

He presented another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while people were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the plants sprouted and produced heads of grain, the weeds also appeared. <sup>27</sup> The servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where did the weeds come from?’ <sup>28</sup> He said to them, ‘An enemy did this.’ The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and gather up the weeds?’ <sup>29</sup> ‘No,’ he answered, ‘because when you gather up the weeds, you might pull up the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “First, gather up the weeds, bind them in bundles, and burn them. Then, gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus sent the people away and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

<sup>37</sup> He answered them, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world. The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the Evil One. <sup>39</sup> The enemy who sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the world. The reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup> Therefore, just as the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the world. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will pull out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and those who continue to break the law. <sup>42</sup> The angels will throw them into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.”

—Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The words for our consideration today are written in the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, chapter 13. In this chapter, Jesus speaks seven parables, seven stories, to teach us something about the kingdom of God. He’s teaching us about the way God operates and rules in the lives of believers. Last week we heard the first parable about the Sower who sows the seed.

In the story that we have before us today from Jesus, you notice that an owner has a field. He owns it. It’s his. Jesus explains that the field represents the world. This world belongs to God. However, *God* is not responsible for bringing evil into this world. You can see that from Jesus’ story. In the middle of the night, an enemy, representing Satan, got up and sowed bad seed among the good.

Jesus explains that the good seed, the wheat, represents his believers. The good seed is you and me. We live as wheat among weeds. He says, **“The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world. The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom”** (Matthew 13:37,38).

We are sons of the kingdom. That means that you are part of the family. We, of course, know from the Word of God how we became part of the family. Pastor Buchholz talked about this last week. God planted the seed of his Word in our hearts and faith grew. It wasn’t by our good deeds or efforts. It wasn’t because we chose to be in God’s family. My children did not choose to become family members with me and my wife. It was beyond their control.

That’s how it is with us spiritually. At our baptisms, God comes to us and makes us a part of his family. At our baptisms, Jesus’ *perfect life* becomes our perfect life. His *death* becomes our death as payment for our sins is made to God. And *his life*, his *rising from the dead*, gives us new life with him. We are the children of God.

And that means that you have certain rights and privileges as a part of the family. We have a Father who cares about us every moment of our lives. He knows what happens to us and around us. He has his eye on us all the time. Your position of being children of God carries with it the privilege of having God’s forgiveness every single day of your lives. You have the sustaining strength from God when you face trouble in your life. And all of that happens for you, not based on your feelings, not based on something you feel inside of you, but all of that happens because God connected you to Jesus’ life, death, burial, and resurrection through faith.

And, my friends, that planting is happening all over the world. God is planting more seeds in the world. He is bringing more and more people into his kingdom, into his family. As the message about Jesus is proclaimed, God the Holy Spirit is at work, changing people’s lives. To pick up the imagery from the Gospel from last week, the seed of God’s Word is finding good soil in the lives of people. God is planting his good seed all across the world, and it is producing fruit. That is really good news for which you and I give thanks.

But God is not the only one at work. Look at what Jesus says, **“But while people were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. When the plants sprouted and produced heads of grain, the weeds also appeared”** (Matthew 13:25,26). The word used here for weeds is a specific weed called the “darnel.” It looks similar to the wheat when it grows in the field. Almost identical. It’s hard to tell the difference.

But there is a big difference. The weed produces a black seed that tastes bitter and can make you very sick. It may look very similar to wheat, but it brings you harm.

You see, that’s how Satan operates. He loves to mimic God. He mirrors God in so many ways, but to destruction, not health. He may even scatter people who sound religious, but if you swallow their teaching, you will become spiritually sick and die. In the visible church, places where people gather together around the means of grace, Satan sows false teachers. These are individuals who sound Christian, who may even claim to be Christian, but whose teaching is not Christian. Their teaching does not match up with what God clearly says in his Word. They are weeds. Jesus says, **“The weeds are the sons of the evil one and the enemy who sows them is the devil.”**

The Apostle Paul saw Satan plant bad seed in his beloved churches. When he said goodbye to the dear Christians in Ephesus, Paul got down on his knees with them on the beach, and he prayed. He then spoke these chilling words: **“I know that after my departure savage wolves, who will not spare the flock, will come in among you. Even from your own group men will rise up, twisting the truth in order to draw away disciples after them”** (Acts 20:29,30). That’s weed among wheat.

In his letter to those Christians in Ephesus, Paul wrote about Satan, **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places”** (Ephesians 6:12). Satan wants to mess up God’s field of wheat.

Have you ever seen him do that? Have you ever seen Satan plant bad seed in the lives of people you love? I had a member in one of my previous congregations who grew up in the church. He was baptized and confirmed. He went to our Lutheran school. But then he went off to a public university and became enamored with a highly respected professor who basically said that the Bible is garbage. Satan planted that professor, that weed, in his life. Because of that professor’s lies, my member no longer believed the miracles of the Bible and the truths of God’s Word. He now has a family, and instead of sending them to a Lutheran elementary school or bringing them to church to learn about Jesus, he raises his family to be unbelievers.

