

The title for today's message is: **Its not what it seems**

Jesus said: ***The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil.***

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, you sent your Son, Jesus Christ into our world, that He might reveal your will for our lives, and redeem us from sin and death. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, open our hearts and minds to receive your Word, that we might discern its truth. And through your same Spirit, inspire us to live our lives according to your word, that we might witness to your grace. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

After reading our Gospel lesson for this morning, you might think that there is little to learn from this parable that we call "The Wheat and the Weeds."

Now according to Matthew's Gospel, Jesus appears to give us an explanation of exactly what he meant by this parable.

But as I studied this lesson over the past week, I discovered that today's parable might not be as clear cut as it may appear.

So today we will explore the meaning of this parable, that is apart from the allegorical interpretation given it by the early church.

Perhaps, in so doing, we might come to more fully appreciate this teaching of Jesus, and its message for those of us who comprise the church of today.

Listen again to the parable. ***“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. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.***

According to several commentaries that I read, this indicates that the weed that was sown was a plant called darnel.

It was well known as a poisonous plant, yet it looked very much like wheat in its early stages of growth.

It could not be distinguished from the wheat until the plants head came out. But by that time,

the roots of the wheat and darnel were so intertwined that one could not be pulled without also tearing up the other, indicating that the weeds were sown deliberately.

Now were told that **“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? 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?

But he said, No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.

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.”

Here again, the landowner is shrewd as well as being a savvy farmer. He knows that the wheat is strong enough to tolerate the weeds competition for nutrition and water.

After the harvest, the landowner will not only have grain for his barns, but he will also have extra, unanticipated fuel for his needs.

Rather than shaming the landowner, the weed-strategy has backfired and shamed the enemy!

The landowner and his servants have the last laugh. What a difference it makes to take this parable at face value!

According to the allegorical explanation of the parable, the weeds are evil and will be gathered by angels to be burned in the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But according to the parable itself, the weeds will be bundled and stored to be used as fuel, to the benefit of the owner and his servants.

The weeds actually become an asset to this shrewd landowner. So what are we to make of this parable?

Well, after thinking about this text over the week, and with the insight of the various commentaries, I have come to believe that the true point of the parable lies in verse 29.

To the desire of the servants to go out and uproot the weeds, the landowner says No. Think about the historical context in which Jesus spoke this parable.

There were various sects or philosophies in Judaism who were striving to create a pure community of faith.

The Pharisees strove to be pure in all their actions, to uphold God's law, and were very critical of the more common people, who may not have been as exuberant about the law of Moses as they were.

These were the persons who chastised Jesus for his association with tax collectors, prostitutes and sinners.

To the Pharisees, the persons Jesus associated with were the weeds of society, which needed to be ignored, if not uprooted from society.

And there were the Essenes, who lived an isolated life in community with each other.

To them mainline Judaism was the establishment of the devil. They may not have wanted to remove the weeds, they removed themselves from society, and considered all who didn't join them to be weeds.

This brings up the possibility that we might be the ones to whom this parable is addressed.

We might be the servants who want to uproot the weeds before the harvest. We might be the ones, that because of our limited vision, fail to see, not only the patience of God in dealing with the weeds of society.

But also the beauty in the weeds, which the redeeming grace of God was able to recover.

Thus, the message of this parable may be telling us to be patient in our judgement of others, and wait for the harvest, because God may have a surprise for us.

Those whom we might think are a detriment to our society of the faithful, may well become fuel to warm the heart of God.

Or perhaps this parable is a story about Jesus himself, and his patience in living among the weeds of our world.

Those of us who think that we are nothing but weeds, and see no value in our lives. And yet, is this not what Jesus did?

The Gospels seem to go out of their way to indicate that Jesus spent a lot of time with those on the fringe of society, the outcasts and known sinners of his day.

Even his chosen disciples were not considered to be the elite of society, by any means.

They were common folk, who never dreamed that they might become some of the most influential witnesses to the grace of God.

And yet, these weeds of that society, through the grace God, became the first disciples, the fuel that warmed the heart of God, through their witness.

Thus, this parable, as Jesus actually told it, speaks to us here today. It tells us that even though there may be those who would have us believe that we might be worthless.

God sees value in our life, and can use us to become his servants to the world. And as we serve our Lord, may God's Spirit give us patience in judging others, as Jesus had in judging us.

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.