

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
September 20th, 2020
Guest Worship Leader: Rev. Beryl Orok
"The Wheat And The Weeds"

Call to Worship

Come O Lord, and scatter the seeds of Your Word in our hearts today

Hear our cries O Lord, and quiet our spirits

God has scattered the seed of love and compassion lavishly into this world

But some seed is wasted; fallen into ruin and decay

Open our eyes to see God's wondrous love active and growing in our lives

Come; open our hearts and spirits to God's loving presence.

We come with confidence and hope in the presence of God. **Amen**

Prayer of Invocation

God of great love; as the earth welcomes seed, we would welcome the presence of Your Holy Spirit in our midst and the truth of Your Word this day.

By day and by night may Your Word take root, sprout and grow within our spirits; enabling us to become the people of faith you have created us to be.

Lord with your Word hidden in our hearts may our lives bear fruit---good fruit, as is your good pleasure and our reasonable service.

Given sustenance by Your Living Word may we branch out to others in offering ourselves in Your service; for your honor and glory. **Amen**

Hymn #441

"Can A Little Child Like Me"

1 Can a little child like me
 thank the Father fittingly?
 Yes, O yes! be good and true,
 patient, kind in all you do;
 love the Lord and do your part;
 learn to say with all your heart:

Saviour, we thank you, Spirit, we thank you,
 Great God our Maker, we thank you!

2 For our playing for our rest,
 for the earth in beauty dressed,
 for the moon and sun so bright,
 for the day and for the night,
 for your patient, loving care,

for your bounty everywhere:

3 For the laughter, for the tear,
for the love that meets us here,
for the lessons of our youth honour,
gratitude and truth,
for the great gift of your Son,
for your work in us begun:

Call to Confession

In Jesus Christ, the King of glory, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that has been lavished upon us. With all wisdom and insight, Christ has made known to us the mystery of God's will and a plan for the fullness of time to gather up all things in Him, things in heaven and on earth.

Let us return to the Lord God, for our sins have brought us down.

Now let us bring our confessions to the only true God who is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

Come let us worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth, confessing our sins before the Lord.

(Silent recall of personal sin)

Prayer of Confession

Omnipotent Lord,

You have blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing, both known and unknown.

Even so, we confess that we often choose not to bow before you or follow the paths you have set before us.

Instead we give allegiance to the powers of this world, homage to economic and cultural structures to which we submit.

We neglect our commitment to you and fail to be governed by justice, and love.

Forgive all our sins, God of mercy.

Cleanse our minds, Spirit of truth.

Teach us Your ways so that we may offer You our praises.

Help us to be found loyal and obedient disciples, ministering peace and proclaiming the gospel of grace and salvation for Jesus sake and in His holy name. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

Anyone who is in Christ has become a new creation. The old has passed away and behold a new life has emerged to grow and mature in His ways.

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself, not counting our sins against us and entrusting us with His mission in this world to bring the Good News to all.

Friends, believe the Good News of the gospel;
In Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Who art in heaven

Hallow'ed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come;

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive our debts as we forgive those who have debts against us.

Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the evil one.

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory

Forever and ever. Amen.

Responsive Reading:

Psalm 92: 5-9, 12-15

O Lord, how great are Your works!

Your thoughts are very deep.

A senseless man does not know,

Nor does a fool understand this.

When the wicked spring up like grass,

And when all the workers of iniquity flourish,

It is that they may be destroyed forever.

But You, Lord, are high forevermore.

For behold, Your enemies, O Lord,

For behold, Your enemies shall perish:

All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

The Righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,

He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Those who are planted in the house of the Lord

Shall flourish in the courts of our God.

They shall still bear fruit in old age;

To declare that the Lord is upright:

They shall be fresh and flourishing

He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

Hymn #698**“Saviour, Teach Me Day By Day”**

1. Saviour, teach me day by day
love's sweet lesson to obey;
sweeter lesson cannot be,
loving God who first loved me.

2. With a child's glad heart of love
at thy bidding may I move,
prompt to serve and follow thee,
loving God who first loved me.

3. Teach me thus thy steps to trace,
strong to follow in thy grace,
learning how to love from thee,
loving God who first loved me.

Scripture Reading:**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; **25** but while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went away.

26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares appeared.

27 So the servants of the owner came to him and said, ” Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?

28 He said to them, ” An enemy has done this. The servants said to him, ” Do you want us then to go and gather them up?”

29 But he said, ” No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

30 Let them both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of the 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.”

36 Then Jesus sent the multitudes away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.”

37 He answered and said to them: ‘He who sows good seed is the Son of Man.

38 The field is the world, the seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.

39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

41 The 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, **42** and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then the righteous will shine forth, as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

He, who has ears to hear, let him hear!

