man that I am! (Wretched woman). Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24)

"Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25) We're spared by God's beloved Son. We're set free from the bonds of sin by the blood of Him to took on our human flesh to bear our guilt and shame upon the cross. All that died with Him there, and now, because He rose again we are blessed to live in His peace.

The weeds, in that sense, are all but gone. Yes, they still exist and can grow up in our hearts, but they can't completely destroy us or separate us from the love of God that we have in Christ Jesus. that being said, should we actively seek sin out and encourage its growth? No!

My Friends, this is where the spiritual gift of discernment comes into play. If you go back and re-read the parable of the weeds and the wheat, you'll see that the land owner's servants were quickly able to discern that there was something going on with the crop. "'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How

then does it have weeds?' God's word helps each one of us discern the things which are good for the soul from the things which are not, because the weeds aren't limited to just a handful of people. They're not just here in our hearts - they're all around us.

Some of the things that we see, these days, are really quite disheartening. Some of the things that we see and the people that we encounter are so bad that want to cry out to God, "Take them away! Destroy them because they're no good! Rid us of those weeds" Thankfully God doesn't do that. Thankfully, because some of those so called "weeds" are a part of my family, my friends and our church and I can't bear the thought of any one of them being lost for all eternity.

I think we're all in the same boat on that. We've all got someone we love know or someone we've met along the way who we're praying for - someone who's life is still being choked out by weeds. And we're praying for them all, that God doesn't come back yet to separate them from us like the workers in this parable will do at the harvest - weeds from the wheat. We don't want to see them - any of them - thrown into that eternal fire come that last day, and therefore we, ourselves, ask for God, in His mercy, to minister to their hearts just as He has ours.

We want to see their hearts cleansed of sin, that they be blessed to enter into God's kingdom with us. So, too, does God. Of course that'll take time.

God's not going to rip anything up or destroy all sin until the last day, because He's giving the wheat time to grow. He's giving it time to ripen and get ready for the harvest. So take heart.

Rest assured that sin's final destruction and the destruction of all those who love sin more than God will indeed come. Most certainly on that last day all the weeds will be gathered up and burned. But not at the expense of His beloved children. While we wait for the coming of that last day, none of us who belong to God will be uprooted or be lost. We will keep growing, our hearts protected, safe in the nail-scarred hands of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Until that day, in with the longing of His harvest, may God grant us patience, and give us peace...

in Jesus' name,

Amen.

May the peace of God which passes all human understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen (Philippians 4:7)