

Isaiah 44:6-8; Psalm 86:11-17; Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

“Live with hope”

*Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

It's not unusual to hear the words, “Pastor, let's not get into the weeds on this.” Yet the weeds are often the heart of the matter. Jesus' parable about the wheat and the weeds reminds us there is no place without life's weeds, issues, and problems. The parable of the wheat and weeds reveals a world continually invaded by evil.

Jesus' parable is social, moral and economic. The first thing we notice is that Jesus is talking not about good and evil commingled in each of us, but rather, about good and evil in the world. The field in the parable is this world, containing both good and evil, wheat and weeds, mixed together. The wheat exists in the world as a sign of good amidst constant evil.

In the parable, the roots of the wheat and weeds are so tangled that the gardeners are told not to uproot the weeds lest the wheat also be uprooted. Jesus is encouraging us to see that the roots of social evils are not always clearly seen; the roots of good are always tangled with evil. Though the wheat and the weeds will be separated in a harvest of God's future judgment, Jesus' parable is meant to give us hope today as we struggle with the social, moral and economic evils of this world.

What is this weed that Jesus spoke about? It is a plant named “darnel” or “false wheat.” It looks like wheat, but is poisonous. Like weeds which look like wheat, evil often masquerades as good. Appearing to be wholesome, evil deceives us until it has poisoned everything. The point of the parable is if it were not for the good wheat, evil weeds would poison the entire field.

The scope of Jesus' parable is the entire world, a reminder that God sows good seed throughout the world. God's children are to live and grow in this world as good seed, as wheat that feeds the world. Though we trust in a future harvest, Jesus' parable suggests that we are to simply live as good seed, as wheat feeding and sustaining the world against evil.

God continually scatters good seed throughout the world, gathering it into one body, the church. God continually scatters good seed, gathering it into bread – the bread of heaven for the life of the world. In the Eucharist, we receive this bread in our empty hands becoming God's wheat and bread for the world. You are the living seeds that become wheat, that become bread for others. You are God's wheat, a sign of hope against the evil of this world.

Who hasn't wished for a world free of evil? Yet as Paul writes today, “*we consider that the*

*sufferings of the present time are not worth comparing to the glory about to be revealed to us.*” Paul is talking about both hope and suffering with Christ, about redemptive suffering with in the battle of good and evil in this world. God’s glory is revealed in us as we suffer with Christ for others in this world.

Paul’s words about “*the sufferings of the present time,*” also point us to the present moment of each day. We live in the everyday of moral and economic choices and decisions. We live in the everyday of good and evil, moments when we can help others. By suffering in the present time, we learn to suffer as Christ with others. To overlook suffering in the midst of evil is to overlook Christ. To overlook Christ is to overlook redemptive love, always suffering for this world. Your life has meaning – live as a sign of hope and life in this often broken world.

Jesus’ parable is sets us squarely in the moral choices of everyday life. We live among the weeds as a sign of life in a world choked by evil. The everyday of work, shopping, paying bills, preparing meals, and caring for others is also the everyday of homelessness, poverty, hunger, and despair. This is where we live. The everyday is the present moment when people are continually faced with choices between good and evil. Jesus calls you children of the kingdom; he calls you good seed and wheat so that God’s glory might be revealed in you as you suffer with Christ for this world.

My response to “Pastor, let’s not get into the weeds” is that we have no alternative. Jesus’ parable is a reminder that there are no shortcuts to God’s kingdom. We cannot retreat to a mountaintop far removed from the world to live as mystics, and we cannot use religion as a personal escape from the social evils of our world. We are planted in the world following the one who came down from the mountain to suffer and struggle with evil in this world. We follow the one who emptied himself of privilege to struggle with evil in our sinful systems and structures of this world. He calls us good seed and wheat so that we might feed the world with hope and life.

Jesus’ choice of the symbol of wheat is powerful because wheat, like many grains, is truly life-giving. Grains not only feed the world, they become Christ’s body in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, we receive bread that strengthens us to live into the everyday of this world. Partaking of his body, we become his holy body for the good of the world.

Anyone listening to Jesus’ parable, would have understood Jesus’ reference to Roman law which made it illegal to sow false wheat in a neighbor’s field, thereby usurping the neighbor’s economic livelihood. Jesus chose the symbol of wheat because grains contain a moral and economic choice for the good of the world. In Jesus’ time as well as ours, people continue to threaten the world’s

supply of wheat and grain. Jesus' parable speaks to us today because evil always seeks to create hunger; evil always seeks to force good people into moral and economic compromise with the power of evil. Evil tangles its roots choking the good so that it might control the field. Today, as in the parable, evil wants to control the entire field, evil wants power over both the wheat and the field, not for food, but for its own power and empty glory in this world.

We are a church that seeks to be a sign for good in this world. Each week, we are fed from this table so that we might feed others, so that might act for good in this world. Each week, we welcome those who suffer into this church. We welcome AA and those who struggle with addiction to find God's grace and life in this place. Each week we feed and offer hope through our Soup Kitchen. Each week, many of you donate food for Loaves and Fishes as a sign of hope to those who are hungry. St. Mark's Men's Group has also begun a new emergency food pantry to respond to the hungry who come to the church during the week. The parable of the wheat and the weeds encourages us to live as good seed in this world by feeding and helping others.

Each week, you leave this place fed and forgiven so that you might forgive and feed others. Live with hope, so that others might have hope. Live as God's wheat, so that no one goes hungry.

You are good seed scattered in the world to feed and to give hope. Amen.