

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
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Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

What Shall We Do About the Weeds?

1. *Recognize their source*
2. *Accept their presence*
3. *Be certain of their destiny*

Hymns: 224 – 529 – 613 – Closing 322

All Scripture quotations from the NIV

Matthew 13:24-30,36-43 –

²⁴ *Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ “An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’*

²⁹ *“No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn...’ ”*

³⁶ *Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” ³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is*

the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ *“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where 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.*

On our family’s recent vacation to the Midwest, I had the chance to go back to Mobridge, SD. I went through grade school in Mobridge at Zion Lutheran School when I was growing up. On our trip my family went by the house I had lived in.

I have a vivid memory from that time. We had a large garden while living in Mobridge. I remember getting ready to go to school in the morning during fall, and my parents told me, “I’d like you to weed a row in the garden before you go to school.” A row may not sound too bad, but we had a large garden with long rows! For a young boy, this was not a fun task. My back would ache after bending over for a time. My hands and fingernails got dirty and dusty. I’d have a sweat going after a short time in the morning sun. For this reason, I did not like weeds one bit!

I still have to deal with weeds. Weeds poke through the cracks in our front walk and driveway and look very unsightly. Our lawn regularly has invading weeds that want to take over. I’d imagine that many of you have to deal with weeds also. What do you do about weeds? You know.

In our reading today, Jesus addresses the problem of weeds in a figurative way. He does it by means of a parable in which he instructs his people how to deal with them. Let’s consider the question, **“What Shall We Do About the Weeds?”** Jesus tells us:

1. **Recognize their source**

2. **Accept their presence**
3. **Be certain of their destiny**

1 – We read in Matthew 13: “*Jesus told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.’*” Later, Jesus would explain some of the points of comparison here: “*The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.*”

In the beginning, God planted a perfect garden. He made a perfect home in a perfect place for our first parents, Adam and Eve. There were no weeds – literally or figuratively – in that garden. But then the enemy, the devil, came. His intent was to ruin God’s perfect place he had created. He led Adam and Eve into sin. The effects of this are that weeds (unbelievers) are now in the world. And the enemy has continued to sow weeds down through time as mankind’s history has gone on. Along with God’s people (wheat), unbelievers (weeds) have been growing.

It’s important to recognize the source of these weeds. Why? For a couple reasons:

1. We need to be aware that the devil is real. Many today have denied that an individual with a hostile will against God’s will really exists. Others have downplayed the danger of such an individual. Still others make jokes about pitchforks and red suits. Be warned: Such people need to remember the Bible verse

from 1 Peter 5: “*Watch out! Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*”

2. It’s also important to know that the devil is the author of evil, not God. God never wanted evil in the world. He does not even delight in the death of the wicked. We do not curse him for desiring evil upon us. We must recognize that God allows evil to come into our lives, but he always does this with a good purpose in mind. He does it to strengthen and focus us on what’s most important.

I was watching a news show recently where they asked the question, “What should God’s approval rating be?” How would people process that question? Most would probably look at the amount of good or evil they’ve experienced lately and make their judgment based on how much they’re enjoying life at the moment. This is not a proper way to look at God’s providence in our lives. He always has our good in mind!

In recognizing the source of evil, we must also admit something about our own natural condition. Romans 8 tells us, “*The sinful mind is hostile to God.*” What does “hostile” mean? It means the same thing as the person who sowed the weeds, the enemy. In our natural condition, we are products of the enemy. By nature you are a weed!

I know some weeds that are irritating to touch – Nettles and poison ivy. By nature, that’s what you are. You have a selfish side that only wants to look out for

number one. You have a built-in mechanism that only wants to think about and please yourself. How irritating, not only to others around you but to God who knows your selfish side as well as you know it.

I know some weeds that are sharp. They have briars and pricklers that cut and scratch. By nature, that's what you are. You have a tongue that can cut deep with hurtful words. You have injured others, either physically or emotionally. In anger, you have even enjoyed it some days.

I know some weeds that are ugly. They even have what we might describe as a menacing appearance. By nature, that's what you are. Ugly sins have been a part of your past, shameful sins that are too ugly to mention. **By nature, we are enemies of God!**

Then we hear about a miracle about wheat. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, *“Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”* God has washed us clean and made us a beautiful plant. God has made us a productive stalk of wheat in his field! The price of our sin and selfishness was paid by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. God washed us clean through our baptism. God has made us wheat, children and heirs in his kingdom! What grace and love!

