

“How God Wants Us to Deal with Weeds among the Wheat”

(Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 – Pentecost 9 – July 26, 2026)

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 – ²⁴*Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. ²⁶But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. ²⁷So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ ²⁸He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ ²⁹But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’” ... ³⁶Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” ³⁷He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. ³⁹The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴²and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”*

Dear Redeemed in Christ Jesus:

In the parable, Jesus pictures the world as a field in which He sows His good seed, producing the children of His Kingdom. These are all believers, who make up His true Church on earth. But the devil also sows his evil seed, producing the children of his kingdom. Often these are intermingled with true Christians, like weeds among wheat. At times it is hard to tell the difference, for we cannot look into a person’s heart like God, to see if he has true saving faith in Christ. Humanly speaking, it is impossible to separate the two completely without damaging the good. On Judgment Day, God will separate unbelievers from believers like weeds from wheat. Meanwhile, let us consider: **“How God Wants Us to Deal with Weeds among the Wheat.”**

1) The devil seeks to sow evil seed among God’s good seed

Originally in the field of the world, God sowed only good seed. He created Adam and Eve holy and sinless. Every human was to be born a true child of God in Eden’s perfection. But the enemy came and sowed his seed and ruined God’s good creation. Due to Satan’s lies and temptation, weeds began to grow in Paradise. They have been filling

the world ever since. Due to the fall, all people are born in a spiritual condition like weeds – as sinners before the holy God, who deserve to be uprooted and burned in the fire of His judgment. For instead of producing the good fruit of righteousness and purity that God desires, like weeds we have produced the poisonous fruit of unrighteousness and sin that God detests.

But God had a way to make things right for us, to save us from death and judgment. He sent His Son into our flesh, to sacrifice Him on the cross for all our sins and give us eternal life. By Jesus' precious blood, God provided salvation for all people. To bring His forgiveness to sinners, God established His Kingdom of Grace in this world – His Church. As His Church proclaims His Gospel of salvation in Jesus, His Spirit plants faith in hearts, bringing us to trust Jesus' blood to cleanse us of all sin. By Baptism and faith, God makes us His children in Christ. He now sees us as wheat, with the good fruit of Jesus' righteous life on us. One day He will bring us into His Kingdom of Glory in heaven, like a farmer bringing the harvest of wheat joyfully into his barn.

So Jesus says: *“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field”* (vs. 24). Jesus sows His seed of faith and salvation everywhere. The world should be filled again with wheat, all whom God creates anew through faith in His Son. Instead, Jesus pictures what happens: *“but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared”* (vs. 25-26).

While God has His way of making things right by saving sinners, the devil has his way of making things wrong. By sowing his evil seed of lies and temptation, he continues to lead sinners away from God's pure Word and keep them in a state of impenitence and unbelief. These are children of the devil, who feel no need for God's forgiveness in Christ. They feel that they are good plants who produce only good fruit. But they remain as weeds in God's eyes; for by rejecting His gift of forgiveness and righteousness in Jesus, their own fruit of sin and unrighteousness remains on them. If they continue in their impenitence and unbelief, one day they will be gathered like weeds and burned in the eternal fire of God's judgment.

So it is that in the field of this world there are growing both wheat and weeds, God's children and Satan's children. These are mixed together in everyday life. Wherever God establishes His Kingdom, bringing sinners to faith and salvation by His Gospel, there also Satan works to sow his seed. This is why to some extent, among visible churches falsehood will try to insert itself next to God's truth, and children of the devil may stand next to children of God. Yet the true Church is made up only of believers. All who claim membership but lack true faith in Christ are hypocrites. They do not belong to His Church any more than weeds belong to a wheat field.

2) How does God want us to deal with this mixed condition?

How does God want us to deal with this mixed condition? In the parable the servants ask the owner about the weeds: “*‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn’*”” (vs. 28-30).

