

WEEDS IN GOD'S GARDEN
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
Holiday Island Presbyterian Church
July 23, 2017

INTRODUCTION:

**What we have before us this morning,
is one of the parables Jesus told during His ministry.**

**A parable is simply a story or an illustration -
- which is not simple at all -
- used to convey spiritual truth in a memorable way.**

**Therefore, parables must be entertaining
or people won't remember them.**

**Sometimes, parables can be disturbing . . .
. . . they can cause us to reexamine our thinking
. . . to coax us beyond our comfort levels
. . . to think about things in a new or even novel way
. . . the Parable of the Good Samaritan is an example.**

THIS PARABLE:

This parable is about the Kingdom of Heaven.

**It was addressed to people who lived in an agrarian society -
- they knew about wheat and "tares" or weeds.**

**The parable would have connected with the people
and would have caused them to think about its meaning.**

**You see, when wheat and weeds . . . tares . . . bearded darnel -
- when the two types of plants are very young,
it is difficult to tell them apart.**

As each grows, it becomes more and more obvious

until at harvest, it is very easy to tell.

To make matter more difficult,
as they grow, their roots become entangled with each other;
therefore even if you could identify one from the other
it becomes almost impossible
to remove the weeds
and leave the wheat undisturbed.

Remember: this was in the days before Round-up.

I assume you know what “Round-up” is;
it is the second most widely used weed killer.
It is very effective if applied in hot weather to green plants.
Be careful though, if you mention the word “Roundup”
within 12 feet of a tomato plant
the tomato will wither and die.

I was absolutely stunned when I moved to Iowa
and discovered there is such a thing as “Roundup ready corn.”
It is genetically modified corn
that is engineered to be resistant to Roundup!

Which has nothing to do with today’s parable . . .
. . . I’ve chased a rabbit and wandered off topic.

THOUGHTS ON THE PARABLE:

When Jesus told this parable to the people gathered,
those closest to Him didn’t quite understand
the meaning behind the parable.

It seemed simple enough -
one field - two sowers
one sower is good, sowing wheat;
the other is evil, sowing weeds.

**The servant in the parable
asks what should be done about the weeds;
the master says wait until the harvest to tackle the
problem.**

**At harvest time,
the weeds will be destroyed; and the wheat preserved.**

**The disciples suspected there was a deeper meaning -
and they were right.**

**Jesus explained the parable saying
the Son of Man - Jesus - sows the seed,
the field is the world in which we live;
Satan sows the weeds and it produces people who are
evil.**

**There will be a harvest at the end of the age
and the “good” will be harvested
while the “evil” will be cast into Hell and burned up.**

**That was Jesus’ explanation of the parable.
Truthfully, the application of this parable is more difficult.**

WHAT THIS PARABLE IS NOT:

First of all,

**You may have heard a sermon or two in your lifetime
that tried to apply this parable to the Church.**

That was a tragic mistake.

**It has nothing to do with Church polity or
discipline.**

The parable was spoken to a crowd of people

who would not have a clue what a church was.

**This parable was to teach folks about the Kingdom of Heaven;
that the kingdom was to be ‘a rose amidst thorns.’**

Do you know the true definition of a weed . . .

A weed is any plant out of place.

**A marigold in the midst of daisies is a weed;
a rose in the middle of a bed of hosta is a weed.**

**The “weeds” Jesus was talking about
referred to people who were influence by evil;
Those people who were not seeking after that which is
good.**

**Specifically, Jesus did not make any distinction
between those who considered themselves Godly -
- yet were not living out their faith -
- and those who were pagans; not believing at
all.**

**According to Jesus,
the “field” is the world in which we live -
- a society which is made up of good and evil -
- coexisting side-by-side.
Just like the wheat and weeds in the parable.**

DIGGING DEEPER:

**So what we have before us
is a parable about the kingdom of heaven.**

**In other words, it is God’s field!
And the field is filled with both wheat and weeds.
Even though it is God’s field,
not only does it contain good; it also contains evil.**

And that's where the parable gets difficult.

