

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 – Pentecost 8 – The Parable of the Weeds – July 19, 2026

+In Nomine Iesu+

We all have things that get to us—things we can't tolerate. The classic, of course, from childhood is fingernails on a chalkboard. When we are at Higher Things—at Evening Prayer—they use small amounts of incense. For some—even though it is actually hypoallergenic—they still cough, can't sing, and can't breathe comfortably.

There is an actual diagnosis for those who can't handle loud eating. It's called misophonia. Sounds like chewing, lip-smacking, or heavy breathing trigger intense emotional or physical reactions. For me, it's styrofoam. I hate the sound as it grates against the side of a cardboard box. The discomfort is palpable.

And today, I want to talk about living with tension. Now, Lutherans have the best theology for this. We distinguish between the already and the not yet—passive and active righteousness—law and Gospel—the sacred and the secular—theology from above and from below. In our Gospel reading, Jesus calls us to tolerate dissonance as the kingdom of God comes into the world.

Our reading is *The Parable of the Weeds*. Sometimes it is called *The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds*. And that is the tension—between the wheat and the weeds.

This parable is addressed to the crowd. And like last week, no one understands it. Remember that Jesus' parables are a form of judgment. They cut to the heart. They reveal truth to some, but veil it from others. They cloud God's Word in mystery. They require a divine interpreter. The Disciples even have to ask Jesus what He means.

Last week, in *The Parable of the Sower*, the Disciples did just that. And Jesus compared the kingdom of God to this wonderful seed planted in four different kinds of soils. The results are sometimes terribly disappointing. In some people, growth is snatched up or snuffed out by the devil—by persecution—by the cares of this world—and the deceitfulness of riches.

But in others, the results are amazing—as the seed of God's Word bears abundant fruit in the hearts and lives of God's people. God's Word brings repentance, regeneration, renewal, and endurance. God shows steadfast love—as we hear in the Ten Commandments—to thousands who love Him and keep His commandments.

Through all of this, *The Parable of the Sower* still contains good news—even as all of these types of soil are present in the crowd. The parable says the kingdom of God will advance even though many hearts remain hard.

Some people are consumed with the cares of this world, but the kingdom still advances. Some only show a superficial interest in Christ, but the kingdom still advances. Some are deceived and prefer another theology—and yet the kingdom still advances. It always bears fruit.

The Parable of the Weeds has a different task and a new thought. This is another kingdom parable. It serves to tell the nature of things in the kingdom of God. Christ has come. He is King. And that changes everything. And with all the parables, if we want to interpret well, we want to look for Christ. And we want to look for that unexpected element.

Now, we heard the parable and the interpretation that Jesus offers. Again, the Disciples ask Jesus to interpret. That is super helpful. And the basic thrust is this. While the righteous and the wicked grow together, they can be indistinguishable for a time. It will sometimes be difficult to tell believers from unbelievers. He warns His servants not to judge prematurely by assuming they can distinguish. The field is the world—and not the Church—and both exist together simultaneously until the end.

The kingdom comes subtly—even quietly—like seed planted in the ground. It comes in words. And some receive it rightly. True wheat does grow—even with weeds all around. Eventually God will separate the righteous from the wicked—the wheat from the weeds. The wicked go to a place of frustration and torment—weeping and gnashing of teeth. And He will give the righteous their inheritance and take them to Himself.

I hope you noticed the tension of this story. Evil grows right alongside the good. Not just in theory, but in people and in the world. The parable explains a mystery that is happening right there among Jesus' hearers. It explains the malice of the Jewish religious leaders who reject Jesus—and plot to destroy Him and His work. And we marvel at such opposition—such treachery and confusion. There is tension in the world between those who follow Christ—and those who do not. We live for different things. We have different fruit.

As we listen to Jesus explain this parable, the seed isn't the Word. And this is important to note. And let me to switch from a collective to the plural. The seeds are the sons and daughters of the kingdom. The seeds are the children of God that He has placed into the field.

Again, with this parable, the field is not the Church. Many have interpreted the parable in this manner. They note, and rightly enough, the visible Church—the Church as it gathers—can always have those among it who don't believe. The world seeps into the visible Church sometimes.

Our own Augsburg Confession says as much. "Strictly speaking, the Church is the congregation of saints and true believers. However...many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled within them in this life." And this is nothing new.

Remember that in Jesus' day, the disciples, the crowds, and even the Pharisees were all part of the visible people of God that was ancient Israel. And yet so many of them didn't actually believe. The people of God were never defined merely by a national heritage—it was always about faith—all the way back to Abraham.

