

In the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ “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?’ ²⁸” “An enemy did this,” he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹” “No,” he answered, “because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰ 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.” ³⁶ 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.” ³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ 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, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. **This is the Gospel of our Lord**

Dear Friends,

My dad loved to garden and he was good at it. Every year he would plant beans and tomatoes and peppers and would have an abundance of vegetables to harvest. He also loved to plant roses and he had huge Lilac bushes that smelled great. Unfortunately, I did not inherit his green thumb. I don’t plant a garden but I do have a planter next to my downstairs patio.

Every July there are a bunch of Tiger Lillys in the center of this planter that bloom. I try to keep the weeds out of this planter but it seems that every time I try to pull some of the weeds a large clump of dirt comes with them including some of the flowers I don’t want to pull. So I leave it alone and enjoy the beauty of the lillies when they bloom and ignore the weeds.

As I was studying this sermon text it reminded me of my planter and the extra weeds/flowers I have in that planter. As we consider the words of this parable about the wheat and the weeds, it would be good for us to ask, **“How does this parable of the wheat and the weeds help me as I live my life here on this earth,”** and **“What should I do about the weeds?”**

I. Anyone know Martin Luther’s favorite question? What does this mean? The disciples asked that very thing, “Jesus, what does this parable mean?” and here is what he told them: **“The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ 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, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.”** When the disciples heard this do you think they now understood this parable or do you think they were asking themselves, “Okay, we know who is what but what does this mean for me

and my life?” That is the question I had even after I read through Jesus’ explanation a number of times.

We are part of what Jesus called **“The Kingdom of Heaven.”** It isn’t an actual place but it is God’s grace working in our hearts. The seed of faith has been sown in our hearts so that we can see Jesus and trust in his sacrifice for our sins on the cross. The Holy Spirit has nurtured that faith so that we can understand and believe that he has done everything for our salvation and now God’s grace encourages us to live our lives for him even in spite of the weeds that are all around us. We are the wheat that Jesus is talking about in this parable.

Then we have the field – the place where the wheat and the weeds are planted. And let’s be clear that Jesus planted the wheat but it is Satan who planted the weeds. I’m glad that Jesus clarified for us that the field is the world because heretics, errorists and unbelievers have no place in the church and if a church lets them in, in the name of tolerance, than it soon becomes full of weeds as well.

But we know the world is full of those who are agents of the devil – those who attack Christianity in any way they can. In some countries Christians are persecuted even to the point of death. In our own country we see more and more attacks on Christianity and at times it seems like the devil is winning. **So what are we to do?**

Our first instinct might be to get rid of the weeds – pull them out – destroy them. That was the first inclination of the servants of the land owner, **“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’”** But the landowner said, “No.” Why? Because the weeds were hard to identify until they produced heads and then their roots might be intertwined with the wheat and you could pull the good wheat out with the weeds. You might say that God loves his people so much that he doesn’t want to put them in jeopardy.

If you think about it, the church at times has tried to remove the weeds with things like the Crusades and the Inquisitions and the Salem witch trials. Most of these did more harm than good and I am sure that Christians perished along with heretics and the wicked.

So what are we to do with the weeds? Well, we certainly want to identify them – identify those and those things which attack Christianity. Sometimes it includes the law of the land; sometimes it is certain groups that work to remove Christian symbols and words from public view; sometimes it is the encouragement to tolerate sinful lifestyles as normal for the sake of unity. Recognize the weeds and don’t join in with them or support them but rather continue to proclaim the gospel.

Continue to talk about your Savior, continue to support the work of the church, continue to support our synod’s mission work, continue to pray for God’s Church and God’s people and the ministry God has given us. We never know where the gospel will have an impact but even some of those we thought were weeds might respond to the gospel message. And as we study and proclaim the gospel it keeps us spiritually strong and healthy as well. It keeps us from getting entangled in the weeds.

It can be frustrating to live among the weeds but for those who persist in unbelief – well the Lord is very clear about their end. He tells us, **“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”**

The wicked and unbelievers will end up in the everlasting fires of hell while the righteous will shine like the sun in heaven with God forever. God will sort it all out on Judgment Day so while we are on this earth we listen to the Good News of our God. We focus on the cross and support the spread of the Word. We ask God to be with us and help us to recognize the weeds around us and we take every opportunity to hear him so that we can remain healthy wheat in the Kingdom of God. Let us stay focused on our goal – the goal of heaven – and that will encourage us as we live as wheat among the weeds. Amen.