2 – Yet not all those around us are wheat. To go back to our first question, “What shall we do about the weeds?” Jesus said in his parable, *“When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds*

come from?’ ‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ‘No,’ he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.’ ”

Jesus laid out some principles concerning the wheat field of the world. The first principle is that the wheat and the weeds can appear to be quite similar at times. In fact, the weeds were not noticed until late in the growing process, when they sprouted a head that had a black, poisonous fungus instead of good kernels. It is true that the godly and ungodly in the world can appear the same at times:

- Both have jobs they pursue
- Both try to find love and many get married
- Both have customs and traditions they follow
- Both have hobbies and interests that are exactly the same

However, a second principle is that when fruits appear, the two are radically different:

- Their language can be very different, as you may have experienced
- Their behavior is very different, in fact grossly violent and beyond understanding at times, as you may see on the news
- Their goals in life are different

What does God tell us to do about the weeds? **He tells his servants to leave them side by side in the field!** In an amazing turn of events that is different than our way of thinking about weeds, God says, “Let them be!”

What does that mean? Some have misinterpreted these words of Jesus to say that churches should not practice church

discipline or excommunication among its members. However, those people are forgetting that Jesus is not speaking of the impenitent in the church. He is speaking about the field of the world that we are living in. Not only that, but Jesus would be contradicting the many verses that talk about correcting and disciplining erring brothers.

What Jesus is saying is summed up well in an account from Luke 9: *“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village.”*

James and John wanted to bring some fire and brimstone down on those unbelievers! They wanted to exact some judgment. But what does Jesus say? He tells them it’s not the time and it’s not their place to violently bring them to an end and uproot them. The principle is that believers don’t have the right to wage holy war or burn heretics to death. It doesn’t mean a person can’t speak the truth; it does mean that God’s justice and vengeance is not to be carried out forcibly by his servants.

Why not? Because wheat may be uprooted with the weeds. What does that mean? I always thought that meant that some believers might be offended by the process and stumble in their faith, losing it. I suppose that might be true, but what about this angle? What about the time to come to faith that you would be ending? Think about the Apostle Paul. He used to be Saul, and he used to go into synagogues and drag off Christians to put them in prison and put them to death. What if a believer had ended his life violently and quickly? They would

have uprooted wheat that God would bring about for his kingdom. After his conversion, Paul became the preeminent missionary in the early Church.

Jesus’ words about leaving the weeds have implications for you:

- First, you will have to avoid becoming frustrated with God. There may be days that you wonder, “Why did that happen, God? Why does that flagrant unbeliever get away with treating others like that and committing crimes? How can this happen in your world?” May God give us patience at those times and help us realize that the weeds will be among us in the world until the end of time. May God help us to leave room for God’s wrath rather than seek to vent our own.
- A second implication is that you will continually have bad influences around you. Have you ever heard of the weed called Creeping Charlie? Creeping Charlie creeps and grows throughout a whole lawn and infests the whole yard. In God’s ruined world, the weeds will seem to be running rampant around you at times. And they will influence you. If you don’t think it’s so, look at how a group of grade schoolers or teenagers that hang out together seem to speak the same slang and dress the same way. Look at how they act like each other. We can rub off on one another. You will need to be on your guard. Your language may be influenced by the weeds. Your priorities will be challenged. Your faith will be contested.

Therefore, how important it is for us to be growing together. How important it is to be in Bible class. How important it is to be in church every Sunday. How important it is to know your Scriptures. God will keep you strong and preserve you in faith through them.

3 – One last lesson about weeds remains. Jesus said, “*At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn...! So it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*”

Jesus tells us that we can be certain of the weeds’ and the wheat’s final destiny. It’s interesting that Daniel 12 mirrors Jesus’ words pretty closely: “*Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.*” As we hear those words, we undoubtedly feel joy. We feel joy to know that our beautiful place in heaven will be where the weeds grow no more. It is a bright, beautiful place that God has prepared for us and that we will surely experience one day.

However, as we hear these words I think we have a tinge of sadness also, for who of us would wish everlasting pain and suffering on anyone? Therefore, a feeling of urgency comes upon us. There are weeds to talk to while we have time yet. Forget about vengeance and holy war, what about

outreach?! There are souls around us that need to hear about God’s heavenly barn, because through the witness of the wheat God can change weeds into more wheat. That’s unlike any garden that you or I have ever known.

So the next time you see weeds in your sidewalk cracks or in your flower garden: **Remember the lessons about weeds and wheat that Jesus has taught us today:**

- 1. Recognize their source**
- 2. Accept their presence**
- 3. Be certain of their final destiny**

And finally, as we live among weeds may God keep us strong! May he preserve us in the faith until we are safe in his heavenly home that he has prepared for us. Amen.