

7th Sunday after Pentecost
July 19th, 2020

“Living with weeds until the great *Roundup*” (Matthew 13:30)
By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today’s text is from our Gospel reading, Matthew 13:30

“Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

Here ends our text.

This is one of those head scratcher parables at first glance. It was unsettling to the disciples who first heard it and it probably has left you along with me asking a few questions.

I. Let both grow together

“Let both grow together...” That’s a tough one to accept, isn’t it? It was such a beautiful planting and now it’s overrun with weeds! Can’t we just get rid of the weeds? ask the disciples. Sorry, there will be no “weed be gone”, no *Roundup*, no pulling out the weeds... just let them grow together.

When the servants woke up in the morning and saw all the weeds, they were clearly not happy. But, You didn’t plant these weeds. They shouldn’t be there. How did they get there? The answer: It was the evil one. Yes, the devil did it. And in our day, he continues to wreak havoc on this world by corrupting people to lie, deceive and murder. He knows his time is short.

The devil’s constant work is to supplant the true worship of God with many forms of idol worship. The evil one tries to lead people to believe that God’s word should be rejected as an outdated relic and that it should be replaced with the evil one’s more enlightened thinking of humanism.

We lament seeing weeds espouse this “enlightened thinking” in our age. Read the book of Jude this week. It’s only twenty-five verses. The verses so accurately describe our day as they also did of Jude’s day.

“Remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: 18 how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts. 19 These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit.” (Jude 17-19)

The weeds cause the divisions for they do not have the Spirit.

One doesn’t have to search far to see their dividing work. They strive to depict all policemen as evil. Police forces should be defunded. There are so called Christian leaders who are silent on the matter. They turn a blind eye and don’t speak against those who hurl things at a policeman, put a policeman in a headlock, set a police car on fire, or storm a police station. As Jude says they

“defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.” (Jude 8)

And while the weeds rise up against the God given authorities of our land, the Rio Grande Valley mourned the loss of two policemen this week who were killed in the line of duty, trying to keeping order and protect people.

Yes, we like our yards trimmed, fertilized and free from unsightly weeds. We like our church grass green and our courtyard tidy. Modern herbicides are pretty good at killing only the weeds and leaving the grass alone. Isn’t there a spray that would clean up the world of evil and the division it is causing? How long do we have to endure the lawlessness and violence of this world? God’s word is effective against weeds.

When Jesus’ disciples wanted to rid some weeds and call down fire from heaven on the Samaritans, Jesus tells them something very important. He who has ears let him hear!

“You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” (Luke 9:55-56)

Pulling up a weed might also pull up some wheat. For only God truly knows the heart of a man. We’re not called to judge and eternally condemn our fellow man. Even when a person is excommunicated from the church because of an impenitent heart, the church prays for him and seeks to save his soul.

Jesus reminds us what kind of spirit we are. We have the Holy Spirit! We are called to have compassion, yes, even upon our enemies! Jesus came to save, not destroy. He came to save all men, including you and me. He doesn't want any to perish. The time will come when unrighteous men will be destroyed eternally. But, that time is for God alone to determine. In the meantime, we serve God by trying to rescue as many as possible.

When we remember what spirit we are, we also remember what spirit we were!

“For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy” (Romans 11:30)

“you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13)

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8)

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled” (Colossians 1:21)

Basically, we were once weeds. But now we are wheat, by the grace of God!! We'll sing “Amazing Grace” right after the message.

“Amazing grace—how sweet the sound— That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see!”

We have been brought near by the blood of Christ, having obtained mercy. We are in the light in the Lord, having been reconciled! We are Christ's and He changes the way we see the weeds. Guard us from Pharisaical pride and contempt for the weeds of this world!

So Jude writes: **“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22 And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.”**

With God's word, we save others, with fear, lest we forget to daily humble ourselves before God. Keeping ourselves in the most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, we are to have the same mind of Christ - to rescue the weeds from the fires to come! And yes, that day will come.

II. Until the harvest

The good news is that there is an “until” in our Gospel text.

“Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

There is a final harvest. There is a final judgement by God. There is a final roundup by the angels of God. This includes a final destruction of the weeds, the unbelievers, and a gathering together of the wheat, the believers, into the celestial barn, heaven itself.

First, there is a collecting of all the weeds. What the Christians were forbidden to do in their earthly lives, the angels are tasked to do. They carry out the will of God. The weeds are collected to be burned. The wheat, however, is gathered to be brought into the barn.

Jesus used two different words here to show the marked difference between the weeds and wheat. This difference doesn't always come out in the English translation if the word “gather” is used for both the weeds and the wheat.

With regards to the weeds, there is an inflexible, relentless “collection” involving no emotional attachment or love. Unbelievers are simply collected and bound. There is no negotiating. There is only a complete subjugation of the unbelievers who cannot escape from what is next, his or her eternal burning in hell.

Trash is collected. Bills are collected. Dues are collected. Weeds are collected. And they are sprayed with the strongest *Roundup* herbicide known to mankind, the eternal fires of hell. *Roundup* is a pretty strong weed killer. But, inevitably the weeds bounce back and you got to hit them again with another round of spray. There is no bouncing back from hell, only weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Yes, finally they are weeded out and separated from the believer. They are no longer able to cause suffering to the believer. God weeds them out, for He alone knows the hearts of those who feigned allegiance in their earthly life. He rejects them and He tells them that He doesn't know them. The judgment of the unbelievers is carried out without appeals. Where there was a waiting period during the earthly life of living with the weeds, there is no wait time to appeal to a higher court. God is the higher court and His judgment is immediate and final.

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:28)

And that is precisely what God does.

For the believer, the final roundup is the day when justice prevails. All the evil that the believer witnessed during his earthly life, the lawlessness of the impenitent weeds is now brought to an end. In the barn, there are no more weeds, only wheat. Evil has been completely and eternally separated from the believer. The vale of tears is replaced with the shining of glory.

Listen to how Jesus describes the believer.

“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

The sinful nature of the believer is also completely removed. They are called righteous because of the righteousness of the Lamb of God who dwells in their midst. The Lamb washed them of their sins with His blood and gave them the robe of righteousness.

Again, “Amazing grace” ...

“When we’ve been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise Than when we’d first begun.”

Indeed... **“the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”**

Yes, hear the word of God from our epistle in Romans 8 which keeps us focused on the glory that is to come, so that we may stand steadfast during the sufferings of this present life!

“we also who have the firstfruit of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”

There is much groaning within ourselves as we see the evil and sadness of this fallen world. But take heart that this is not our world. We are but pilgrims. It is not the world in which we will spend eternity. Heaven is our home...Come, ye thankful people come!

“For the Lord, our God, shall come, And shall take His harvest home, From His field shall in that day, All offenses purge away, Give His angels charge at last, In the fire the tares to cast, But the fruitful ears to store, In His garner evermore.”

“The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”

Even so, Lord, quickly come, To Thy final harvest home; Gather Thou Thy people in, Free from sorrow, free from sin, There, forever purified, In Thy garner to abide: Come with all Thine angels, come, Raise the glorious harvest home.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear this good news again and again from the final verses of Romans 8.

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...There is nothing that “shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What great comfort, God gives to His people, His elect, the wheat.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, live among the weeds with much compassion and love. For we were once weeds ourselves, when God rescued us. And there is still time to rescue others with God’s word. We don’t know who God will save. We don’t know who God will turn from a weed into wheat before He comes. We proclaim the same message of repentance and forgiveness in Christ that saved us. He who has ears, let him hear!

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,²⁵ To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, *Be* glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever.” (Jude 24, 25) Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Galatians 4:7)