

Awaiting God's Good Harvest in Peace

8th Sun. after Pent. – 07/19/26 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 30, [The owner of the field (Jesus) tells His servants,] **“Let both (the weeds & wheat) 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.’”**

Introduction

✧ Matthew continues to relay Jesus’ teaching to us here in our Gospel Reading about the various aspects of what He calls “the kingdom of heaven”; that is the way things are right now, and what things will be like in the future under His rule and reign as the only One who is both Son of Man and Son of God; and King of all.

➔ As He often does in these “kingdom of heaven” parables, Jesus splits His teaching into two versions. There is the parable itself that He teaches to the unbelieving crowds, and then there is the more detailed explanation that Jesus gives just to His disciples; those whom Jesus would soon authorize and send out as His apostles and evangelists.

➔ As always, Jesus is the subject; the main character of these parables. In today’s particular parable, verse 37 identifies the sower of good seed as the Son of Man. The good seed He identifies in verse 38, according to the original Greek as “the sons” of the Kingdom; those believers in Jesus – both male and female, whom the heavenly Father has planted, or placed by grace, here in this worldly “field.”

✧ Jesus also introduces His “enemy” who plants weeds in the midst of the wheat at night; that is in secret. This, Jesus says in verse 39, is the devil. The weeds are “the sons of the evil one” (v.38); those whose beliefs and priorities are against Jesus and in union with the devil. They have taken root in the same “field” with the true believers so that their roots; their earthly lives and interactions and relationships have become so intertwined that if you were to try and pull out just a weed, it might prematurely take a stalk of wheat with it.

➔ So Jesus instructs His servants, who are clearly His apostles and later those faithful pastors in His Church, not to over-zealously pull out and separate the weeds, but instead, to let them grow together until the final harvest.

➔ It’s then, at the end of the age, that the unbelieving souls who still rejected Jesus in this earthly life, will be separated from what Jesus calls “the righteous” ones. The sons of evil, Jesus says, will be collected to receive the outcome that they chose by their unbelief, which is everlasting suffering in the “fiery furnace” of hell. “Then,” verse 43 says, “the righteous” will be gathered into the everlasting, joy-filled “kingdom of their Father” to “shine like the sun” in the bliss and glory of God.

I. The World Contains both Believers & Unbelievers

✧ So, what would Jesus have you and me learn from this parable? First, that here in the visible Church in this world, both genuine believers and hypocrites will exist together. At the time that Jesus shared this parable, He was highlighting the great contrast between His chosen apostles and the Jewish Pharisees and Scribes who claimed that they alone belonged in the Kingdom.

➔ Though many people to this day claim to be and self-identify as genuine believers in Christ, the fact that the actual things they believe to be true are so far apart – even opposite from each other, shows that they/we can’t all believe in the same god. It’s not possible, for no true god would say that two opposite beliefs could both be the truth. For example, either Jesus is the

promised Messiah, Savior and Son of God or He is not. The Pharisees said He was an imposter that must die, and the apostles said He is the one true God and Savior.

➔ In the end, Jesus says that the difference will be unveiled and the genuine believers will be known by the fruits of their faith, while the hypocrites will be exposed by their superficial attempts at justifying themselves by their own works. Indeed, their false teaching and false worship that lures worldly folks to think that they can be “good with God” by their own merits and good works will only show how blatantly far away from God they really are in the end. As Jesus says in verse 41, any close look at any and all of mankind’s attempts to perfectly keep God’s Law, will receive the just verdict that we are all “law-breakers.”

- ✕ However, in God’s “kingdom of heaven” any talk of basing our eternal existence upon our own works, or even upon the fruits of our faith, should rightly make us squirm in our pews, because a true believer in Jesus does not base his/her eternity upon his/her own works or fruits. No, every bit of our future, eternal outcome must always depend exclusively upon Jesus! He and His righteous works are the only source; the only cause of faith, as well as any and all good works we might perform.

II. We Will Struggle Amidst Unbelief Until Jesus’ Return

- ✕ The second thing Jesus would have us learn from His parable today is that not only will we live here in the midst of unbelievers, but that our existence in this world will be one of significant struggle.

➔ Though Jesus’ servants wanted to immediately cleanse the field of any and all weeds, Jesus would not allow it. In fact, He directed them to let the weeds grow with the wheat until the final harvest. Why would Jesus say such a thing? Wouldn’t you think that because He warns us so often in Scripture against falsehood and corrupt living, that He would just as soon get rid of all unbelievers as soon as possible?

➔ But Jesus’ response shows how deeply He loves and cares for, not only those who are obviously His believing sons and daughters, but also for those who may still come to faith down the road. Jesus reveals God’s great patience when He says, “Let both grow together until the harvest....” 2 Peter 3:9 looks to Jesus’ final harvest return and teaches us that “The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” Anyone who gardens knows that there are some weeds, especially when they’re very young, that are virtually impossible to discern from the desired crop. It won’t be until the plants are larger, and their roots are likely entwined with each other that you know for sure that they are weeds.