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Prayer for Illumination

Gracious God, source of all light,

By Your Word you give light to the soul.

Pour out upon us the spirit of wisdom and understanding that our hearts and minds may be opened to know Your truth and our wills be strengthened to obey it. Bless now the words of my lips and the meditations of our hearts.

Grant that we may hear and in hearing be led in the way you would have us to live for you. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord we pray. **Amen**

“The Wheat And The Weeds”

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

Rev. Beryl Orok



Every year Rob and I plant a vegetable garden, 2 in fact--with great hopes and visions for the harvest of fresh vegetable over the summer and into the fall. Just like many of you here we buy the seeds ahead. It's always fun to peruse the seed catalogues as they start arriving in January.

In past years, when we all participated in the variety of contests at Perth Fair, my husband and my brother would start about January, truthfully it was more like as soon as the fair ended, ordering pumpkin seeds. But not just any pumpkin seeds.---Giant pumpkin seeds; and so the Giant Pumpkin growing rivalry would begin; to be settled only by the decision of the fair board adjudicators or some beetle who ate the blossoms and ended the competition early.



Now when it comes to the vegetable garden each year, I remember planting the variety of vegetable seeds and seedlings but find myself inevitably wondering --- where on earth are all these weeds coming from??

Our flower gardens are another story---is it just me or are some plants that we called weeds --like mulleins, which we were sent out as kids to pull out-- now considered perennials that are sold for a good dollar in nurseries? Now I happen to like Mulleins so I let them grow where they wish. I like to see how tall they will grow and in bloom they are enticing the bees and their soft wooly leaves just add to their appeal. My Mom always points out to me that I have mulleins growing beside the house or elsewhere and just shakes her head when I say --I like them!

It is always a wait and see game with the perennial gardens ---is it a weed that is coming up or is it a perennial. I remember one year fervently weeding out bachelor's buttons and perennial asters!!! And more than once Rob's zeal for digging up the garden in the spring has resulted in the loss of anticipated plants before they even had a chance to survive.

Talking about weeds reminds me of: Murphy's First Law of gardening:

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily--it is a valuable plant.

The best definition of a weed I have found is: A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except learning to grow in rows!!

Did you know there are over 30 references to weeds in the Bible? Now there is a project for you to search out.

Today we are going to reflect upon the parable about wheat and weeds from our scripture reading in Matthew 13. The parables of Jesus are intriguing because there was always a central theme. He told 7 parables to explain the mystery of the Kingdom of God to his listeners. The people of that day were awaiting the rule of a

visible, sovereign God to set up his kingdom on earth, but Jesus was there to tell them that the kingdom of God was within them and was already present.

The Old Testament Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, to name just a couple, lamented their awareness that the people of their time were so lost in sin that they resented hearing God's word and deliberately turned away from His teachings.

Well Jesus had the same experience! In fact there were those who wanted to kill him because of his teachings and so, being the master teacher that he was, he often spoke in parables (an earthly story that reflected a spiritual truth) in order to get people's attention and draw them into new ways of thinking about the truths of the Kingdom of God.

His words" Let those who have ears to hear, hear— Matthew 13: 9 reflects the wistful, longing, warning words of love, from He who had a tremendous gift to offer yet sometimes even His own followers, were too spiritually blind to see or too stubborn to accept.

Welsh Theologian C.H. Dodd stated “At its simplest the parable is a metaphor or a simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt as to its precise application to tease the mind into active thought.”

This parable of the wheat and the weeds is one that does this for me.

The agrarian based parable of the wheat and the weeds has always interested, challenged and somewhat puzzled me. Weeds among the wheat---like mustard in the farmer's grain field or pig weed amongst the radish or Lamb's Quarters among the kale. We are all familiar with these common weeds.

Now if you have a King James translation the title of this parable would read tares among the wheat. A tare was a weed; most likely referencing a very noxious weed called Darnell.

Darnell and wheat were almost indistinguishable. It was commonly known as false wheat! But at harvest time it could be readily identified from the wheat because the real heads of wheat would droop over; heavily laden with grain while the Darnel remained upright; light weight and useless.

Jesus explained the meaning of this parable to his disciples, upon their inquiry,



Tares - Darnell

Wheat

while they were alone, He turned the parable into an allegory; each element of the story having a spiritual element. It is noteworthy that this parable was told while Jesus was under the duress of a death threat; concocted by the authorities in response to a Sabbath act of civil disobedience by Jesus and his disciples.

Matthew 12: 1-2

At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.”

Jesus then went into a lengthy response reminding them of David when he was hungry, entering into the temple and eating the showbread from the altar which was forbidden except for the priests.

He ended the discourse with the statement, “The Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath!”

The Pharisees of course were livid by such a claim!