Oh, how hard and painful it is to see weeds grow up where God planted good seed, especially when it happens to people we know and love, even members of our own family!

But even in the midst of this, Jesus calls for patience. The servants come back with the news that there are weeds in the wheat. The owner tells them, **“An enemy did this.”** They want to get into the field and immediately start ripping out the weeds. The owner says, **“No, because when you gather up the weeds, you might pull up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest”** (Matthew 13:29,30).

**Wait patiently for the harvest!** We see harvests taking place periodically in our lives. A loved one in the Lord leaves this world in death. It’s a harvest where the Lord brings that person to the *barn of heaven*. Your loved one is safe with Jesus. Those believers are no longer in danger of having their faith choked by the deceitfulness of the weeds. Their harvest has already come. But the *final* harvest will take place when Jesus comes back on the Last Day.

The prophet Joel calls it **“The Day of the LORD.”** Only God knows when that day will be. Nobody else does. All the people who claim to know that day are deceivers and liars. This is a day only the Lord knows about. Jesus explains, **“The harvest is the end of the world. The reapers are angels”** (Matthew 13:39). Not you and me. We are the proclaimers, not the reapers. Jesus continues, **“Therefore, just as the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the world. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will pull out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and those who continue to break the law. The angels 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”** (Matthew 13:40-43).

Jesus says that unbelievers will be **“thrown into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”** And you can just picture what gnashing of teeth refers to. The pain and the agony, sure. But also the anger and resentment that go with it. It’s a horrible place. A place we do not want to go to. But understand that justice will be served. Jesus will bring his judgment against those who oppose him. You can be sure of that. But that’s not what’s in store for you and me. Jesus says, **“Then the righteous, believers clothed with Christ’s righteousness, will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father”** (Matthew 13:43). I like the picture. The cloud is hiding the children of God. But the time is coming when the cloud will disappear, and we will clearly see Christ’s believers shine like the sun.

My friends, there is no greater joy for you and for me than to know exactly where we are going. We will experience unending joy. We will be in the presence of God and see him face-to-face. We will have an experience of joy that is beyond human language.

But that's also something you have right now. There is such joy knowing right now, right now, where we stand because of our Savior Jesus. Because he has removed our sin from us, we stand as his wheat, not weeds. We will be welcomed into his barn, not burned.

Oh, to be sure, that day is coming. Jesus says it's coming soon. The final harvest is right around the corner. Oh, people for the ages have mocked and scoffed. "Yeah right. Where is this coming that you proclaim? Everything has been going on in the same way for a very long time. When is God coming back?"

The apostle Peter reminds us that God is not slow in keeping his promise. Rather, he is patient. Why? Because he does not want anybody to perish. He doesn't want anybody to suffer eternal agony in hell.

Thank God that there is still time to rescue many from the torment that awaits the unbeliever. The owner told the servants to not dig out the weeds among the wheat. Here's why. **"Because when you gather up the weeds, you might pull up the wheat along with them"** (Matthew 13:29).

Shortly before these words, the apostles **James and John** wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy the *Samaritans* for not welcoming Christ into their city. But if you recall, after his resurrection, Jesus sent **Philip** to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Christ to them. We hear that **"With one mind, the crowds paid close attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the miraculous signs he was doing"** (Acts 8:6). Eventually, many of them were baptized. They came to faith.

What would have happened if James and John would have pulled the weeds in Samaria? Many people would have been lost to destruction. Do you see the patience and mercy of God?

Or maybe you remember Saul from Tarsus. He was on the road to hell while he was seeking to take captive all who confessed Jesus as their Savior. Then Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus. And what happened? Did Jesus pull out Saul the weed? Did he burn Saul up?

No, he changed Saul's life. He brought him to faith. Not only that, but Saul became Paul, one of the most fervent missionaries to ever live. Paul became so eager to bring the message of Christ crucified and risen to people. He knew it was only through Christ that people would be spared. God changed Saul the weed to Paul the wheat and used him to bring the saving message to many more people, including you and me.

My friends, we have that same message. We have the message of Jesus which has the power to save the lost, to heal the wounded, to strengthen the weak, and to keep us all in the faith. God has given us the one thing that can change people from weeds to wheat: the Word of God. Just look at how Jesus ends this section: **"Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear"** (Matthew 13:43). Now is the time to hear. Now is the time to speak the truth in love. Somebody is waiting, not to be pulled, but to be changed. Changed from a weed to a wheat. You might not yet see it. But be patient as God does his work in the field. **Wait patiently for the harvest.** Amen.