

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 19, 2020

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Patience, Trust, and Weeds

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

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

Eph 1:2

Jesus put another parable before them, saying, “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 (vv 24–25).

A sower went out to sow. We heard about that last week. Seed scattered everywhere—everywhere and some even falling on good soil, even producing a good crop. As I said last Sunday, there will be a harvest, and it will be glorious!

The fields are ripe *now*. That’s what Jesus says. But it’s *not yet* the final harvest. Not yet time to gather the wheat into the eternal barns. Not yet time to pull up the weeds for good. Not yet time for them to be tossed on the unquenchable burn pile.

In the kingdom of heaven timing is everything. God’s timing. Not yours, not mine, but His—His good and gracious timing. Why does God wait? Why does He allow weeds to grow among the wheat? Why let sin and evil sprout up and grow for a time? That’s what today’s parable is about.

GOD IS MERCIFUL WITH THE WEEDS FOR OUR SAKE,
SO THAT NONE OF THE GOOD PLANTS ARE LOST.

Be patient *now*, dear Christian, and trust God *in the end*.

I.

Jesus said, **“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”** (vv 24–26). It’s obvious what should happen next, isn’t it? What else do you do with weeds but pull them up? If quack grass sprouts next to the bean plants, that’s what you do. Pull it up. Grab the spade and dig it out. So **“the**

servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where did the weeds come from?’ 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, pull them out, do the weeding *now?*’” (vv 27–28).

And he said, **“No.”** No? The kingdom of heaven isn’t like that. Not now. Not yet. **“No! Lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat also. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I’ll tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barns”** (vv 28–30).

It’s a puzzling response. Like the servants, the master recognizes the evil of the enemy. He sees what the servants see. He doesn’t want weeds in his field any more than they do. But the master also knows that, until the end of the world, there’ll always be this mixture of good and evil, believers and unbelievers. Trying to root out the bad seed *now* may damage the growth of the kingdom in the end. So He is merciful. He spares the weeds for now.

We’re so much less patient. We’re way too eager to uproot evil *in others*, too ready to pull out the spade and tear into the soil. How often have we made our eyes, our ears, our hearts, our lips the judge of our neighbors? Who are you ready to call bad seed and uproot? Who would you toss out of the kingdom and onto the burn pile? And who might uproot you if given the chance? No doubt we’ve done plenty to deserve it.

But, NO! Put your spade and your clippers away. Jesus hasn’t given you permission to do that. It’s not your job. He’s not asking for you to mark the weeds or point them out. He doesn’t need your help with it. Beware of judging the motives of others based on appearances. Be on guard against condemning fellow believers. Leave the field in God’s good and careful hands. Leave Him to sow and to tend and to harvest.

II.

Let both the wheat and the weeds **grow together until the harvest** (v 30). God is patient. Don’t be in such a hurry. Act too quickly, too recklessly, too strongly, and you’re likely to pull out some wheat along with the weeds. But patience isn’t only something we are commanded. Patience is also a gift from Jesus. It’s a fruit of the Spirit. We receive it from God’s Word. “Here,” Jesus says in His Word, “take some of *My* patience, *My* long-suffering, *My* kindness and forbearance.” Don’t you know **that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance** (Rom 2:4)? Do you see how long God has been patient with you? Can you count the number of times you’ve deserved to be uprooted and thrown out, but instead Jesus was numbered with your sin and you were counted with His righteousness?

Patience, however, is *not* the same as tolerance. It doesn't mean that we should ignore evil or make peace with it, as if it's only for God to deal with on the Last Day and not something for us to take seriously now. We might be tempted to think, "Since good and evil will exist together until the end, why even bother calling out evil the world? Just let God take care of it on the Last Day." That attitude would put a muzzle on God's Law. It would allow sin to run rampant and evil to grow. Jesus was and is utterly patient, but He isn't permissive. When the scribes and Pharisees were ready to stone the woman caught in adultery, Jesus stopped them. He would not let her be pulled up. But He also said to the woman, "**From now on sin no more**" (Jn 8:11). His patience kept her from being uprooted, but His love didn't leave her in her sin.

We must say what God says and also hear it for ourselves. What He calls evil and sin, we also will call evil and sin, even if the world calls it good, even when we find it in ourselves. But it's not for us to make the final judgment, not for us to weigh souls in the balance and cast out the ones found wanting. Leave that to God.

III.

Trust that, in the end, God will render righteous judgment over all things. This is how Jesus explains this parable to His disciples: "**The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. 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. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear**" (vv 37–43).

Patience *now*, and trust *in the end*. Evil and sin will not last forever—not in the world, not in us. Jesus promises to handle the field appropriately, to gather the wheat and to burn the weeds. He invites us to trust Him, to trust His crucified hands, to trust His mercy and His justice in the cross, to leave the judgment to Him.

It's tempting, however, to want God's judgment now. "Why wait until the end?" we say, "since the Kingdom of God is certain, let's give the evil people what they've got coming and fix this world once and for all." But that way leads to the silencing of the Gospel. It means the end of forgiveness and mercy and grace.

The good news of Jesus' death for sinners is something we need as much as anybody else. Unless we're willing to stake the outcome of the final judgment on what we've done, on our lives and our works, we live from His mercy, too. We entrust ourselves to Him, and so we must trust Him also with the world. We already know what the judgment against us is: Not guilty! Innocent, undeservedly innocent by virtue of Christ's death for us. Because He suffered the wrath of God for us. Because He was uprooted, pulled out, tossed onto the burn pile for our sin and the evil we've done.

In the face of coming judgment, Jesus presents us with the mercy of God *now*. In Jesus' name, the Church forgives those who repent, baptizes them, and welcomes them into the Kingdom. Though we live in the midst of evil in the world *now*, *in the end* we will live in the mercies of God eternally.

The final judgment is coming, but don't be afraid. We wait patiently for our Lord, who is merciful with us. We trust Him. He plants and replants with the seed of His Word. Do not lose hope in this weedy world. God is merciful, but He will have His harvest too. Christ is risen, the firstfruits of those who will rise from the dead. Your hope is secure. He has given you His Spirit to be with you *now* and to help you as you wait, as God does his patient, merciful work—for you and for all.

There will be a harvest, and it will be glorious! Be patient, trust, cling to His mercy, for **then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father** (v 43).

The peace that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Phil 4:7