This parable of the wheat and the weeds may leave us with some questions and I hope it does, because it is in that questioning, that we open ourselves to the Spirit to lead our study and inform our conscience.

At first glance the explanation of this parable’s meaning seems pretty simple--it is about the church as the field where God plants in the hope of gaining a rich harvest of blessing and souls. God is represented as the landowner and the weeds are those who are led by the evil one.

We, the Church, are the field of God--**we are the ground God works, the plants God nurtures and the people God rests hope in.** Wow ---have you ever given that much thought? What a privilege to be called children of God ---**those whom God's hope rests in!!** Our hope rests in Jesus Christ our Savior but God's hope rests in us individually and as the church of Jesus Christ here on earth.

Just as the wheat is a precious commodity to the farmer, we are precious to God as a body of believers and as individuals within that body!

The parable relates that the laborers are quick to identify the weeds and the solution in their mind is --- pull them out. Get rid of them!

But take note here that they first went to ask the master for direction before they took action.

This noteworthy action reminds us as the old song says ---take it to the Lord in prayer. When we are tempted to rush to action or judgement; ask the landowner!!



But when the dutiful servants report the growth of the weeds; the farmer / landowner refuses to risk losing any wheat in order to be rid of the weeds.

We are often much like those servants. We sometimes look out upon the world and we see and experience evil.

We see weeds of violence, starvation, betrayal, hatred, suffering of all kinds, evil deeds and words, and we ask WHY??? Why can't all those perpetrators be dealt with –severely and stopped.

There is a familiar theme in the gospels: the shepherd leaves the 99 to find the 1 lost sheep, the woman searches and searches for the lost coin. You see in God's economy nothing; no one, is wasted or expendable. Everyone matters to God!

So, it is not surprising in this parable that the landowner gave instructions to let the weeds grow along with the wheat, in case the wheat be damaged or destroyed in trying to uproot the weeds. The servants in the parable became upset, concerned that there were weeds among the wheat, concerned that the harvest might not turn out well, concerned that the good purposes of their master might fail!

But the wheat survived and was not poisoned by the weeds.

We can make sense of this when we think about farmer's crops, but when we try to make application to the community of believers or our own lives it's a little more difficult. The ideal church is filled with loving, kind, nonjudgmental people who serve shoulder to shoulder in the work of God in their community and around the world.

Yes that's the Ideal!!

Fact is not everyone is good or godly! These are the weeds Jesus was referring to and not everything is as it should be in the Church at times, yet I risk to say how ungodly we can become, i.e. damaged we become, when we take on the task of judging others or become invested in harshly condemning ourselves without recognizing the work of the Spirit in our lives to redeem and renew.

Reality is that sometimes we do grow impatient with what we see around us, becoming judgmental of the actions of those we might consider to be "weeds"

Please be aware though that when we start thinking and feeling like this our own "weed nature" is sprouting and growing and if not contained will come into full bloom spreading seeds of destruction in our midst, in our personal lives and often in the lives of others.

It is so easy to become focused on weeds and lose sight of the beauty and the fragrance of the bouquet of flowers that make up the rest of the Church! We tend to like labelling weeds in the church—trouble makers, liars, manipulators, ungodly persons. But we can't forget that there is transformative power in God's Word and in the presence of the Holy Spirit and treated with patience and love, what we thought were weeds may just turn out to be wheat. We can not know!

We serve a mysterious God who will exhibit great patience and love towards those we might be quick to deem unworthy!

The landowner in the parable did not abandon his field because it had some weeds. God does not abandon us or His church! He is fully aware and remains committed to us, to the thriving of His people in the church.

This Jewish fable makes an important point about the character of God. When the ministering angels saw the Egyptians floundering in the sea after the Israelites passed over, they burst into song. But God rebuked them saying: My children are drowning in the sea and you would rejoice!!

This is our God, a God of love, who is yet the righteous judge, who sees the heart and meads out justice righteously.

He is God, the landowner who says ----do not disturb it! Do not try to pluck it out--- because if you do you are going to wreck the whole place: you're going to end up pulling up wheat, as well as, weeds no matter how careful you are and you are going to develop an eye of judgement. While you might be right in that judgement, you may end up doing wrong. Leave it to me---wait for the time I have set!

In the natural we think "get rid of the weed", but the dim insight of human wisdom or the closed eyes of human pride and fear leads us astray and into the weed patch.

Some of those plants deemed weeds and of no value, when I was young, I still see blooming and beautiful; like the delicate Queen Ann's Lace along the roadway! Some weeds can serve important functions like preventing soil erosion or can be used in herbal medications. Back to my Mulleins! Mullein can effectively clear excessive amounts of mucous in the lungs, cleanses the bronchial tubes, and soothes inflammation of the respiratory tract. Its leaves and flowers are used in the preparation of a potent herbal extract.

