

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Pentecost 9 -- July 10th and 13th, 2008

Mat. 13:24-30, 36-43

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

“The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ““An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ““No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where 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.

In the name of Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, dear Christian friends,

Weeds! They are God's reminder to this world that we are sinful. After Adam disobeyed his Creator and ate of the forbidden fruit in the garden, the Lord said: "Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you." We know God's curse has been carried out, not just in farming, but in all people's lives. Weeds! We see weeds in our flower beds. We have weeds in our lawns. We have weeds growing between the cracks in our sidewalks or decks. No matter what you and I do for a living, we have them.

Almost as sure as those weeds all around us, there is the desire to get rid of them. Expensive bags of lawn fertilizers, chemical sprays for farm fields, weed-whackers and the list goes on. And why? Because nothing grows well with weeds choking it out. We will pay good money and spend lots of hours getting rid of weeds. But this morning in our text, we see that Jesus is telling us to not pull out the weeds. Why he tells us that is our sermon topic. May the Holy Spirit use Jesus' parable to find the answer this important question:

Theme: What Shall We Do About The Weeds?

- 1. Faithfully Share God's Word with them.**
- 2. Let God judge them on Judgment Day.**

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away ... The One who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for [believers in him]. The weeds are [unbelievers], and the enemy who sows them is the

devil". The farmer's enemy was really evil. Obviously, he knew what he was doing, and he really wanted to cause damage. It wasn't as though he was some neighbor cruising by with an alternate style of grain seed in a grain sack on the back of a pack mule which just happened to leak a few seeds along the edge of the farmer's field as he and his mule walked by. No, he did his dirty work at night so no one would catch him, purposely sowing seed all over the field among the wheat.

The devil hates God, and wherever God is touching hearts and lives with his saving love, there the devil goes to work to try and undo God's work. Never forget that the battle that Satan would like to fight against God is a battle for control of the hearts and minds of people. God wants people to trust him and to desire what he wants them to have. Satan wants people to believe his lie that people can be all right on their own, and he wants people to desire whatever makes them feel good. That's what makes the devil's work doubly tricky. First of all, he is not going to parade down the street announcing through a bullhorn, "Follow me to hell!" Nor do his evil schemes slip out of his bag of tricks unintentionally. No! He's out doing his dirty work undercover, sowing the seeds of his lies all over the world.

Secondly, he tries to make his lies so appealing. We can expect temptations from every direction, and we can expect that Satan will zoom in on our weaknesses. Are you lonely? Then the devil will try to convince you that you will be lonely the rest of your life, and the only way to counter those feelings of loss and emptiness is to medicate them with alcohol or drugs or to try to soothe those feelings with behaviors that may feel good but are outside the boundaries of God's standards of right and wrong. Are you wealthy? Then Satan will try to get you to be selfish so that you never share it or try to get you to believe that fat bank accounts are the source of joy. Are you poor? Then Satan will try to get you to be jealous of others, discontented in what you do have, and he may even try to push you into giving up striving and working for a better life. Are you young? Then Satan will try to get you to disrespect people God has placed over you and to think that you know all the answers. And if that's what Satan is trying to sow in our hearts and minds, think of what he is doing in the hearts and minds of people who could care less about a close relationship with God! Jesus teaches us here about Satan's tactics so that we understand the realities of this world.

The weed that is talked about in our text is a weed that looks just like wheat when it sprouts. The farmer's servants didn't recognize the weeds right away, but when they were growing, the problem became obvious. Then the question came up, **"Do you want us to go and pull them up?"** We can't blame them for their zeal, but pulling up the weeds would damage the wheat. That's why the farmer said, **"Let both grow together until the harvest"**.

There has always been a temptation among some Christians to think they can be street sweepers and clean up the world of those who offend God. That's how the church can get into trouble. It happened back in the Middle Ages with the Inquisition when supposed heretics were hunted down and tortured, and it happens today when some Christians think they have to use politics to push their agenda. Jesus is offering us some cautions with this parable. You better be sure that your agenda is God's agenda, and then you better think twice before you try to force on others what you think is right. Jesus gave the sword to governing authorities to punish evildoers and to keep peace. The only sword he gave to the church is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. He wants us to understand reality. As we live in this world, evil will be growing all around us, and we will not be able to eradicate it. The only thing God wants us to do is to testify to the truth – there is one Savior, Jesus Christ, and he took all sins of all people from God's sight – and let the Holy Spirit handle the rest.

The farmer told his servants to hold off trying to pull up the weeds. Then he told them what would happen at harvest. **“Let them both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned, then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn”**. Jesus also gave the meaning, **“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”**. The servants didn’t want to wait for getting rid of the weeds, but the farmer assured them that this would happen.

Getting rid of unbelievers will happen in God’s own good time. In the meantime we wait. People generally don’t like to wait. Go to the doctor’s office, and you wait. Go to just about anything and you wait. Waiting just isn’t very much fun, but that is what we do. God has good reasons for delaying his judgment. He wants more to come to repentance. He also would rather have us long for what is ahead in the world to come than get all caught up in what is going on in this world. Let God do the mowing on Judgment Day. That’s the whole point of teaching us that there are weeds among the wheat. Jesus wants us to long for the glory that will be ours.

Terrorists killed more than forty and injured more than that a few days ago. People have been convicted of killing people or are on trial for killing people. In Milwaukee four people were killed on the 4th of July. What possesses people to be so brutal, what other than the devil himself?

But take heart. God is still in charge. He will not let Satan rob us of our eternal joy. Instead Jesus’ parable reminds us to face reality. There will be suffering while we live in this world, but God allows that to happen so that we stay focused on our eternal goal. That goal is guaranteed because of what our Savior did for us. Because of his amazing love, you and I **“will shine like the sun in the kingdom of [our] Father. He who has ears, let him hear”**. Amen.