

Sermon Text – Sunday, July 19, 2026 – Pastor Paula Kraus

1st Reading: Genesis 28:10-19; 2nd Reading: Romans 8:12-25
Scripture for Message: Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43 “Patient Hope”

Our scripture reading begins as Jesus tells the crowds around him many things using parables to teach about the kingdom of heaven. With his parables Jesus both confuses and informs, different audiences inevitably hear different messages. Jesus meant his parables to be challenging and thought provoking. In our reading this morning Jesus tells a parable about wheat and weeds or wheat and tares, one that is well-known to our ears. I wonder however if we can listen again and think about what this parable can do to provoke and refine today.

Jesus uses parables to talk to the crowds about the “kingdom of heaven” and maybe that is because humanity does not have the vocabulary to understand and / or adequately describe God's realm. Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a variety of images recognizable to his followers. He uses parables that equate the kingdom to a mustard seed, a merchant seeking pearls, a man hiring laborers, and in what we just read, a person sowing good seed in his field. There is both good news and bad news in this parable; let's start with the bad news.

One thing that I noticed, probably for the first time from all the countless times I have read this parable. Is in verse twenty-five, “while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat.” The enemy waited until no one was watching, sneaking into the field under the cover of darkness and then running away. I don't think the enemy Jesus talks about is your next-door neighbor trying to mess with you – this enemy is a cosmic enemy sowing seeds of despair and regret in addition to seeds that cause separation from God. In other parables Jesus warns his followers to be alert and remain awake because you don't know when the thief will come, the thief that will sow the evil seeds of destruction when everybody is asleep.

The bad news in this scripture is that we cannot “pull the weeds” or the evil seeds without uprooting the wheat or the good seeds. Matthew uses a Greek word for the “weeds” in his retelling of Jesus' parable. That Greek word refers to a type of weed indistinguishable from the wheat until both reach maturity. The weed that Matthew refers to would be poisonous to anyone who might consume it and might be harmful to the good seed. Since we won't be able to make the distinction from God's

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standards we must leave things alone, let nature take her course and wait for the final harvest.

Jesus gives his followers an explanation that invokes images of a final judgment where evil and good are separated for eternity. Judgment where the weeds that grow from the seed of the enemy will experience “weeping and gnashing of teeth” or regret and despair while the good seed will shine like the sun/Son in the Father’s kingdom. Until the time of final judgment we must continue to live in a world occupied with both good and evil, wheat and weeds.

This parable reminds us of who the reapers are and they are not us. Good and evil will continue to grow together until harvest time when the reapers that God sends will sort things out. That’s the way of the world, good and evil grow together in the world and inside of each of us. We can refer back to Jesus’ sermon on the mount and hear that our Father in heaven “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”

Paul’s message to us reminds us that “All have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God.” God will fulfill God’s purpose for our world. It’s not our job to tell God who’s in or who’s out. Knowing that God does not abandon the beloved creation, I can’t imagine that anyone we point to is beyond God’s reach. The role of the church, this church including each of you is to point to God’s kingdom. To be a hopeful witness to the coming of God’s reign rather than a judge of God’s creation.

Douglas Hare, in his commentary on Matthew writes, “Perhaps Jesus used this parable to point out that human beings are not competent to make the kind of judgments implied in separating wheat from tares.”¹ For me that is the good news, we do not have to choose but are free to let God sort things out. Our job as Christians and followers of Jesus is to love everyone – bring the good news of Jesus Christ to everyone because we don’t know which is the wheat or which is weeds. The unfortunate truth is that if we think we know for certain who falls into the good category and who falls into the evil category, then maybe we are on the list of the latter and not the former. “Judge not lest ye also be judged.”

There is an important message of grace in this parable. I ask myself, does Jesus mean that there will be “children of the evil one” for whom

¹ Hare, Douglas R.A. *Matthew: Interpretation – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. WJK. 1993. Print. p155

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there is no redemption? I wonder if the potential for good and evil, wheat and weeds is present in all of humanity. I don't know the answer to that question; I guess it might be true that some will never accept Jesus and will never believe in a God that forgives and offers us "another way." I have hope though and I see hope in this parable.

I hope that where separation of the wheat and weeds is graciously postponed until the final harvest, it may even be possible for weeds to become wheat. That, however, will not be possible at all if we decide ahead of time who the weeds are and treat them as weeds instead of possible wheat that can be harvested. Paul's message to us from the passage in Romans is that "in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." I choose to wait patiently for what I, in my humanness, cannot see in others or in myself to take blossom according to God's plan, even though I recognize my impatience with current affairs.

This is the good news for the church – rather than seeing the mission of the church as "fixing" or "cleaning up" the world according to our passionately held agendas, we are free to proclaim and live the good news of God's reign for the sake of a messy world that appears for many to be a hopeless cause.² This is a message of hope that reapers will sort out the evil seed from the good seed at the end of age, and we won't be responsible for that. Even though it does not appear that good always wins, even though we lament the existence of evil in our world we have God's promise that the "Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers."

So, if the mission of the church is not to fix or clean up the world – what is the church's mission? It is clearly stated in the mission statement of this congregation – "The mission of the Sayre Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is to honor God, share the love of the Christ, and change lives ministering grace and peace." If we think we must uproot the evil seed, we might just get caught up in an entanglement that becomes harmful to ourselves and to the good seed God has planted. We are not competent to discern good seed from evil seed according to God's standards.

² Michael Pasquarello III. "Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43: Connecting the Reading with the World" *Connections Year A, Vol 3*. Eds. Green, Long, Powery, Rigby, & Sharp. WJK. 2020. Print. pp171-172

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Jesus has told us that the 'kingdom of heaven' is at hand – the church's mission is to show the world what living in the kingdom looks like. Our mission is to live as if we know we are living in the kingdom as part of the family of God. "God's kingdom is present in the world, which is the field where God's people are planted to live, work, pray, suffer, struggle, serve, witness, and finally, in God's good time, surrender their lives wholly to God."²

So here we are, in God's kingdom, living side by side with sin and evil seed. We are blessed with the freedom to not gather weeds. We are blessed, by the grace of God, to wait with patient hope for the reapers to gather the righteous ones into God's barn. The key verse in this passage says ". . . the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels." Believe that to be true, live with the weeds and be the light for the world to recognize the kingdom, live as if you know you are a beloved child of God. In this world with chaos and confusion around each corner, wait with patient hope for all of God's promises to reach fulfillment and know that it is not up to you to gather the weeds.