

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Have you ever seen a field of beans that looked more like a cornfield? Or a lawn that looked like a dandelion farm? Farmers and homeowners become frustrated when dealing with weeds and other unwanted growth. But we brought all this on ourselves. "*Cursed is the ground because of you,*" God told Adam. There were no weeds on the earth prior to this. But sin changed all that. Out of Satan's victory in Eden came thorns, thistles, and every conceivable weed that causes problems for us today.

Yet, these weeds are minor when compared to the weeds Jesus speaks of in His parable. God's enemy and ours, the devil, did not just cause weeds to infiltrate fields and lawns. He has sowed weeds among God's children.

No respectable farmer would plant weed seeds in with his crops. And so the servants in the parable were baffled as to how weeds showed up in their master's field. We may become baffled at all the wickedness that grows up right alongside of us. The weeds of sin are in our lives, our families, our congregation. And like the servants in the parable we, too, may ask in bewilderment, "How can this be?"

We would expect to see fields of weeds out in "no-man's land," just as we expect weeds to show up in government. After all, "power corrupts." In fact, people joke about the sins of politicians. We would be shocked to see, not weed fields in government, but row after row of weedless fields.

But when it comes to our congregation, our families, our own lives, we want pristine fields without so much as a single weed showing its ugly head. And so we're shocked when members quarrel, when members get agitated at their pastor. We're frustrated when the congregation can't seem to come together. We may feel defeated when problems erupt within our families. We get depressed when we see ourselves giving in to the sins that grow up within and among us. Where did all these weeds come from? As Dorothy said to Toto, "*We're not in Kansas anymore,*" so with us: We're not in Eden anymore. Welcome to the sinful world. This is the field Satan has corrupted with his weeds.

Now do you imagine that a farmer would get angry at his wheat because there were weeds in with his wheat? I just can't picture Al or Kenny, or any farmer coming down out of their tractor to yell at and smack their crop of wheat. But we can get angry at the weeds; righteous anger, that is. But if we would not get upset at our lawn or at our crops for having weeds, why do we get angry at each other? You are God's wheat. Your spouse, your children, your parents, your pastor, and elders, and organist, your fellow members here--all are God's wheat. Does it make sense for us to come down out of our tractor and yell at the wheat? Get angry at the wheat? Hold a grudge against the wheat?

It makes sense for God to do all that. He has the right to get angry at the wheat. He planted the wheat. He gave every good blessing to the wheat. So when He looks out upon His wheat field here in Augusta and sees more of a weed field than a wheat field, He would have every right to plow the entire field under.

He did that once...back in Noah's day. He plowed under the entire field with water. There were only eight stalks of wheat still standing--Noah and his family. The rest of the field was entirely made up of weeds. He didn't start over, however. He put the eight stalks of wheat carefully, not in a barn, but in an ark, and He destroyed the rest of the field.

But He will never destroy the entire field again until the end. "*Let both (the wheat and the weeds) grow together until the harvest,*" he told his servants, "*And at harvest time I will tell the reapers, 'Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'*"

You and I are not in the barn yet. We're still with the weeds in the field. And God will not destroy you with the weeds, though He has the right to, for we are full of sin. He will not even harm you by tearing out all the weeds before the final harvest. He does what He did for Noah. He puts you in His ark, the church, where He keeps you safe from the weeds.

Oh, we have weeds here in the church, just as Noah and his family brought weeds into the ark. The weeds of sin live in us. But God does not spray you with Roundup. He covers you with the blood of Jesus. That's how He made you His wheat to begin with. You were washed, bathed in the cleansing blood of Christ in your baptism. Whatever weedy sins are in you--and they are there within all of us--they cannot condemn you because you are forgiven. "*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin,*" the Bible says.

And so look around you. Go ahead and look. Look at your family. Look at your fellow members here at Christ Lutheran. You're looking at wheat that has been forgiven by God. You do not see a perfect wheat field here. The perfect wheat will be in the barn of heaven later. You see sinful wheat, weedy wheat, wheat that may have offended you in the past, wheat that is fragile, perhaps stressed, wheat much in need of the sweet rain of Jesus' Gospel.

Don't blame the wheat for your problems. Don't accuse the wheat. God doesn't. He accused His Son in place of the wheat. Christ Jesus was burned in the fires of hell on the cross to preserve the wheat--to preserve you--from that punishment. God loves His wheat. He loves you. That's why He gave up His Son for you. That's why He gives His Son to you today. Here in the Sacrament God takes care of His wheat. He gives you what you need the most--He gives you Jesus.

So, yes, we have a weedy field here in our congregation. Our families are weedy. Our lives are full of weeds. But Satan has not won. His weeds will be burned in the fire. Your place will be in God's barn. Until then, your place is here in God's ark. Here God takes care of you. Here Jesus comes to you in water, word, bread, and wine. He comes to you here because He loves you. You are His precious wheat. Amen.