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Gospel lesson

Jesus tells another parable this week as we continue in the Gospel of Matthew:



picture from MMMS collection

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

NRSV

²⁴ He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field;

²⁵ but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away.

²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well.

²⁷ And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?'

²⁸ He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?'

²⁹ But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.

³⁰ Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect 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 approached 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 are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one,

³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers,

⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

The Word of God for the people of God

<Children's/Interactive time>

Let's play a game: Would you rather...?

When hungry, would you rather make others go hungry as well or have everyone fed? Why? <Let them respond>

If someone hurts you, would you rather they get hurt too or that you get healed? Why? <Let them respond>

For the rest of your life, would you rather have a loving companion or guaranteed liveable income? Why? <Let them respond>

Would you rather have unlimited cheap power or unlimited clean air & water? Why? <Let them respond>

Does our gut reaction in a moment of stress align with your calm/rational response? Why do you think that? <Let them respond>

What is best for us to follow in the long term? <Let them respond>

What does Jesus tell us to do? <Let them respond>

Is every choice in life an either/or choice? <Let them respond; ask for examples>

Sometimes we are presented with either/or choices, but God calls for us to think beyond that for better options based in love. If we cannot think of anything, we need to do our best to show God's love to others – nurturing all people, with trust that God will sort out sin in the end, when we are ready to grow more fully into God's holy kingdom.

May we always choose love and wait with eager longing for God's blessings to be manifest upon this world.

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<Hymn "You Are the Seed">

UMH #583>

Message: Wait with Eager Longing



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/core-faith/week-3-eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a/week-3-eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-core-faith-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Holy Creator who nurtures life,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That in setting our minds on You, we may live Your love more fully every day and inspire others to seek you too. Amen.

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In our "Core Faith" series today, we "Wait with Eager Longing."

"Romans 8 calls us to see creation's groaning as bound up with our own salvation, inviting us to exercise dominion not as exploitation

but as Christ-shaped care for a world longing to be reborn in hope."

Ever wonder why we do not get to see Paradise before it is time to go there?

Back in the 1970, psychologist Walter Mischel at Stanford University ran an experiment in delayed gratification. According to Wikipedia, “In this study, a child was offered a choice between one small, immediate reward, or two small rewards if they waited for a period of time.”

In later version of the experiment, “the researcher left the child in a room with a single marshmallow for about 15 minutes and then returned. If they did not eat the marshmallow, the reward was either another marshmallow or a pretzel stick, depending on the child's preference.”

The scientists thought more awareness of the reward would cause the kids to wait longer for it. Instead, seeing what they wanted in front of them but not being able to touch it increased their frustration and shortened their wait time.¹

God loves us and plans to bless us – and all of creation – but we need to wait while God works with us until we are ready in order to receive the full blessing.

Grasping Jacob manipulated Esau and Isaac to get both Esau's birthright and the blessing Isaac meant for Esau. It was like he was sitting there waiting for

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stanford_marshmallow_experiment ;
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fh0029815>

the covenant blessings of God and could not hold off taking what was in front of him.

As a result, instead of staying with his family until he came into his inheritance, Jacob had to flee his brother's wrath, for Esau planned to kill him. That is why Jacob was on his way to Haran, and perhaps was thinking he had lost everything due to his lies.

But our God provides infinite blessings and is faithful to the divine promises. Even when Jacob could not see a way back to grace, God let him know that he was not abandoned, just in transition. God had his situation well in hand – and Jacob had much to look forward to, if he just trusted God.

As the psalmist proclaims, the Lord is with us everywhere and we can trust that God will bring light even to our darkest moments. We may try to flee from the consequences of our actions, but the truth eventually catches up to us. God holds people accountable, and by bringing out the truth, enables a path forward to healthier, more blessed life.

Paul wrote about how Jesus did that for us – and now we have the option to live in the light of the love of Christ rather than according to the flesh. We are heirs with Christ for the kingdom of God, where sin is no more and everything flourishes in love.

All of creation, which suffers because of the sins of humanity, waits with eager longing for the day when sin is no more and it is set free from the burden and pain of sin. Don't we all long for that? To be made

whole once more and to live in joy and fellowship rather than in pain and broken relationships?

Jesus told a parable about wheat and weeds. God does not create junk; we are all created good, planted as good, healthy wheat. But then sin comes in, causing problems. This world is steeped in sin thicker than the smoke from the Canadian fires, polluting our lives – and many people embrace sin for their lives.

I am sure we can all think of one or more people that we would put in the “weed” category because of the problems they cause, the pain we suffer because of them. There may be people who think of us as weeds because we do not prioritize the same things as they think are important, so they feel pain because of us.

Here’s the thing: we do not make the situation better by condemning other people. We do not make the situation better by focusing on ourselves to the exclusion of others’ needs. We do not make anything better by embracing sin – we become as weeds in the field when we do that. Jesus taught us a better way.

If we want to be wheat, we need to grow as the Lord instructed us, to live in love, honest and humble. When we mess up, it does not help to hide the truth or to run away from it. It is far better to fess up and ask God to help us deal with it

God makes truth known and enables us to be set right again, even when we think the corruption of sin makes recovery impossible. Sin will be burned away; the good wheat will remain. Foster your relationship with

God so that you develop more into wheat than weed, and remember that if you cling to sin, you will get burned.

To foster your relationship with God this week, I invite you to:

- ✝ Think of a truth you have been hiding, that makes your life difficult.
- ✝ Ask God to help you deal with that truth well. Pray to God for courage to be open and honest enough to seek and accept help for it.
 - This can be hard if it involves overcoming pride.
- ✝ Be humble; show kindness and grace to those who do not seem to understand – they may have issues too. Certainly groaning nature seemed to this week as the fires made our air harder to breathe – scientific data suggest there would be fewer fires if the earth had not gotten so much warmer from all the global pollution humans generate.

When we live with care and respect for one another and for the world, everything thrives better. Live in the love Jesus taught and wait with eager longing for the fruits of the kingdom of God to be made manifest.