

The Nineth Sunday After Pentecost (July 26, 2026)

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O.T. Lesson: Joel 3:12-16

Morning Praise: p. 45

Epistle: Romans 8:26,27

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Gospel: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Psalms 18

Text: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

541 vs. 1-4

Theme: There Are Weeds In Christ's Field.

541 vs. 5-7

I. An enemy has done this.

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II. Let the weeds and wheat grow together until the harvest.

III. At the harvest the weeds will be separated from the wheat.

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Dear sons and daughters of the kingdom of God,

"There are hypocrites in the church. That's why I don't want anything to do with church. I see them all the time -- people who belong to the church, but they sure don't believe what the Bible says; people who call themselves Christians, but they sure don't live Christian lives. Just think of some of the TV preachers over the years, and some of the scandals that have occurred in churches. There are so many different preachers and churches that change the message of the Bible to suit their own purposes."

That's one of the most common reasons people give for staying away from church, because they see hypocrites in the church. But as we shall learn today, that's not any reason to give up on Christianity.

Jesus knew that there were hypocrites in his church already in his day, and he knew that his church here on earth would always be plagued by hypocrites and false teachers. Jesus knew that these sham-Christians would cause no end of trouble for his church, and be a constant source of discouragement and grief for his true believers. That is why Jesus spoke the parable of the weeds among the wheat, to explain to us why there are unbelievers in his visible church on earth, and to assure us that this appalling situation will be remedied at the proper time, and in the proper way. As the parable describes: There Are Weeds In Christ's Field. Jesus informs us: An enemy has done this. Jesus instructs us: Let the weeds and wheat grow together until the harvest. Jesus assures us: At the harvest the weeds will be separated from the wheat.

In the parable, Jesus is describing his church in this world as we see it, and it would include all people who claim to be Christians. If we were to stand on a street corner in Wausau, and ask people whether or not they're Christians, I think the majority of them would say they are. But upon further questioning, I fear we would also find that the majority of the people who claim to be Christians believe things that are totally contrary to what Jesus teaches in the Bible. Jesus' Holy Christian Church is made up of all true Christians. True believers and true believers alone are members of his kingdom. We call this the invisible church because we cannot see into people's hearts and know what they believe, so we cannot know for sure who Christ's members are. The only person we can be sure about is ourself. But in the parable Jesus is describing the earthly state of the church in this world, and many unbelievers have managed to enter into Christ's visible church.

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed, wheat, in his field. But at night, while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. When the wheat had sprung up, and began to form heads, then the weeds also appeared. The servants were amazed at the weeds, growing all over

the field. They came to their master and said, "Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?" "An enemy did this," he replied.

What a mean and dastardly thing for that enemy to do. It is obvious what he had in mind. He wanted to destroy the man's wheat crop. And he chose a most vicious way to do it, planting weeds, or tares, among the wheat. The particular weed that is described here is one that is found in wheat fields. When it is small, it looks like wheat; but when it matures and goes to seed, it is easily distinguished from the wheat. That is why the servants didn't notice the weeds until the wheat was heading out. Also, the seeds of this weed are poisonous, and so all the more destructive to the harvest.

Jesus spoke this parable to a large crowd. Then after he left the crowd and went into the house, his disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." Jesus answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil."

The amazing thing is not that there are unbelievers and hypocrites in the church. The amazing thing is that there are true believers in the church, true believers who gather together around God's holy word in its truth and purity, and motivated by that powerful word, serve the Lord with their lives. That's the miracle. It is Jesus himself, the Son of Man, who has placed Christians into his church on earth. Jesus humbled himself to suffer life in our weed-infested world, filled with hypocrisy and unbelief. Even as an infant, Jesus had to be taken to Egypt to escape murderous King Herod, who said he wanted to worship Christ. Throughout his ministry Jesus was plagued by Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes and Teachers of the Law, all trying to find fault with him and trick him. Finally, Jesus was condemned to death by people who claimed to be true believers in God and his word. Jesus suffered this world's unbelief and hypocrisy for us. He suffered our unbelief and hypocrisy in order to win our forgiveness, and make us his true people. Jesus alone has made it possible for us to truly enter his kingdom. He it is who sows the field of this world with Christians. By ourselves we could only be weeds, but Jesus has taken our sins away and sent his Spirit to work faith in our hearts through his word, and made us sons of his kingdom.

But there are also weeds in the external church here on earth; unbelievers, people who call themselves Christians, but don't hold to the truth of God's holy word; people who claim to be Christians, but don't live their lives according to that word; false teachers and people who lead others astray. How did these weeds get into Christ's field? The enemy who sows them is the devil. By his lies and false teachings, he plants evildoers and heretics into God's church. How devious the devil is, that he plants his unbelievers right into Christ's church. These weeds might look harmless enough at first. In fact, often we cannot even tell who they are, just as the servants couldn't tell the weeds from the wheat. But the devil has one reason for planting them there, to destroy Christ's church with his lies.

The devil strives his hardest to stir up troubles and discord in congregations, especially in congregations like ours, where God's word is being taught in its truth and purity, where the congregation is serving the Lord, and reaching out to proclaim God's saving gospel to others. We're a real threat to the devil, and to the devil's followers. The devil works overtime on congregations like ours, trying to tear us apart. You see, the devil isn't satisfied with setting up a chapel across the road from Christ's church. He sets up shop right in the midst of Christ's church.

