

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
COMPASS, PA

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Sermon: “*God’s Field—God’s Harvest*”

Isaiah 44:6-8	(There is no god besides our God)
Psalms 86:11-17	(Teach us Your way Lord, for Your mercy is great)
Romans 8:12-25	(Hope that is seen is not hope; we hope for what we don’t see)
St. Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43	(Jesus teaches the parable of the weeds)

In Matthew, Chapter 13, Jesus tells a story that feels familiar to anyone who has ever farmed or planted a garden. A farmer sows good seed in his field. He does what is right. He prepares the ground, scatters the seed, and expects a good harvest. But while everyone is sleeping, an enemy comes and sows weeds among the wheat. When the plants begin to grow, the servants notice the problem and ask the question many of us ask when we look at the world: “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?”

That question is not only agricultural. It is spiritual. It is moral. It is personal. If God is good, why is there evil? If Christ is Lord, why does injustice remain? If the Kingdom of Heaven has come near, why do cruelty, falsehood, violence, pride, and suffering still grow in the same field as faith, mercy, truth, and love? Weeds are aggressive. They absorb water and the soil’s nutrients faster than cultivated plants. Just so, it may seem that evil is on the rise, gobbling up all the goodness in God’s field.

However, Jesus does not leave the meaning of this parable to guesswork. When His disciples ask Him to explain it, He says, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world.” That means this world is not abandoned territory. It is not ultimately ruled by chaos, chance, or evil. The field belongs to Christ.

This is the first comfort of the parable. Before Jesus tells us about the enemy, He tells us about the sower—as He did in last Sunday’s gospel lesson. Before He speaks of weeds, He speaks of good seed. Before we are asked to face the reality of evil, we are reminded of the sovereignty and goodness of the Son of Man, who is God incarnate.

There is much in the world that is overgrown with ugly thorns and choked by poisonous vines, but the world is still God’s field. There is much in our time that grieves us, but history is still moving toward God’s harvest. There is much in our own hearts that disturbs us, but Christ has not stopped sowing His kingdom-life among us.

Jesus is frank about the reality of evil. “An enemy has done this,” the Master says. In this explanation, Jesus identifies the enemy as the devil. Our Christian faith is not naïve. It does not pretend that evil is merely a misunderstanding, a lack of education, or a temporary inconvenience. Evil *is* real. Sin *is* destructive. Our enemy, the devil, works overtime, using deception, sabotage, and imitation. The weeds in this parable likely resemble the wheat throughout much of their growth. That is part of the danger. Evil often disguises itself as wisdom, freedom, success, or even righteousness. The enemy does not always attack the field by burning it down. Sometimes he works quietly, secretly, and subtly, sowing what looks harmless until its fruit is revealed.

But notice this: the enemy can sow weeds, but he cannot own the field. He can disrupt the crop, but he cannot determine the harvest. He can imitate, but he cannot create the Kingdom. The devil is real, but he is not equal to God. Evil is present, but it is not permanent. The enemy acts in the night, but the harvest comes in the Son-Light.

In this story, the servants want immediate judgement. They ask, “Do you want us to go and gather [the weeds]?” An understandable question. We know that impulse. When we perceive that a wrong has been done, we want it fixed as soon as possible. When we see hypocrisy, we want it exposed immediately. When we encounter injustice, we want God to act *now*. There is a righteous longing in that desire; we should not be indifferent to evil.

Yet the Master says, “No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.” This is not permission to tolerate evil or excuse sin. Rather, it is a warning against taking God’s final judgment into our own hands. Human beings are often poor judges of the whole field. We see what appears on the surface; God sees the roots. We see a moment; God sees the end from the beginning.

For instance, how many times have we misjudged someone? How many times have we written off a person whom God was still in the process of growing? How many times have we assumed that we ourselves were wheat without noticing the weeds of pride, resentment, greed, anxiety, or bitterness growing in our own hearts? While the Church is called to witness, to love, to discipline wisely, to pursue justice, and to resist evil, even the Church is not called to become the final judge of souls. That role belongs to Christ alone.

