July 23, 2023 **WHEAT AND WEEDS TOGETHER**

Last week we meditated on the parable of seeds and the soil, which helped us to understand how the people hear the good news of God’s word. In this week's gospel reading St. Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43 Jesus told another simple parable to illustrate the truth about the Judgment Day. This story is designed to be familiar to people who depended on agriculture and commercial fishing for a living. A farmer planted good wheat seeds in a field. But under cover of night, an enemy came in and planted weeds. At first no one noticed. There was a common weed in Palestine called bearded darnel, which was a common curse of farmers.

The weed in its early stages looked just like wheat. But when both had "headed out" or produced seeds up top, the two could be distinguished by color. Then the darnel had to be separated from the good grain because its seeds were slightly poisonous. The farm workers came to the owner and asked, "Do you want us to pull the weeds?" "No**,"** said the owner. "If you try, you might damage the grain in the process. Let the weeds be there, at the harvest time we will separate the two."

First, the enemy is real. In verse 25, Jesus says, "An enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat." In verse 39 Jesus tells us plainly that the enemy is the devil. Some modern Christians consider themselves too sophisticated to believe in a devil. And surely, we all know that there is no creature with horns and a pitchfork. But the Bible declares that there is an intelligent, active unspiritual presence in this world opposing God. This Satan and his followers were angels who rebelled against the rule of God and were cast out of heaven. Satan tries to connect with the original sin in all of us, attempting to separate us from God and make this world resemble hell.

The second truth declared is that God is patient and kind. In Jesus' parable, the owner of the farm does not clean out the weeds right away. God is amazingly patient with us sinners. Listen to this word from II Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead, he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” *(NIV).* God will never allow someone to be condemned to hell unjustly or undeservedly. And God gives to most people many chances to repent of sin and claim Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior.

Third, it is God who judges in the end not us. No person is authorized to compose a list of those who are going to hell. It is perfectly proper to say out of love, "If you reject the gracious offer of Christ, you will spend all eternity apart from God." That is a truthful, loving statement. If we ever decide in advance that somebody is unreachable for Christ, we have ceased to be a church. We are then a club, not worthy of the name of Christ.

Listen to the types of people who became Christians and joined the New Testament church at Corinth most of them were sinners. Under the lordship of Christ, they changed. Christ loves us enough to accept us as we are, but he loves us too much to leave us as we are. Then God separates the wheat and weed during the harvest. There Are Two Different Sowers - "a man who sowed good seed" (Jesus Christ) ...." an enemy" (Satan)

Jesus came to this earth and sowed the seed of Grace. Grace is the seed that produces eternal life. Long before Christ's arrival, Satan attempted to thwart God's plan for mankind. If you look back to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, you will see the cunning deception of Satan. From that time until the present he continues to spread seeds of deceit and discord. Not only are there two different Sowers:

There are two different seeds: "good seeds" (of wheat) and "tares" (an injurious weed resembling wheat). Both seeds that were planted produced a crop. One was good, one was bad! One was authentic, the other was a cheap imitation of the real thing. The good seeds produced wheat. When harvested this crop could be used to produce many kinds of beneficial food. The bad seeds produced tares. The top of wheat contains beneficial grain...But the top of a tare contains tiny black seeds that can cause nausea, convulsions & even death.

Spiritually speaking both Jesus and Satan are still sowing seeds today. Jesus is still spreading the seeds of the gospel of grace. And Satan is still spreading deception and evil. The good seed produces eternal life. The seed sown by the enemy produces deception, destruction, death, and damnation! If you like to know more, please join us in our worship on Sundays at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

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