

Eighth Weekend After Pentecost (RCL/A): "Seeds & Weeds: the Wisdom of Waiting on God"
Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
July 18-19, 2026
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Manasquan, NJ

"Don't just **do** something! **Stand** there!" We're more used to hearing the opposite, being urged into action! "Don't just **stand** there! **Do** something!" In today's parable the slaves are rarin' to go, itchin' to begin tearing out those weeds. They're downright **offended** by the appearance and existence of those weeds, so much so that they get a bit sassy with their master:

*"...did you not sow **good** seed in your field? Where, then, did these **weeds** come from?"*
(Matthew 13:27b-c)

They're not just curious, they're agitated. In contrast to their anxiety, the master is matter-of-fact and quite calm. He answers, *"An enemy has done this."* (Matt. 13:28a) The slaves are quick to volunteer, *"Then do you want us to go and gather them?"* (Matt. 13:28c) No, he says, you'd risk uprooting the good with the bad, because the wheat and weeds are look-alikes as sproutlings, and by the time the plants mature and you can distinguish weeds from wheat, their roots will be intertwined and so inseparable you can't uproot one without plucking up the other, too.

It's easy to mistake one plant for another. I had a sad experience when a would-be helper back in Illinois mistook my beautiful crop of almost-ready-to-bloom poppies for dandelions and pulled them all out. (Thankfully he was an inexperienced gardener who cut the foliage and left the roots so they survived to bloom the next year.) Look-alikes are tricky. We certainly know that people who forage for mushrooms have to be **really** careful to pick the edible and not the poisonous ones.

This parable clearly says **we're** not **wise** enough to distinguish weeds from wheat so we need to leave the judging to God and to the angels God will send at the final harvest. I think that

truth is reflected in the reframe, “Weeds are God’s wildflowers” and in the related question, “Is a weed a flower that’s the victim of prejudice?” If we see a field of blooming sun-yellow dandelions in Denali National Park we recognize it as God’s handiwork (and hope we’ll have a bear sighting because we know they snack on dandelions). But if a homeowner sees a ton of dandelions on his or her front lawn, they’re much less apt to thank God – unless they’re committed to participating in No Mow May or have chosen to leave the lawn herbicide-and-pesticide-free for the sake of creation and in honor of the Creator.

Another example of a plant that’s a weed in one place and a flower in another is the ox-eye daisy. We can purchase daisy seeds on-line or pay money for the plants at local garden centers. They’re featured in many summer bouquets. But in the Northern Cascades in Washington State they are labeled an invasive species. There are signs imploring hikers who find them to uproot them, pack them out of the park and burn them once they get home!

In Matthew 7:1 Jesus directs the first disciples (and us), *“Judge not, so that you will not be judged.”* He said that because he knew we have a serious tendency to judge each other! Mother Teresa of Calcutta got to the heart of the **problem** judgment creates when she observed, “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.” Our retort might be, “Nothing there **to** love!” but is that ever totally true? How completely do we understand our loved ones, no less those with whom we have more glancing contact, like coworkers, students, patients, clients, neighbors, or outright strangers? Do we really know enough to judge? Rather than condemning someone in our own minds, could we be in honest conversation with him or her, expressing genuine interest in where they’re coming from? Building bridges instead of erecting walls.

On one hand we hear, “A leopard doesn’t change its spots, a tiger doesn’t change its stripes,” but on the other hand we probably all know at least one person who has truly changed

for the better. Maybe by God's grace they succeeded getting into recovery from their addiction and now are working the program, day in and day out, perhaps mentoring others to do the same. Or maybe the person we'd always thought of as totally insensitive experienced serious trauma and came away with newfound profound empathy for others' suffering. Or perhaps the one who wounded others with thoughtless words was made aware of the depth of hurt they were causing, repented of their "weedy" behavior and began to think before speaking in order to build others up and not tear them down verbally. In that sense, "a child of the evil one" can **become** "a child of the kingdom." The "weed" can become "wheat."

God is patient with us. There are times God calls us to Spirit-ed action and there are times when God calls us to patient, prayerful waiting. "Don't just **do** something! **Stand** there!" the Lord tells us in this story. In God's time the field **will** ripen and the harvest **will** come. Meantime, wheat and weeds grow shoulder to shoulder, roots intertwined. Time is the Lord's gift: including time to recognize our own weedy behavior, time to correct it, time to grow in fullness of grace.

It's been pointed out that the slaves' impatience about the existence of the weeds could have made more a mess of things than the enemy sowing the weed-seed in the first place. After all, if the slaves had dived in and uprooted every plant they **thought** they recognized as a weed, they could have uprooted the whole field, since the roots of the weeds and wheat were intertwined.

When we get overwhelmed by the tidal wave of weedy behavior in this world, when it seems like love is **not** winning, that cruelty hogties mercy, and that "the arc of the moral universe does [**not**] bend toward justice" (Theodore Parker; MLK, Jr.), the Lord calls us to patience, hope and trust that "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well" (Julian of Norwich). We humbly do what we humanly can and then we leave the outcome in the Lord's

Hands. Sometimes we need to revisit St. Paul's reminder in Romans 8, which we heard earlier and bears repeating:

*15 For you did not receive a spirit of **slavery** to fall back into **fear**, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.*

18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us...

*24 For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with **patience**.*

After our mother Georgia died my sisters and I found in her things a card with this prayer by St. Teresa of Avila, Spanish mystic. When I am impatient it helps to center me:

*Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you.
All things are passing away: God never changes.
Patience obtains all things.
Whoever has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.*

In his explanation of the parable Jesus says, "... the enemy who sowed [the weeds] is the devil." (Matt. 13:39a) The Greek word translated *devil* is *diabolos*, as in *diabolical*. It literally means *slanderer*. The devil slanders God by saying that God is not in control and that God's kingdom is not coming. The devil slanders God by telling us we are powerless to sow good seed in this world and we are incapable of living lives that are fruitful in God's sight. Lies, lies, lies! "[We] did **not** receive a spirit of **slavery** to fall back into **fear**..." We believe and claim the promise that at the end of the age, "... the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." (Matt. 13:43a) Meanwhile, by God's grace, we shine with Christ-light and sow **good** seeds, **God** seeds, wherever we go. Amen

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