The Master's desire is to "Let both of them grow together until the harvest." In a mixed field, the wheat is not called to obsess over the weeds, but to become what the sower planted it to be. In a world of conflict, grow in peace. In a culture of hatred, grow in love. In an age of despair, grow in hope. In a time of compromise, grow in holiness. In a field where evil is present, bear the fruit of the kingdom. Pray for grace to grow in patience, humility, and trust—the good plants Jesus exemplifies.

The question for us is not only, "Why are there weeds?" But also, "What kind of fruit am I bearing?" Am I growing in mercy? Am I becoming more truthful? Am I more patient than I used to be? Am I quicker to forgive? Am I more attentive to the poor, the lonely, the wounded, the sick, and the forgotten? The presence of weeds around us does not excuse the absence of fruit within us.

Jesus says the harvest is "the end of the age." This parable is about patience, but it is not vague. God's mercy is not forgetfulness. God's delay is not indifference. As we read in 2 Peter 3:9 (CEV), "The Lord isn't slow about keeping his promises . . . In fact, God is patient, because he wants everyone to turn from sin and no one to be lost." Still, a day *is* coming when all that is hidden will be revealed, all that is false will be exposed, and all that is evil will be removed. We hear sobering truth as Jesus speaks seriously of the coming judgment. We should not soften His warning. There are real consequences for rejecting God, causing others to stumble morally, and giving ourselves over to evil. The harvest reminds us that all of life is accountable to God.

But for the righteous—those who believe in, love, and obey Christ—Jesus gives a promise of breathtaking beauty: "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." This story does not end with weeds. It ends with light. It ends with the Father's kingdom. It ends with God's people shining, healed and whole, reflecting the glory of the One who planted them.

The good news of this parable is in the patient mercy of the sower. Christ does not abandon His field. Christ does not uproot anyone too soon. He allows time for repentance, growth, endurance, and grace. Because this same Jesus entered the field Himself. The Son of Man did not remain distant from the world's weeds. He came among sinners and walked among the broken. He was rejected by the self-righteous, bore the crown of thorns, and was crucified between criminals. At the cross, the judgment we deserved fell on Him, but through His resurrection, a new harvest was begun.

So, our hope is not that we can grow as pure wheat through our own strength, or by our own merit. Our hope is that Christ is able to make us children of the Kingdom. He forgives sinners. He transforms hearts. He grows what He plants. He will bring His harvest home.

Jesus ends with a call: "Let anyone with ears listen." Listen, then, to the comfort: the field belongs to God. Listen to the warning: the harvest *will* come. Listen to the command: do not seize God's judgment seat. Listen to the invitation: grow as children of the Kingdom.

When you are discouraged by the weeds in others or the world, do not despair. When you are troubled by the weeds in the Church, do not lose faith. When you are convicted by the weeds in your own heart, do not hide from Jesus and His love. Come to the Sower and ask for forgiveness. Receive His mercy. Trust His patience. And bear His fruit. The day of God's harvest *is* coming. Evil will *not* have the final word. The enemy will *not* own the field. The weeds will *not* choke out the Kingdom. Christ will gather His people, and "the righteous will shine like the sun" in the realm of our Heavenly Father.

Let us pray:

O Lord, our God, You have planted us in this world. Give us the strength to stand steadfast in Your field even when we feel crowded by the weeds of doubt, hardship, pain, and worldly distractions. Grant us the wisdom to understand that You are still cultivating our hearts. When the weeds of life grow tall and threaten to choke our spirits, let Your Holy Spirit be the stake to which we cling. Protect our roots from the storms of anxiety and direct our branches toward Your Light. Help us to bear good fruit, reflecting Your love and mercy to those around us. And grant us the patience to trust Your perfect timing for the Ultimate Harvest. In Christ's Holy Name we pray. *Amen.*