

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Growing in the Sonlight

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

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(Proper 11-Sunday between July 17 and 23 Inclusive)

24He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; 25but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. 26So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 27And the slaves of the household came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' 28He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 29But he replied, 'No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. 30Let them both 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.'" 36Then 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." 37He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; 38the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, 39and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and evil-doers,

42and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"

DIAGNOSIS: Weed whacking

Step 1 – Initial Diagnosis: What kind of seed are you?

If only our wheat field had no weeds – this seems to be one of the perennial cries of humanity. We rightly chaff at the enemy's work around us, but then we also feel we have the right to sort ourselves into the good and bad categories – and, of course, "we" are always the wheat and "they" are always the weeds.

Step 2 – Advanced Diagnosis: Horticultural hubris

But when we make these distinctions, we are usurping God's agenda for our lives. We are setting ourselves up as arbiters of good and evil, and keepers of the divine timetable. We are trying to decide the fate of the field and its crop, not trusting the owner (God) to plow, plant and harvest as God sees fit.

Step 3 – Final Diagnosis: Uprooted

But God does not allow anyone else to do what is his alone to do. The harvest time, the reapers and their work are appointed by God with no help from the plants. In fact, when we assert our agenda against God's, the end of the age is grim indeed. Uprooted and burned, we will be left outside the kingdom with weeping and gnashing of teeth.

PROGNOSIS: Let 'em grow

Step 4 – Initial Prognosis: New roots for the world

This kingdom parable isn't about wheat and weeds fighting it out in the field of life, but about Jesus' entry into history on his

redemption agenda that changed the field forever. He allowed himself to be uprooted, collected and burned on the cross for our sake. He took our weedy existence and gave us his resurrected life, the full golden head of grain, that is the first fruits of the kingdom of the Father.

Step 5 – Advanced Prognosis: Growing until the harvest

When we trust Jesus' timetable for the kingdom and his mercy agenda rather than our self-appointed criteria, we don't have to worry about who is growing next to us and can focus on keeping our faces turned toward the Son.

Step 6 – Final Prognosis: Shining like the sun/son

And with our faces turned toward him, his light becomes our light and we are able to shine in the world, glowing and reflecting the beauty of his countenance to all that we meet. We no longer need scramble to secure our place in the field, but are free to help the ones around us turn their faces toward him as well. Together we grow and though it's not always easy waiting for the fulfillment of the harvest, God is always right on time.