

August 14, 2011  
Pentecost 9

*"The Weeds in the Wheat"*

**MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43**

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Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. <sup>27</sup> "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?' <sup>28</sup> "An enemy did this," he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' <sup>29</sup> "No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> 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.'" <sup>36</sup> 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." <sup>37</sup> He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> 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, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. <sup>40</sup> "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

This summer multimillionaire George Ballas died in Houston at the age of 85. He was known for inventing the Weed Eater. He got the idea for this invention while going through a car wash and watching the spinning bristles washing his car. He started with a tin can and fishing line and then refined his invention into the weed eaters we have today. Think of how much joy he brought to people as they start up the engine and chop down the weeds. The other day my wife and I pulled weeds from our small garden. There is a certain satisfaction that comes with pulling out the weeds, putting them into a bucket and dumping them into the green waste dumpster.

In this story that Jesus told about a wheat field with weeds, the servants of the landowner are eager to get into the wheat field and pull out the weeds. The landowner tells them not to do this because in the process they will damage the wheat that is growing next to the weeds. When weeds pop up in the kingdom of God our sinful nature wants to get rid of the weeds as quickly as possible. Hit them with the Weed Eater. Better yet, spray them with Round Up. Chop them with a hoe. Jesus wants us to know that is not the way to handle problems in the kingdom of God.

Martin Luther once said wherever the Lord builds his church the devil builds his chapel next door. What are we going to do when Satan plants the weed seeds in the lives of fellow Christians that we love who may be members of our family or members of our own congregation? Let's listen to what Jesus tells us when we see the weeds in the wheat.

## **The Lord plants only good seed**

When the Lord grows his church, he plants only good seed. "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field." See how carefully the farmer breaks up the soil and then carefully plants only good seed in the soil. The fall rains come. The seeds begin to grow into plants that bring forth an abundant crop. Jesus says, "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." As we sit here this morning, Jesus is guiding his church. The seed of God's Word is being planted in the lives of people, changing hearts and bringing people into the kingdom of God.

Could anything be more beautiful than God's Word that changes the lives of people? In Isaiah 55 the Lord says, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth; It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." In God's Word I come to the realization that I have nothing to offer God to make him love me or accept me as Paul confessed, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is in my sinful flesh." I also see in God's Word that my heavenly Father has everything to offer me. He gives me his Son Jesus and places my sin on him. He becomes my sin and is punished in my place, so I can be justified. That means declared not guilty. Through Jesus we become sons and daughters of the kingdom of God. This is happening all over the world. God is planting good seed in the lives of people and bringing them into his kingdom. Psalm 1 says, "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."

Satan does not want to see a field planted with good seed that develops into plants that are lush and green and giving glory to the Lord. So he plants his bad seed next to the good seed.

## **Satan plants the bad seed**

"But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and showed weeds among the wheat and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared." The word used here for weeds is a specific weed called the darnell. It looks similar to the wheat when it grows in the field, but produces a black seed that tastes bitter and can make you sick. If you were an evil person and don't like your neighbor, throw some weed seeds over the fence into his garden while he is sleeping. Then peek through the fence and chortle with evil delight as he spends hours on knees pulling out the weeds.

Jesus tells us who it is that chortles with evil delight when he is able to sow the seeds of evil next to the beautiful seed the Lord plants with his Word. "The weeds are the sons of the evil one and the enemy who sows them is the devil." Satan loves to sow the seeds of doubt in the minds of people. Remember what he said to our first parents. "Did God really say you should not eat from the tree?" Then he appealed to pride and personal decision making but saying, "Your eyes will be open and you will be like God." Adam and Eve's first born son Cain listened to Satan and took the life of his brother Abel.

The Apostle Paul saw Satan plant bad seed in his beloved churches. When he said goodbye to the dear Christians in Ephesus he kneeled down on the beach and prayed with them. Then he spoke these chilling words "I know that after me I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw disciples after them." In his letter to the dear Christians in Ephesus Paul wrote about Satan, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Have you ever seen Satan plant bad seed in the lives of people you love? My cousin and I were very close while we growing up. We were in the same class for eight years in our Lutheran elementary school. We attended youth confirmation classes. He memorized all the parts of the catechism, the Bible verses and the hymn verses. The good seed of God's Word had changed his life just as it changed my life. But then something happened. Satan started planting bad seed in his life. After his first year in college, full ride scholarship to MIT, he no longer believed in the miracles of the Bible and truths of God's Word. He raised his children to be atheists.

How hard it is to see weeds grow up where God planted good seed, especially when it happens to people we know and love, even members of our own family. It makes us so angry we want to take a Weed Eater and get rid of the weeds or spray them with Round Up. If only we could come up with the right zinger, the right sarcastic remark, or the right argument to put them in their place and show them the error of their ways, then we might shock them into coming back to the Lord. Instead the Lord tells us in his word to speak the truth to them in love.

### **The Lord calls for patience**

Notice how this story that Jesus tells is a call for patience. The servants come back with the news that there are weeds in the wheat. The owner tells them, "An enemy did this." They want to get into the field and immediately start ripping out the weeds. The owner says, "No, because while you are pulling up the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let them both grow up together until the harvest."

When I was a boy growing up on the family farm, my father would pay us one penny for each mustard seed we pulled from the fields of oats. That allowed us to earn some money to spend on games and rides at the local firemen's picnic. We ran across the fields, pulling the mustard plants wherever we could find them. Notice how mustard plants grow all over California because Father Junipero marked his path by dropping mustard seeds that grew into yellow plants. Wherever Satan plants his bad seed in the lives of people, we want to work at rooting out the bad seed before it destroys people in their faith. In Ephesians 4 the church is compared to the body of Christ. As members of the body of Christ we are responsible to speaking the truth in love to each other. It does not say we are to speak the truth in anger, or speak the truth in sarcasm or speak the truth with self righteous way, no it says speak the truth in love.

A beloved professor of mine once asked the question, "What is worse robbing banks and killing people or teaching God's Word incorrectly?" We know the answer to that question. Think of how patient Jesus was with his enemies. He spent so much time telling stories such as the Lost Son to people like the religious leaders who hated him for teaching he was God's Son who had come to earth to save them from their sin. Where do we find the strength to stay faithful to the Word and speak it in a loving way? Jesus gives us strength as we hear him pray, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." Think of how patient the Lord has been with you once again this past week. You have let Satan sow sinful thoughts in your heart and so have I. God patiently worked with us by giving us the Holy Spirit who convicts us and then comforts us.

### **The final harvest will happen**

God is in control of his field. He knows when the end will come. This past week I was reading from Ecclesiastes with the well known words, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age..." The day of judgment is coming. The Lord will separate the weeds from the wheat. Jesus tells us clearly that angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be

weeping and gnashing of teeth.” This time of judgment has not yet come. The weeds are allowed to still be with the wheat. In your lawn or garden, the good plants never change the weeds into the good plants. In the kingdom of God it is different. The Lord leaves the wheat growing next to the weeds so the sons of the kingdom can bring God’s Word to the sons of the evil one. And so we pray for people like my cousin. And when the Lord comes, those who are righteous in Christ will shine like sun. Then the wheat will no longer have to live with weeds. We long for that day when the church militant will become the church triumphant. Then we will see how the Lord used us to patiently witness to those who have become weeds to bring them back into the kingdom. Amen