



Lectionary 16, Year A

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Gospel Text – Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

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²⁴ [Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field,²⁵ but while everybody was asleep an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷ And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ ²⁸ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹ But he replied, ‘No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both of them grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’ ”

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” ³⁷ He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸ the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with

fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"

SERMON TEXT:

I have a question for you. When you were a kid, and playing outside, did you ever go and pick the dandelions in the yard because you thought they were beautiful flowers? I used to think dandelions were so beautiful. I would pick them up and tie them together to make them into crowns. I would bring them inside and put them in cups as a bouquet, to light up the room with their golden yellow color. I used to love them. But one day, one of my friends told me, "You know those are weeds, right?" and although I knew weeds were not what we wanted growing in our yard, I thought that weeds were those green things my mom would pick next to the flowers in the front of my house. I wondered how something so beautiful, like the dandelion, was a weed. So I didn't believe it at first, but came to realize that they, indeed, were weeds.

You know that feeling you get when you find out something you felt like was common knowledge? I felt so silly, embarrassed really. And if you're like me, that's one of the worst feelings in the world. Feeling like people perceive you as naive, or uninformed. I'm also incredibly stubborn and competitive, so feeling like someone else had this knowledge all along and didn't tell me, made me feel insecure, and I just wanted to say, "I don't care, they are flowers to me!" But that would not make them flowers. It would just make me stubborn. So, I wondered, "what else?" What else would I find beautiful and wonderful that would turn out actually to be a weed. Because I didn't want to feel this foolish again.

So now, this morning, I can't help but wonder about the disciples and those in the crowd Jesus was speaking to. Listening to parables can be quite difficult if you're not really following what Jesus says. And I cannot imagine what it would have been like trying to decipher this message if Jesus had not gone on to explain to them what it all meant. But as Jesus told them "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one..." I have to pause. Remembering how it felt to find out dandelions were weeds, I wonder how many of them turned to one another wondering who among them were weeds? Who among them were the children of the evil one?

Because that's our worst fear, right? To be on the wrong side, or to be wrong, period. We are so afraid that the way we've done things, the way we've believed, the stances we've held, we are so afraid that those are wrong that we try to conform everyone else to our line of thinking. We try to point to the clear right and wrong in every situation. And Jesus here, clearly says there are weeds among the wheat. Our inkling, then, is to get rid of the weeds.

BUT what puzzles me about this story is that the *sower didn't get rid of the weeds*. The sower, instead, says, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.' and that the reapers would differentiate at harvesting. And you would think those around Jesus would understand, but they stop and ask, "Can you explain this to us?"

What Jesus then tells them is that this story is about judgment. It's about the judgment of good and evil in our lives and in the world. And there is a clear message here that judgement is coming. Once again, this can ignite fear within us. And from this fear of judgment stems all others.

The three messages of good news, though. **One**, that as the wheat, the only thing that is asked of us is to grow. **Two**, we can still grow fruitfully with weeds among us. **Three**, the sower is the one who will take care of the weeds.

We serve such a great and all powerful creator that our job as God's children is not to uproot the weeds. It's not to figure out who the weeds are among us, but simply to grow. And I want to emphasize this because I think we forget it in our everyday lives. Our call to serve God is not to judge. That is God's task. It is not for us to wonder who is worthy of God's love, God says to love radically and freely like God does for us. Because we are all growing at different rates. Some of us may look like weeds when we are starting out, but then grow into strong stalks. And even for the weeds among us, is our God not powerful enough to transform weeds into wheat?

Our reading from Isaiah reminds us of the power and might of our God, "I am the first and I am the last, besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let them proclaim it, let them declare and set it forth before me." Holy and most high, our God is greater - especially greater than silly ol' weeds.

This parable encourages us to cool down a bit, because ultimately the weeds are God's to worry about, not ours. And this message trickles into our lives telling us not to worry too much. Not that we shouldn't be vigilant, stand for justice, and care for God's creation, but that the best and greatest thing we can do is serve one another in the ways we know how to.

Like finding out a dandelion is not a beautiful flower, we are learning new things each day. Things like learning to perfect a lemon pound cake recipe, or how to cross stitch are fun things we learn. Yet, we are also learning about the lived experiences of one another and how to be good humans together. And sometimes this new information asks us to admit when we are wrong or that we need to change our minds. And that's okay. Because things change. And just like good midwesterners, when the sun is shining but there's rain falling down, we don't yell at the sky or deny that it's raining, we just adapt.

As Jesus spoke to this crowd of followers, it serves as a reminder for us that no matter where we are on the journey, no matter how we identify ourselves, we need to be able to stop and lean in and listen again for what it is God is saying to us now in this moment.

We do not have every answer, and we are going to get it wrong a lot of the time. So we lean in, we ask God to help us do the next right thing. And if that thing is contrary to what you believed before, what you said before, that's okay. We repent and ask God for guidance. Because as the sower has planted us, we are meant to grow - Growing closer to the call God has for our lives, working together to transform the world. Amen.

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