SO---- what can weeds teach us, what good are weeds, what good can come of a weed?

Weeds amongst us serve to make us humble and force us, if we are open to the Spirit, to seek God for direction and to see with God's eyes.

Weeds in our midst convict us of our need to love as God loves, to be patient, to hope and pray for the best. Maturity in the life of a weed can bring amazing changes. Remembering always that God does not wish that any should perish!

Throughout life good and evil, wheat and weeds are intertwined in unpredictable, unavoidable, perplexing ways.

Paul in his honesty spoke in Romans 7: 15 about his personal weed nature; about the constant turmoil of doing the very thing he didn't want to do! That's living with weeds personally!!

What good can come of having to deal with the weeds in our individual lives? Well for one thing --recognizing our personal weeds and tendencies to act like a noxious weed will humble us.

A humble and contrite heart God will not despise. Psalm 51:17

We need to rely on God, not our own sense of self-sufficiency or self-importance. It also makes us more forgiving and understanding of others in their struggles. Joy and sorrow, laughter and tears, success and failure, surprise and disappointment, triumph and tragedy, love and loss intertwine like the wheat and the weeds in the soil of our lives as people of God.

Remember God loved the Egyptians too. He loves those we might consider weeds and he loves us even though we have our own garden of weeds within to contend with.

The final harvest belongs to God alone! Praise be to God!

Personally I am so grateful that God does not root out a weed at first sprouting!

Always it is our best service to God to be the wheat faithful and obedient, bearing good fruit and walking in God's ways; rather than spending our energy thrashing the weeds around us and thrashing ourselves for our human struggles.

Wm. Barkley in writings from The Gospel of Matthew said, "The only person with the right to judge is God. It is God alone who can discern good and bad: it is God alone who sees the entire person and all that's person's life. It is God alone who can judge!"

I would like to close with Paul's advice to the Romans found in Chapter 12 of the book of Romans from the Message translation.

Live in harmony with one another; do not be harsh, but associate with the lowly: do not claim to be wiser than you are: do not repay anyone evil for evil but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.

Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good!

Let those who have ears to hear do so!

Hymn: “May the Mind of Christ My Saviour”

(Click on the link below to play the hymn.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_ZBhSxWots

1. May the mind of Christ my Saviour
Live in me from day to day
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say

2. May the word of God enrich me
With His truth from hour to hour
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power

3. May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing

4. May the love of Jesus fill me
As the waters fill the sea
Him exalting self-abasing
This is victory

5. May I run the race before me
Strong and brave to face the foe
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go

6. May His beauty rest upon me
As I seek the lost to win
And may they forget the channel
Seeing only him

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3) We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer.

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspert offering@gmail.com Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Invitation to Offering

We now turn our thoughts to blessing our God with our tithes and offerings so let us be generous and joyful givers. The collection plats are on the back table for your convenience on your way out.

Offertory Prayer

Lord of the harvest, You have blessed us with the goodness of our lives and abundance in so many other things. Even when we think we are lacking, we are not.

We take this opportunity now to give to the work of Your kingdom a portion from the blessings You have bestowed on us.

Take what we offer from thankful hearts; may it be used to bless others and for the furtherance of Your kingdom work. For Jesus' sake. **Amen**

Pastoral Prayer

Lord of the Harvest, we thank you for this time we have had to share together in Your presence today.

Your Word has impacted and enriched our thoughts and informed our actions as Your people.

Sometimes we find ourselves quick to judge others and ourselves.

The Joy of the gospel is such that it cannot be taken away from us by anything or anyone, so even though we see evil in this world and we are wearied and concerned about the future at times: especially in this current time of great unknowns and great losses and adjustments due to the COVID pandemic, we can rest in the assurance of Your love and faithfulness to us.

May we remember to pray as the needs of our community and country and those of our congregation are brought to mind by Your Spirit this week.

Thank you for our lives and Your calling to each of us to be Your people. With Your help may we sow good seed by the goodness of our lives and look forward to a bountiful harvest. **Amen**

Closing Hymn # 300:**“Father, We Love You”
(2 verses)**

Father, we love You
We worship, We adore You
Glorify Your name in all the earth
Glorify Your name
Glorify Your name
Glorify Your name in all the earth

Jesus, we love You
We worship, We adore You
Glorify Your name in all the earth
Glorify Your name
Glorify Your name
Glorify Your name in all the earth

Benediction

Go in peace and love; caring for one another in the name of Jesus.
May He who is our Lord and Savior bless you with a heart of reverent and joyful obedience and may God the Father bless you with a mind that knows His truth and His glory
May the Holy Spirit guide and lead you on the way with resolute determination, love and wisdom, until at last you experience the wonder of the inheritance that has been prepared for you in heavenly places.
Go in peace to serve the Lord and one another. **Amen**