It is not the Church’s business to try to root out unbelief or false belief by worldly force. There are bad examples of this in history. During the Inquisition corrupt leaders, planted in the visible church by Satan, had many punished or killed for opposing their teachings and authority. During the Reformation, when faithful teachers like Martin Luther exposed false teachings and corruption in the visible church, their lives were threatened or taken. As Satan has sown his evil seed, many have suffered though they were true believers. God never authorized the sword to be used in His Church to change human hearts. If you try to use worldly power to uproot the weeds, invariably the wheat is also uprooted and faith is ruined.

Instead, Ephesians 6:7 says we are to use “*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*” In a world led by Satan’s lies, the Church is to testify to God’s truth. This includes using God’s Law to expose sin and call sinners to repentance (Ephesians 5:11). For example, we uphold the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death, while condemning the sins of abortion and euthanasia. We uphold the sanctity of marriage between one man and a woman, while condemning all forms of sex outside of marriage. At the same time, in our testimony to the world we proclaim the Gospel – the salvation Jesus won for sinners by His death on the cross to pay for all our sins, and His perfect life by which He fulfilled all righteousness for us. In this way, as Christ’s wheat, we produce fruit for our Savior. By the power of God’s Word and His Spirit’s work, He continues to convert unbelievers to faith and make them into His wheat.

In a world where Satan seeks to mingle weeds with the wheat, we see the effects of his work in visible churches. Sadly, many seek to blend in with the world around them – giving up the Word of God for the teachings of men, becoming permissive to sin. There, Satan is sowing his seeds of falsehood. This is why we practice fellowship as Scripture teaches. In love for God’s truth, and in love for souls, we join with fellow believers where God’s Word and Sacraments are rightly taught and used. For there, He is sowing His good seed among us, and His Spirit is producing the fruit of faith unto eternal life. If these pure marks of His Church are absent or tainted by falsehood, or sin is not disciplined as His Word teaches, Satan is sowing his lies and evil among the members. This is why the apostle Paul warns in Romans 16:17: “*note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.*” When it becomes necessary to leave churches that teach and practice falsely, and seek fellowship where God’s Word

and Sacraments are used rightly, it is not like uprooting the wheat with the weeds. It is like making sure the soil around the wheat is good. Again, we do so in love for God's saving truth and in love for souls.

This is also the guiding principle in the church if a member strays into a sinful path. Christian love will not allow us to stand by and watch him fall into Satan's trap. We will go to rescue him from his path with loving admonition from God's Word. If he repents, we rejoice to share Christ's forgiveness. But if he finally will not repent, Jesus says he must be treated as an unbeliever; he must be excommunicated (Matthew 18:17). This is not uprooting the wheat with the weeds; it is telling the impenitent that he has uprooted himself from true faith. He must be warned that if he continues in his path, he will be among those gathered by God's angels like weeds to be burned in the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Again, we warn him so urgently only because we love his eternal soul and do not want this to happen to him. Like God, we desire that he repent and be saved. If he repents, we are ready to receive him back with the joy of the angels (Luke 15:10), sharing God's boundless forgiveness in Christ.

After all, what is His Church but a rescue mission for sinners like us? As believers, we come together before the Lord confessing our sins, asking Him to forgive and weed out of our hearts and lives all sin and deceit. We come to church to hear His gracious forgiveness of all our sins in His Absolution. We come to be renewed in our Baptism and faith, to hear how Christ cleanses us by His blood and presents us to Himself as "*a glorious church... holy and without blemish*" (Ephesians 5:27). We come to His Supper to receive His Body and Blood for our forgiveness and strength. We come together as members of Christ's Body, to be built up by His Word and His Spirit, and to encourage one another to remain steadfast in the true faith unto eternal life (Hebrews 10:25).

This is how we live as God's wheat in the world. In love for our Savior, we want to keep His Word pure, watching against Satan's seed lest it take root among us. In love for souls whom Jesus bought with His blood, we want to sow the good seed of His pure Gospel in all the world, that many more of our fellow sinners may believe and be saved.

May God grant us grace to examine our hearts and see that we are members of His true Church by faith in His Son. In the harvest at the end of the age, Jesus will send His angels to gather us as wheat into the barn. They will bear us joyfully home to heaven, where we will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of our heavenly Father.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, forevermore. Amen.