There are weeds in Christ's field, many, many weeds. There always have been, even on the day Jesus spoke this parable. There were weeds in that crowd, people who

tagged along behind Jesus and called themselves his followers, but were there for all the wrong reasons. Some proclaimed Jesus to be an earthly king, someone to care for their physical needs. Some proclaimed Jesus to be a magician, and wanted only to be entertained by his miracles. Some proclaimed Jesus to be only a great teacher and philosopher, and looked to him only for advice, instead of for forgiveness and salvation. Then, of course, there was Judas, the Lord's betrayer, a weed among Jesus' own disciples. There were Ananias and Sapphira. There were weeds in the congregation in Corinth, and in the Galatian churches against whom Paul had to warn the true Christians in his Epistles.

Down through the ages there have always been heretics and false Christians in the church. The devil has thoroughly scattered God's field with weeds, so that today we find hosts of preachers and church groups who call themselves Christians, yet fail to teach what Christ taught, many who think that Christ's message is outdated and must be changed to fit our times. Tragically, the vast majority of churches in our country and in the world who claim to be Christian fail to proclaim the Bible as God's true and inspired word. An enemy has done this. There are many who call themselves Christians simply because they belong to a church, but God's word means nothing to them. The devil has done this. There are many who think they are Christians simply because they come to church on Sunday morning, but then they go and lead wicked lives the rest of the week. An enemy has done this. There are those who think they are Christians because they always try to do good, but tragically, they are trusting in themselves, rather than in their Savior. The devil has done this. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." [Matthew 7:21]

All these weeds cause no end of trouble for God's church, and can be very discouraging to us as true Christians. We need to be careful that we don't blame Jesus for their presence in his field. He didn't put them there. An enemy did this. Satan has put unbelievers around us for one reason, to destroy us, and so we also need to be careful that we don't get entangled in the weeds, or get so used to them that they don't bother us. They are dangerous. When we hear people teaching God's word falsely, we need to realize; not, it takes all kinds to make the world go round; but, an enemy has done this. When church members lead lives contrary to God's word and encourage us to do the same, we need to realize; not, it must be ok, but, Satan is responsible for this.

All these weeds in Christ's field -- what shall we do? Surely something must be done about this situation. But Jesus says, "Not yet. Let the weeds and wheat grow together until the harvest." The servants in the parable asked the owner of the field, "Do you want us to go and pull up the weeds?" "No," he answered, "because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest."

Jesus has not given us permission, nor does he want us to go around destroying unbelievers in his church. He has not given the power of the sword to the church. It would be terribly wrong for us to go around killing or persecuting heretics and those we suspect to be hypocrites. That very thing was tried more than once in the middle ages and in the inquisition. Obviously, it didn't work, and it is also obvious that if such a thing were tried today, we would have open war, and many true Christians would be destroyed as well. Nor are we to spend our time trying to close down churches that teach false doctrine. Nor are we to spend our time trying to silence false teachers and preachers. We must leave them alone. Let us spend our time proclaiming God's word correctly, and that includes warning others against falsehoods. Let the weeds and wheat grow together until the harvest. It is not our place to punish and deal with the wicked. That's God's place.

However, this parable is not an excuse for lax church discipline within the local congregation. When our own members are failing to hear God's word, confess it, and live according to it, then we must warn them, and practice discipline as Scripture outlines it in places like Matthew 18. This is done, not to weed people out, but to bring them back. And surely we need not and dare not let false teachers preach from our pulpit. And surely we need not and dare not let unbelievers and those who are not united with us in true faith commune with us at our altar. And surely we need not and dare not join together with those who are not true to God's word. But outside our congregation we have no jurisdiction over those who falsely claim to be Christians.

Yes, there is much heresy and evil in the visible Christian church. We dare not try to change it by force. But let us see to it that we don't get caught up in it. Again, let us see to it that we proclaim God's word correctly and clearly to strengthen Christians against the evil and falsehoods all around them. This is the best and the proper way to silence heretics.

We cannot stop the enemies of Christ here on this earth, but they will finally come to an end. At the harvest the weeds will be separated from the wheat. In the parable, the owner of the field assured his servants: "At the time of the harvest I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them into bundles to be burned, then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn." Jesus explains: "The harvest is the end of the age, [Judgment Day,] and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Those who are not true Christians, those who have not truly trusted in Jesus as their only Savior from falsehoods, sin and evil will be weeded out of his kingdom and destroyed in hell, the place of eternal torment, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Then only the righteous will be left in Christ's kingdom, we who are righteous, not by ourselves, but only through the blood of our Savior. "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear." The picture is that of the sun, emerging from behind a cloud. The glory of God's church of true believers has largely been hidden by the falsehoods, sin and evil in the world, by the enmity and hatred, by the many misunderstandings and slanderings, by the crosses and afflictions, by sadness and tears. But now, at the harvest on the Last Day, in heaven, all this is past. Their true glory breaks forth, never to be dimmed or clouded again. The Church triumphant shall not be troubled by weeds.

We might think that the church here on earth should be perfect, and it should be, but it isn't, and it never will be in this sinful world. An enemy has seen to that. The church won't be perfect until it's in heaven. As long as the church is in this world, it will remain a militant church, which must contend with many evils. Jesus has foretold this, and instead of being a cause for discouragement, it is really a proof that the gospel message of the Bible is true. Jesus uses the struggles within his church to keep his own humble and trusting alone in him as their only righteousness and salvation. May we be encouraged to keep on fighting the good fight of faith, knowing that "there is in store for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day -- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." [II Timothy 4:8]

Amen.

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy -- to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power, and authority now and forever. Amen.