Our experience is often very much the same. There are plenty of people who claim to be Christian but have no idea what that means. They don't have faith in Christ. They don't confess the historic Christian faith. They secretly hold onto false doctrine. They treasure their own immoral ways. They are connected to the world rather than to Christ—regardless of what they say with their Church affiliation. Being on a membership list won't save anyone.

And so, there is a call for discernment for us who are here today. The kingdom of heaven is at hand. All of us are to repent and believe the Gospel. We need to know and embrace our identity as wheat. In 2 Peter 1, Peter calls upon us to "be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure."

Paul builds on this in 2 Corinthians 13, “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?— unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”

Now is the day embrace your identity as a follower of Christ. Be loyal to Him and His kingdom above all things. Confess the faith of the Holy Scriptures. Know and hold onto our creeds and confessions. Look to Him for eternal life and salvation. Let Him define your priorities—your life—your eternal future. Sing, pray, praise, and give thanks.

But here in the parable, the field is the world. And this switches the focus for us a bit. And it gives us a new vocation. In Holy Baptism—received in faith—we have been made citizens of a new kingdom. We are now members of the kingdom of heaven—even as we are sojourners and exiles in the world. We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

On earth, this is the one holy Christian and apostolic Church. That invisible Church by definition gathers around Word and Sacrament. Our confessions define not only where we can find the Church—but also the nature of those who are its members. The true Church consists of those who have true faith in Christ—born again—born from above—following Jesus—all by grace through faith.

But Jesus scatters us throughout the world as well—again, the field is the world. In a sense, we take the confession of His truth with us wherever we go. We have a mission as we walk out that door—a mission to confess Christ. We are living examples of His truth. We live in such a way that we give glory to God. We reflect His light, His image, His kingdom to the world.

In the world, Jesus says, we engage in this cosmic struggle between God and the devil—between good and evil. When Jesus penetrates this dark world with His gospel and with His people, the devil will resist at every turn. He has his agents too. We might even know one or two. He has his own kingdom. There will be tension. And we have got to be able to live with that and stay loyal to Christ.

But I want you to notice the outcome. We aren’t suggesting that the forces of good and evil are somehow equal. The kingdom of heaven will be victorious. It will be realized in the new creation. It will endure forever.

And all those who are sons and daughters of the world, all those who have set themselves against Christ, actively or passively, will share in the world’s fate. We still believe in hell around here. The lake of fire is the final resting place for those who continue in sin and reject Christ. They will get what they want—they will spend eternity as they have chosen—in separation from God.

And so, at the close of the age, this conflict—this tension that we live with in this world—will be resolved. When the patience of God finally comes to an end, He will send out His angels. And they will begin their work by gathering and binding the weeds. They will remove all evil—every cause of stumbling, every cause of temptation—from the earth.

And after this separation of weeds from wheat, “The righteous will shine like the sun.” The temptations of the world—and of the sinful nature—that lead us to sin—will

melt away when we see Jesus face to face. We will be fully and finally conformed into His image.

Until then, Jesus urges patience. He calls us to live with this tension between wheat and weeds. This is the message of the parable for His own. Patience. We have to wait. “Let both 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.” This is probably not our favorite word—*wait*.

This is a frequent refrain in the Psalter. In Psalm 27, we hear, “Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!” In Psalm 37, we even hear God’s resolution between the wheat and the weeds, “Wait for the LORD and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off.”

For now—His kingdom has come—and evil remains. The causes of evil have not yet been fully uprooted. And His patience is all about repentance. And even though the kingdom grows, there will be weeds on the last day. Hell will be occupied. The road to destruction is wide and many will find it. But it need not be that way with us.

We turn to the Lord for knowledge and wisdom and strength. He brings His grace and we seek it. And we refuse to succumb to the evils that grow right alongside us. This is what it means to be citizens of His kingdom. We reject the ways of the world. And we look at life as His people. He grants us a new identity. He grants us new purposes.

It is as Paul says in Romans 12, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

While we wait, we trust God and tolerate the dissonances and tension of life in the world. We know that the Lord has reasons for delaying His final judgment. His Gospel is still spreading. And as His sons and daughters, we are all wrapped up with the vocation of being His own, and serving Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.

So, even as the works of evil linger—and they do—it doesn’t mean that God has failed. Instead, we have a call to patience. We call the world to repent and believe. We invite the world to come under the Lordship of Christ—just like us. We wait for Him to finish His work.

And we rejoice in the victories of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, in His resurrection and ascension, and in the promises of His soon return. And it all ends with the righteous shining like the sun in the kingdom of our Father. This is *The Parable of the Weeds*. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+