

Had the master not stopped them, his servants would have dug up all the weeds before the harvest. And so would we. We do not like weeds, whether we are farmers, gardeners, or just trying to keep our lawn looking nice. Weeds have to go, and the sooner the better.

In His parable, Jesus is not giving us advice on how to maintain our gardens. And it's a good thing, for if weeds are not pulled, they will take over a garden. There will not be a harvest, or much of one, if the weeds are allowed to grow untouched.

What you do with the weeds in your lawn and garden is your business. But what you and I do with the weeds in our life is God's business. The weeds in our life are people. Those people who cause our blood pressure to go up. You have them and so do I. And we do not much care for them. People will move to a different neighborhood because of a weed who lives next to them. They will change jobs because their boss is a weed. And when a bothersome weed in their life dies, they will have a celebration.

Our grandmothers taught us that if we are nice to people, they will be nice to us. But I'm guessing that grandma did not have to deal with many weeds in her life. A weed is a weed no matter how you treat it. The master's servants were impatient to pull the weeds because they knew that weeds are stressful to the wheat. The weeds bear down on the wheat. They overpower the wheat. And the wheat cannot do a thing about it.

It is not the wheat's job to judge the weeds. The weeds will be judged by Jesus Himself. But not until the harvest. At that time, He will send His angels "*and they will gather...all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace.*" Then we can have a celebration. When all the weeds are gone from our life.

Do I sound a bit like a Pharisee here? I think so. You and I are wheat, not weeds. Through Holy Baptism Jesus has declared us to be "*the children of the kingdom.*" Once *sons of the evil one*, we have been transferred into God's family, rooted in Christ Jesus, and growing in Him as wheat.

So we are not weeds, the bothersome unbelievers out in the world. We are wheat. Nonetheless, there are times in our life when you and I act like weeds. We cause stress for others. We create issues, troubling ones. The wheat and the weeds are alike in that we are sinful through and through. And our sinfulness can and does bear down on the wheat around us.

So who am I to judge the weeds when I can be just as bothersome as a weed? And who am I to celebrate when the weeds will be thrown into the fiery furnace, when I myself deserve that same furnace?

Friends, Jesus suffered and died on the cross for wheat and weeds alike. When He prayed from the cross, "*Father, forgive them,*" He was not just praying for the wheat but also for the weeds. And it's a good thing. Because when I behave more like a weed than the wheat that I am, I have the assurance of knowing that I, too, am forgiven.

And this same assurance is for you. I do not care if I was told that every last one of you is a weed. I am still going to tell you that you have a gracious God, that Jesus Christ is your Savior, and that all your sins have been declared forgiven.

In fact, this is how God turns weeds into wheat. Through the good news of Jesus Christ. Isn't this why the harvest is delayed? Jesus wants all to repent. He is at work right now changing weeds into wheat.

There was a weed, a nasty one, who had lived in such a way that people were celebrating as he was dying. And yet this weed, this thief on the cross, Jesus turned into wheat. Who is the nastiest weed in your life? Do you pray for this weed? I doubt if many, or if any at all were praying for that dying thief. But Jesus was. And now he is in heaven.

You and I are not there yet. We are still wheat in the field. And therefore, we are troubled and stressed by weeds. We do not judge them. We pray for them. But this is exhausting. Stephen prayed for the weeds who were throwing stones at him. And at times we may feel like Stephen.

Take a look around you. Yes, I know we are six or more feet apart, or even farther, watching miles away at home. But the fact is that, as a good farmer, God does not plant individual wheat stalks here and there. He plants a whole field of wheat so that each individual stalk of wheat can lean on another when the weeds are bearing down on us.

We persevere as Christians, God's wheat, alongside others who are persevering alongside us. We persevere in the community of the baptized. And here Jesus waters us in our baptismal grace day after day. This is how we persevere until the harvest. Amen.