**Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (ESV)**

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, [25] but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. [26] So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. [27] And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' [28] He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' [29] But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. [30] Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" [36] Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." [37] He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. [38] The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, [39] and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. [40] Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. [41] The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, [42] and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [43] Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

**“Roundup Ready”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Discouragement and frustration abound in our time. Technology has turned us into a picture perfect people. What we watch on TV is supposed to play out in our life the same way. Automated machines make everything move in an orderly fashion with a harmony of lights and sounds. Out here in rural America, crops appear flawless by using roundup ready seeds and sprays. Even our gardens can look pristine by just sprinkling on some weed preventing Preen. Is it surprising that a picture perfect people also expect a picture perfect church? The smooth operation of churches today as organizations of men takes precedence over hearing Christ’s Word faithfully preached for men. Discouragement and frustration abound because our eyes keep facing what does not fit into a perfect picture.

Jesus telling the parable on the wheat and weeds was not a field any farmer would want to take pride over. Just as God was the foolish sower with His seed, so God as the sower shows unconditional concern for what He plants. The wheat is important no matter how the weeds distort the crop. As before, Jesus explains this parable only to His disciples who had concerns and question with what He said. Discouragement and frustration will abound for any that believe the church in this world is to be one glory after another. Matter a fact, Martin Luther warns later that church members avoiding the sacrament “should look around to see whether he (or she) is still in the world and remember there will be no lack of sin and trouble…” (Catechism 42). So what if it is not a picture perfect, the kingdom of heaven rests on Christ promising we are roundup ready by His Word.

There are those who would love to take advantage of today’s text. They would twist it to justify their case against God’s Law. “See, see!” They would say. “The wheat and weeds must remain so anything goes for now.” It is the same kind of abuse against Jesus’ words who also says, “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1). Such thinking against the Law having no place or purpose is extremely dangerous. It denies parents the right to discipline children when they do not obey their father and mother. It makes governments unstable being incapable to judge the wrongful acts in a society. It even lets sin run rampant in the visible church without Jesus forgiving sinners by His Word. Is the sower to blame for the weeds? Does God willfully want injustice in the world? What does the parable say, “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.”

The sower has no room for willful negligence. God planted good seed in this world. He did it with Adam and Eve only to find Cain killed His brother Abel. He did it with Noah in a flood only later to gaze upon people building a tower called “Babel.” John the baptizer cried out against the Pharisees and Sadducees, “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matthew 3:8). Jesus judged the whole city of Jerusalem saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!” (Matthew 23:37a). St. Paul told Timothy status of false preachers saying, “...these men oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith” (2 Timothy 3:6). If willful planting of false seed was permissible, what good was even the reformation? Luther says,

“But Christ did not say that weeds were to be sown and produced, but that while people slept, tares were being sown by the enemy. It does not follow that we are to allow the tares to be sown right before our eyes…” (House Postils 272).

There is no excusing away the ELCA decisions to go ahead and ordain women and now gay clergy. The office of the keys is not only forgives the repentant, but also binds the unrepentant. Even “excommunication” is a word that will remain for it cuts-off openly unrepentant sinners from the Christian congregation.

So what does the parable of the wheat and weeds address if it is not a “free-for-all” for the Devil and sons of the Evil One? It is to lift up the heart of those discouraged and frustrated by what they see. The workers were not to be hasty in having a perfect picture field. Their reaction was credible saying, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?” The Sower was already aware of what was going on, but He did not react the same way. His love was for the wheat no matter the weeds. God’s Son is fully aware of how the Devil works behind the scenes. As history accounts time and again, “Where God builds the Church, the devil builds a chapel” (Bul’s notes). The word for “weeds” in Greek does not mean any old weed that a person can spot in a field. Instead, it is a “darnel” or “cockle” a kind of weed like grass, which grows right along with the wheat. It is impossible to tell the difference. As some note, “The similarity between these two plants is so extensive that in some regions cockle is referred to as *false wheat*.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

Discouragement and frustration abound when the weeds get the attention and not the wheat. Yes, there are hypocrites in the church. This is the way it has always been. Judas is a prime example. However, knowledge of his betrayal was only after the fact. So long as a person is repentant over sin and confesses the faith share in their baptism, there is nothing else to say. St. Paul declares, “Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother” (Romans 14:13). We falsely judge when someone votes against us in matters that do not matter to God’s Word. We falsely judge when someone does not do it the way I want it done. We falsely judge when treating fellow-members of the church as the enemy or make untrue claims of our neighbor. In a sense, we are all hypocrites wanting the perfect picture, but that only comes by Jesus forgiving Word. Yet, a true hypocrite never imagines himself to be the hypocrite for the sons of the evil one have no need of the One who saves sinners. Even if false weeds weigh down what God plants. Christ promises it is only for a time. St. Paul admits the wheat will experience stress saying, “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons…” (Romans 8:23) However, the baptized have the Word of Jesus and His sacrament to sustain us as the wheat in a world of sin, death, and the Devil.

As seeds are roundup ready, so the sower knows the wheat will be ready for harvest. The final judgment does not rest with anyone but Jesus. He said, “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.” The sower rendering judgment is to justify the wheat and end the weeds. There is a perfect picture, but it is upon the promising Word of One man who is God’s Son and not the will of any other. Wheat appears brown for harvest while darnel appears black. Wheat is useful for eating while darnel is actually piousness. The justification that we seek as the wheat is not our will or works, but what Jesus has already promised for our whole life. It is because of His sacrifice that the first fruits of His victory justify sinners to live for Him no matter how much we struggle. As our Lutheran Father state, “We cannot pit our works against the wrath and judgment of God…Only Christ, the mediator, can be pitted against God’s wrath and judgment” (Tappert 136:214).

The wheat has no reason to worry. Christ cares for what He planted no matter how poor, weak, and damaged you look among the weeds. His righteousness from the cross proves the wheat is worth the imperfect picture. “The righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” It is the promise that stands sure in our baptism. It is the strength preserving us throughout life to hear His voice say, “I forgive you all your sins.” It is the joyful harvest awaiting on the Last Day. Jesus even now comes as judge and Savior in His Sacrament to take away discouragement and frustration. Churches should try to run efficiently, but that is not the best judgment call in this world. The kingdom of heaven rests on Christ promising we are roundup ready by His Word. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darnel [↑](#footnote-ref-1)