

***Weed, Seeds and Other Things of This World***  
**Psalm 86: 11- 17; Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43**

I have been living out this parable in a very real way! Due to my back and knee problems I have hired my yard work done for several years. However, I still love to have flowers blooming and neatly groomed grass. Therefore I have a horticulturist who plants and weeds the flowers and another young man who mows and trims my yard each week.

That has worked well for several years, until this summer. The horticulturist planted a beautiful, low maintenance, flowering border along my walk and patio that has bloomed continually with minimal weeding and maintenance for three years. This year, however, the young man who mows my yard, changed the pattern of mowing, blowing the cuttings into the bordering beds, meaning that the crab grass has tried to take over the beautiful flowers. Unable to pull all the weeds without damaging the flowers, we opted to use an organic spray to kill the weeds! The result has been the death of most weeds and flowers! And so, the battle continues. The one thing I have learned, based upon this parable, is that I am not God! I cannot judge who lives and who dies, who is righteous and who is not. Only God can do that!

In addition, I have come to ask the question: Can we even comprehend a God that loves the world so much that every grain of wheat is significant. What if we started living our lives as if that were true?

Perhaps there were some overzealous 'weeders' in Matthew's congregation who wanted to purify the community by rooting out the bad seed. This seems to be a temptation for followers of Jesus in every age. We live in a time when the church and all of society is widely polarized. There are extremists all over the world today who believe they have a mandate from their god literally to destroy those whom they deem to be enemies of God. Surely the Christian church in a world so polarized and filled with terror because of religious excess; surely Christ's people have a special responsibility to bear witness to a better way.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once put it: "God's purpose is not wrathful judgment." God's purpose is redemption, and the road to redemption is by way of reconciliation. Only in that way will the world finally be saved." Today's parable warns us against relying on our human capacity to know fully the mind of God. It also suggests that what might appear to be good and pure to us might not necessarily be either one.

I am sure that we all know someone who presented him or herself as a saint; and, then, something happened that revealed another side. I think of an incident at a traffic light. A man was stopped, waiting for the light to turn green. When the light changed, he was distracted and he didn't budge. The woman in the car behind him honked her horn. He still didn't move. She honked again. By this time, she was pounding on the steering wheel and blowing her horn non-stop. Finally, just as the light turned yellow, the fellow in the first car woke up and drove through the light. The woman in the second car was beside herself. Still mid-rant, she heard a tap on her car window. She looked up to see the face of a police officer. "Lady, you're under arrest," he said. "Get out of the car. Put your hands up." He took her to the police station, had her finger printed, photographed, and then put her in a holding cell. Hours passed. The officer returned and unlocked the cell door. He escorted her back to the booking desk.

"Sorry for the mistake, Lady," he said. "But I pulled up behind you as you were blowing your horn and cursing out the fellow in front of you. I noticed the stickers on your bumper. One read "Follow me to Sunday School." The other, "What Would Jesus Do?" So, naturally, I assumed you had stolen the car you were driving.

Before holiness and perfection however, Jesus expected transformation in his hearers.

So who are the weeds and who are the good seed? We tend to assume that we are the favorites; we are the "chosen ones." But the plain truth of Scripture is that in God's sight all people are loved and valued. In God's realm, all people are God's children. There are some church people who would assume the weeds to be undocumented people living in the US. But would God? Other folks might think lesbian or gay partners to be the weeds. But would God? Some otherwise wonderfully dedicated Christians may think female ministers weeds among the wheat. But would God?

One theologian warns, "Never uproot people in your mind or attitude by treating them as no longer of any worth!"

Jesus is generating disciples who live out the ways of the kingdom – open table fellowship, gender equality, non-hierarchical living, inherent worth of every human being, and opposition to oppression. This is Kingdom living. The Kingdom of God is like this... Weeds and wheat living together as God seeks the beauty and best among us.