

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
"The Weeds and the Wheat"
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 19, 2020
First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.
Pastor Peter Adelsen

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

A popular proverb says the following: Where God builds a church, the devil builds a tavern next door.

Martin Luther began a sermon based on today's text with those words back on December 9, 1528. Again, "Where God builds a church, the devil builds a tavern next door."¹

Today, this can be updated by saying "Where God builds a church, the devil builds a distraction next door," such as television, sports, hunting, and fishing. The list goes on and on.

Luther continued saying that people used to tell this fable: When God made man out of a clod of earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life so that man became a living soul, the devil wanted to imitate God and also took a clod of earth in order to make a man out of it; but it turned out to be a toad.

This fable was to indicate that the devil is always the imitator of our Lord God, and forever poses as divine and creates the impression that he is God.²

Today, on this Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Jesus continues preaching parables to the crowd and He interprets the parables to us, His disciples.

Last week, Jesus taught us the *Parable of the Sower* in the Gospel lesson. He began saying "**He who has ears, let him hear**" (Matthew 13:9). Today, Jesus teaches us the *Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat* and He concludes saying "**He who has ears, let him hear**" (Matthew 13:43).

¹ Martin Luther, "What Luther Says" (Concordia Publishing House: St. Louis, 1959), 396.

² Ibid.

By saying this, Jesus is informing us to pay attention and listen to what He is about to say and to what He has said.

Unlike many of Christ's parables, which leave us to interpret what is meant, the *Parable of the Sower* and the *Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat* leave no question on what these parables mean, since it is Christ Himself who explains these parables to us.

[The Parable of the Weeds]

Jesus teaches us: ***“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also”*** (Matthew 13:24-26).

Now, how many of us have been there? I have. And weeds are a constant battle in my garden.

You may have *or had* a garden or a farm field, but I'm sure we have all been there. We sowed our good seeds and we find weeds coming up right beside our good plants. We try to pluck out the problem weeds, but we see them return after a good rain. This can be frustrating!

For the servants in this parable, they asked the sower: ***“Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?”*** (Matthew 13:27)

The Master then replies, ***“An enemy has done this”*** (Matthew 13:28a).

Immediately – *we have all been there thinking* – why not just pluck out the weeds?

But, plucking out the weeds when your good plant is right next to the weed is not always a good idea. For in the case of the parable, the weeds are likely bearded darnel, which is botanically close to wheat, so they are hard to distinguish from each other. And, when pulling darnel weeds, with their strong and deep roots, this would likely uproot the emerging wheat plants.

So, the Master informs His servants to let the wheat and weeds just grow together until the harvest, and then at harvest time, He will tell the reapers to gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but the wheat will be gathered into His barn.

[Cancel Culture]

But, why not just pluck out the weeds? If we do not want the weed – *the undesirable* – why not just pluck them out?

You may have heard the phrase “Cancel Culture”? This concept known as “Cancel Culture” has gained steam in the past few years. So far, many statues and monuments, Aunt Jemima³, Eskimo Pie⁴ and the Washington Redskins⁵ have been plucked, or canceled. This concept of “Cancel Culture” is the practice of withdrawing support for public figures and companies after they have done or said something that many consider offensive.

So, if a public figure says something that many on the internet find offensive, the “Twitter mob” will do their best to get this person fired or silenced:

- Author J.K. Rowling was criticized for saying boys are biologically boys and girls are biologically girls⁶. This angered many who called her “transphobic.”
- The Houston Rockets’ general manager Daryl Morey tweeted “Fight for Freedom. Stand with Hong Kong.” His comments angered China, so he was forced to apologize.⁷
- Paw Patrol, a cartoon, has been called to be canceled due to Chase, a German Shepherd puppy who is a police dog, and his positive portrayal of law enforcement.⁸
- Goya Foods is threatened by a boycott, since its CEO praised the President.⁹
- Or, if *you* post what is undesirable on Facebook or Twitter, your post may come with a warning label for others in order for them to choose to see it.

Although the internet is relatively new, the concept of “shaming” is not new. Sadly, for much of our Christian history, many Christians had a wrong interpretation of the *Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat*, even though Jesus explained this parable thoroughly.

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/business/media/aunt-jemima-racial-stereotype.html>

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/20/business/dreyers-eskimo-pie-name-change.html>

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/13/sports/football/washington-redskins-new-name.html>

⁶ <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment-arts/books/story/2019-12-19/jk-rowling-transphobic-tweet>

⁷ <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-49956385>

⁸ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/10/arts/television/protests-fictional-cops.html>

⁹ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/goya-foods-ceo-robert-unanue-not-apologizing-praising-trump/>

Back then “Cancel Culture” was known by the word “heretic.” Now, some of these men and women deserved the title “heretic” – *for their false teachings in leading people to damnation* – while others received this title falsely.

Some notable people to receive the title “heretic” were Arius, Marcion, John Huss, William Tyndale, Joan of Arc and Martin Luther. So, why were these people declared heretics?

- Arius taught that Jesus was a created being inferior to God the Father.
- Marcion taught that the wrathful God of the Old Testament was not the same all-forgiving God of the New Testament.
- John Huss taught that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone as he preached in the language of the people.
- William Tyndale translated the Bible into English.
- Joan of Arc believed that she heard voices of three saints who told her to accomplish the divine mission of saving France while disguising herself as a man.
- Martin Luther taught that what God’s Word teaches is more important than contradicting popes.