- ✕ Besides that, Jesus tells even His apostles whom He has personally trained, that pulling weeds is just not His servants’ role in His kingdom. No, that is the role of the angel reapers at the end of the age.

➔ And I know, this kind of patience and tolerance with blatant and obvious unbelief can be difficult to have; can seem ungodly to allow, not only in our personal corner of the world, but especially in the midst of Christ’s Church. In fact, other passages in Scripture stress separation from evil, such as when Jesus tells the disciples to cast out the leaven of the Pharisees (Mt. 16:11-12) or when He empowers Peter and the other new and future Christian clergy not only to loose the forgiven souls but also to bind the unrepentant on earth (Mt. 18:18).

➔ Paul even warns the Corinthian Church to cast an immoral member of the congregation out from among them (1 Cor. 5:2,13). But God’s intent of such excommunication; of such refusal to forgive those who are unrepentant, is only designed to put fear in the erring person’s heart so that he/she will repent and then be restored back into Christ’s Church. You see,

excommunication always looks to the future hope of restoring a soul back into faith and fellowship with God and His family.

- ✘ That is the primary purpose of God's Law and Commandments; to show us our sin so that we see how much we need Jesus and His forgiveness and life. And that means that we believers, who are God's servants, must take great care not to judge so quickly that a son of the evil one; a condemned rejecter-of-Jesus is among us; especially since, in our own sin, we are all evil! The big difference though for us is that a true believer-in-Jesus is not only 100% sinner but also 100% saint at the same time, because of Jesus' righteous blood that covers our sin; that makes us God's beloved child.
- ✘ Jesus also shows us here that we in His Church must not confuse or misuse the role that He has given us to fulfill in His plan. Christ's purpose for His Church and her servants is not to bear the sword of criminal punishment or God's final judgment!
 - ➔ That was the great travesty of what was known as the Inquisition in 1100s to the 1800s when the Medieval Church proclaimed war on all "heresy" and false-teaching. When someone breaks a civil law the established government is the one that has God's authority to punish that lawlessness appropriately, not the Church.
 - ➔ And, as for the false teachers and hypocrites among us – they will receive their punishment on the Last Day, when Jesus says in verse 42 that they will be cast with the devil and all causes of sin into the eternal fire.
- ✘ This is good news for all Christian believers. For even as we struggle with persecution and the devil's tricks, we look forward to a new life without any of the causes of sin. At our death and later on the Last Day, we are assured that we will all be gathered into Jesus' heavenly "barn" (v. 30) for safekeeping. Yes, the same angels who cast the sons of the evil one into their fiery fate are specifically equipped to also gather us and all of Jesus' beloved Christians into the bosom of Abraham for safekeeping.
 - ➔ The fact that Christ's Church will still struggle here in the world with the causes of sin in our midst, is why we believers still here on earth have traditionally been called the "Church Militant." We even have a section in our hymnal devoted to hymns that address this struggle. Our opening hymn today came from that section.
- ✘ Many people, even try to complain and use "the strife in the organized Church" as a reason to stay away from Christ and the gifts that He gives us only here. But Jesus shows us in our text today, that we should actually expect it; that we should embrace it as a part of His plan for us on this side of heaven.

III. Even Now the Church Enjoys True Peace

- ✘ Nevertheless, and above all, we learn from Jesus today in this text that already now, in His Church, we can find true peace in Jesus. In His *Means of Grace*; that is His Holy Word, His cleansing water and Word of Baptism and in His Holy Supper of Body and Blood, Jesus dwells with us and He does His ministry through His called servants. It is here that He showers us with His grace; and He feeds and fills us with His deep, unsurpassed and all-consuming peace; peace with God because our sins are covered and forgiven; and peace with the certainty of our future in His glorious kingdom of heaven.
 - ➔ Jesus' death on the cross sealed and accomplished the redemption of our bodies on the Last Day so that now when we hear His voice as Holy Scripture is read and preached in Worship, we are assured that Jesus is with us in the midst of our suffering; in middle of this unbelieving world. And when His very body and blood passes over our tongues in the bread and wine, Jesus certifies that we are forgiven for all those times the evil of this world draws us into sin.

- ✘ Yes, we are truly blessed by God to be here in His gathered body of believers. Jesus said, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on My account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Mt. 5:11–12). This is what the Church has always called “The Theology of the Cross” where, through great suffering, great good results. As Jesus said in verse 43, “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

Conclusion

- ✘ So for now, my fellow sinners and saints here in the one Holy Christian Church, the world mixes and grows side by side both belief and unbelief. But we eagerly wait for God’s good harvest, fully at peace, because in the end Jesus, the Righteous One, will judge the difference perfectly. It’s then that we whom He has made righteous by His grace, will forever “shine like the sun in the kingdom of [our] Father” (v.43); in His radiant glory! Amen.