**There are very few humans or human activities
which are pure and good.**

We are fallen people - prone to sin.

We are all sinners in need of forgiveness.

**One of the hallmarks of the Presbyterian Church
is that we recognize our propensity to sin
and a part of each worship service
Is dedicated to confession and forgiveness.**

**The parable points out there are two kinds of people in the world . . .
. . . following two separate natures: good and evil**

**There are good people,
who are struggling against their temptations
trying their best to follow Jesus.**

**Then there are those who just don't care
and they live their lives in quiet desperation
focusing on the things of the world.**

**And often we are people with commingled natures;
we find the good in ourselves
inextricably bound to evil -
- either intentional or unintentional.**

**Governments and institutions,
Churches, hospitals, universities, seminaries
and individuals never bear corps of pure goodness.**

**Just as the purest metal oxidizes,
and algae grows on the clearest of water,**

**and barnacles grow on the hull of every ship
and dandelions and crabgrass grow in every yard!
Nothing in this world is constantly pure.**

**Every institution - every single one -
is bound by the Iron Law of Oligarchy.**

**The first rule of any institution -
- this church included -
- is the preservation of the institution!**

**We want to believe we have a higher priorities than that,
but the sad truth is -
- self-preservation is our highest priority.**

**There comes a time in every government,
every institution, every Church,
and every individual
when reformation is needed.**

**When we need to escape the chains
which bind us to the wrong path -
- to the wrong priorities.**

**There comes a time when we have to pause and reflect . . .
. . . am I sowing weeds?
Or am I sowing good wheat
based on my response to the love God has shown me.**

**It is a well known adage
that we will reap what we sow.**

**Just as Jesus is Lord of the Dance,
He is also the Sower and Lord of the Harvest.**

SERVANT'S QUESTION:

So, the servant's first question is the most poignant:

**'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field?
Where then did the weeds come from?'**

The deepest of all mysteries is the origin and existence of evil.

**If you can explain how a field - the world -
- that is sown by God through Jesus -
- created to be good - can produce weeds - sin -
- you have explained everything.**

**If God only sows that which is good,
where do the misery and the wickedness come from?**

The master in the parable explained it well:

"An enemy did this."

**It is not God who has caused the misery in our lives -
- it is the "enemy"!**

**The servant then wanted instructions
on what to do about the weeds.**

The master said wait till the harvest.

CONCLUSION:

OK . . . there you have the parable and an explanation.

Now, let's talk about application -

- how do we - living in the 21st century -

- harvest truth from this parable

**and apply it to our own lives - and those around
us?**

**It is important for us to see ourselves as "plants"
that have been sown into God's field - the world.**

The sovereignty of God has created us to be "good" plants -

**- our free will allows us to decide
whether we'll be good plants -
- replicating ourselves in the field
or will we be weeds.**

We are to be “in” the world but not “of” the world.

That's hard for us to do -

- and harder for us to maintain on a consistent basis.

**Sometimes the good in us get commingled with the evil
and we can't sort it out.**

Paul said in his letter to the Romans: 7:15-20

15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

I would venture to say

there is not one person in this room

**who gets up in the morning deciding to rebel against God -
- to deliberately sin.**

If we trained ourselves

to listen to the Holy Spirit a little more closely

we would be less likely to sin before nightfall.

Within each of us,

we have the capacity for good and the propensity for evil.

**Over and over and over we face choices . . .
 . . . to do the right thing; the good thing -
 - or to give in to the enemy and chose the sinful thing.**

**That struggle is not an easy one.
 It seems the harder we try to choose the good things
 the more difficult the choices become.**

**The good news is that we do not face that struggle alone.
 God created us out of love.**

**God redeemed us from our sins
 with a love we cannot comprehend.**

**And then God - through Jesus -
 promised to send the Holy Spirit
 to guide us in our decisions
 to comfort us in the trials we face.**

**If you take nothing from this sermon today . . .
 . . . let it be this:
 You are loved . . . and you are not alone!**

**You have not been abandoned in the field -
 forgotten and uncared for.**