For all these people, the Church canceled or attempted to cancel. Instead of giving the true heretics – *like Arius and Marcion* – time to repent for their sins and for leading people astray from God’s Word, they were just declared heretics. Although, they at least had a voice to speak before being condemned.

As for Hus, Tyndale, Joan of Arc and Luther, the Roman Church did not want to give them even a voice to defend what they proclaimed.

In time, however, Joan of Arc was declared a saint – *25 years after she was burned at the stake*. Much of Tyndale’s English Bible was used to produce the *King James Version* of the Bible. And, although still officially a heretic in the Roman Catholic Church, many of Luther’s reforms were included in the Second Vatican Council.

So, for centuries, the Church was wrong in declaring certain people canceled. Yes, we should weed out false teachings, but we should do so in respectful ways, so that the ones in error have time to repent, *so that they too could be saved*. And where the Church went wrong, the accused should be able to speak their case from God’s Word.

Today, this should still be the case among the worldly “Cancel Culture.”

And, if we are honest, we often “cancel” our own friends and loved ones. Instead of seeking reconciliation, we hold a grudge, or don’t speak to the one who as wronged us in a Christlike way. Sin has a way of overpowering us and our emotions.

Now, did God the Father just cancel us *because of our sin*? No, He sent His Son Jesus!

No matter how much we fail, we can always look to Christ, who suffered the punishment we surely deserve, and He bore it upon the cross. He did this so we – *who are dead in our sin* – would be reconciled to God the Father and made alive through Christ. Since, we have received reconciliation through Christ’s death and resurrection, we are to do as He commands by reconciling with one another.

[Explaining the Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat]

After speaking the *Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat* to the crowd, Jesus went into a house.

The crowd and the disciples are left pondering, “What does this mean?” So, the disciples asked Jesus: ***“Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field”*** (Matthew 13:36b).

Here is where things get different from many parables. Jesus interprets this “earthly story with a heavenly meaning” and in doing so, this parable becomes not just a story, but a teaching. Jesus leaves no room for error. Jesus is making it clear what His teaching means.

He explains to them: ***“The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels”*** (Matthew 13:37-39).

Here, Jesus gives them – *and us* – a rapid-fire lexicon on what everything means:

- I, Jesus, am the Son of Man.
- The enemy is the devil, Satan.
- The different seeds sown in soil are believers and unbelievers.
- The “harvest” is the consummation of the age.
- The reapers are the angels.

- The field in which the seeds are sown and are so closely mixed-together is “the world.”

[Encouragement and Hope]

But then, Jesus appears to explain deeper into the meaning of His parable than what was originally spoken in the parable:

Christ explains: ***“Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place 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”*** (Matthew 13:40-43).

Jesus says this to direct our attention to the sure and certain promise of the Last Day. For on that Day, all ambiguities and every opposition will be removed, and all will be set right for those who are planted and sustained by the Word, that is the good seed, of the Son of Man.

This parable is meant to bring encouragement and hope. Christ’s message to us is to take the long view, and set our hope on the day that will certainly come.

As human beings, we, as wheat and weeds, coexist in the world. As wheat, we are children of the heavenly Father. As weeds, we are children of the evil one, but the weeds have time to change. The weeds have time to change into wheat.

The point of the parable is this: the weeds – *in time* – through repentance and faith in Christ could become wheat. The unbeliever who is destined to eternal punishment can become a believer in Christ and receive eternal life! Likewise, one who is wheat today can fall away and become a weed. But, God gives us time to repent as He continuously cares for both the wheat and the weeds until the harvest.

Remember, Christ did not hang out with sinless human beings. If He did, He would always be alone – all by Himself. You see, Christ was among the sinners. He was among the sinners, not to pluck them out. Instead, He was among the sinners to bring about repentance. He was among the sinners to bring them to faith. He was among the sinners in order to save them from their sins.

So, Christ is the sower, and – *in a way* – Christ is the good seed who has come among us, the bad seed, to bring us to repentance.

And, as you can tell, the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is patient and merciful. He gives us time to repent since the harvest, Christ's Second Coming, has not yet happened. But, that day is coming!

For us sinners, we have hope and assurance through Christ alone! Through Christ's atoning death and His bodily resurrection, for everyone in Christ, we have nothing to worry about. For He has destroyed the powers of the evil foes among us: sin, death and Satan!

[The Sower Restores Us]

Remember, the Triune God didn't have to do any of this for us, but He did out of pure love for mankind!

The fact that God sows good seed at all is Gospel, this is good news! Everything good about the good seed is His doing, not the seeds. But God is more than a sower – He is a caretaker as well. His kindness did not cease with the sowing.

No, He nourishes us with His Means of Grace as we hear of His grace in our baptism, in our forgiveness of sins, in hearing His Word, and in receiving the very body and very blood of Christ. Through the Means of Grace, we are restored as good seed. Through the Means of Grace, we are restored as wheat! We are restored as righteous! We are restored as children of the heavenly Father!

You see, God's goodness is not merely initial – in that He plants us and lets us figure out *our own* life. No! His goodness is continuous. He comes to us and restores us as His child!

Soon on the day of Christ's Second Coming, the harvest will come! The lawbreakers will suffer eternal punishment, but the righteous will enjoy the Father's heavenly glory. The righteous will shine like Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. For everyone in Christ will reflect the light of Jesus.

“He who has ears, let him hear.” Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