

Sunday, July 19, 2020  
St Andrew's Gananoque  
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43  
Sermon: Living with Weeds

In our passage from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus has been speaking from a boat to the large crowd that had gathered, using parables to explain to them about the Kingdom of heaven. The parable from today's passage speaks of not one but two very different sowers different seed, and different plants.

Let's face it. We live with weeds. They are a part of our daily life, but are mostly seen during the growing season. We prepare our gardens in the spring by cultivating the soil and removing the dead plants, hoping to prevent weeds growing up where we plant our flowers or vegetables. We have to maintain our gardens during the summer to ensure that the ever-present weeds do not take over our gardens. Unfortunately, we can make a slight miscalculation when planting certain flowers or plants which can also take over our gardens!

Who here has done this? I have to admit that I am guilty of this not once but twice in my gardening endeavors. The first surprise was when we bought a small, harmless chocolate mint plant. I thought we would plant it nicely in a corner of our flower bed and be able to contain it. For anyone who has grown mint, you realise that this is just not how mint chooses to grow!

Needless to say, I successfully removed the offending weed and didn't lose too much of the lawn as a result! My next miscalculation involved a plant that I bought at a church yard sale. Purple violets are what I believe I chose, and again I thought it would look nice in our garden.

It did... but I was not aware of how this plant made its way around the garden and kept me busy just trying to get ahead of the spreading plants! Lesson learned!

Our parable from today's passage speaks of a farmer who sows his field with wheat. He could have chosen one of his servants to sow the field, but instead has chosen to complete the task himself. We also read that not only is he sowing seed, but it is described as good seed. With good seed selected you expect a successful planting and bountiful harvest. So in essence we have the landowner taking the time and effort to plant the seed and also selecting and sowing good seed. We also see a second sowing of this field, one that is done maliciously. The weeds that are sown will grow up amongst the wheat. The bad seed that has been sown is what is known as darnel – a plant that looks very similar to wheat. The evil individual has intentionally chosen to sow the weeds and is attempting to undo the good that has been done by the landowner. The results are immediately known to the hearer of this parable, but in fact would take a long time for the effects of this sowing of bad seed to be recognized.

A very surprising and confusing thing here –designed to shock its listeners into thinking about things differently - is why the growth of the wheat and the weeds should be virtually indistinguishable from one another and all growing together in one place until the harvest.

The servants have a conversation with the landowner and are just as puzzled as he is about the presence of the weeds in this field planted with good seed. It is interesting to note that the seed was not sown in neat rows, but is scattered along the ground. The weeds would grow among the wheat and would share much of the same space in the ground. When the servants offer to remove the weeds, the landowner offers a better solution.

Were the servants to pull up the weeds, they would end up uprooting much of the wheat, and further causing more damage by walking through the fields to get at the weeds. The landowner suggests waiting till harvest time to separate the wheat from the weeds and collecting and destroying the weeds by fire to prevent future weeds. The wheat, once separated will be gathered and stored in the barn.

It would have been an interesting parable with many possible lessons learned had it ended here. We read in verse 36 that Jesus leaves the crowds outside and enters a home. Once inside the house, the disciples ask Jesus to explain the illustration of the wheat and the weeds. Jesus identifies himself as the farmer who sows the good seeds in the field of the world. The wheat represents the people of the Kingdom, while the weeds are the people belonging to Satan. The enemy who sowed the weeds among the wheat is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the world with the angels acting as reapers who will separate the weeds or evil people who will be thrown into the furnace and subsequently burned. The godly in comparison will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Wow! This is not an easy message to hear! We don't hear many messages on God's final judgement, let alone one of punishment for the evil people. What can we learn from this parable? One of the important things to remember about our parable today is that we are the good seed planted in this world and live together with weeds. That is a fact. But we also have to be aware that we are not to judge others around us. It is quite easy for us to identify weeds in our garden, and on our lawns and we may have the tendency to do this with the people around us. You may have had a conflict or disagreement with your neighbor, with someone down the street, or see someone who looks evil, who in our estimation looks like a weed.

We may even find ourselves seeing people who choose not to wear a mask or not observing social distancing as a weed. We have to be cautious to not judge. Like the parable we have heard today, the weeds are virtually indistinguishable from the wheat until the time of harvest. By judging people, we ourselves can be damaged in the same way that the wheat can be damaged by uprooting the weeds. Consider how your life and relationship with God is affected when you judge others and hold grudges in your heart. This is a lesson that I had to learn myself. I can't help but think of how much time and energy I have lost by holding onto that grudge or judgement and how that also affected my relationship with God.

I am sure that you would agree that bitterness, holding grudges, and anger can be very tiring and takes a lot of our energy. If we instead spend that time and energy in prayer, how much easier and fruitful would our lives be? This parable tells us that we don't have to worry about judging other's works, or decide whether they are weeds or wheat. The angels have been given that task. We are given the task to continue to grow and bear fruit for the Kingdom of God, and we have the opportunity to pray for those around us who may be weeds. With prayer and sharing the love of God, they too can become wheat and bear goodness and love.

Let's take every opportunity this week to watch for those we meet who may be desperate to hear the Good News and pray for opportunities to share God's love with them. The next time you see a weed, take a moment to see the beauty there and remember that it is through God's grace that we have been changed from weeds to wheat.

Amen.

