

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Last year was the first time that I attempted to have a garden. Attempted is probably the key word about it. Actually, I did pretty well last year. We cleared a patch of ground, not too big, and I planted seeds. I waited patiently, and by the end of the summer, we had more snow peas than I ever wanted to see, zucchini the size of my arms, some peppers that were ok, a small supply of lettuce, and tomatoes that we realized that neither Greg nor I like to eat. But overall, it was basically successful. What was surprising about that is the fact that I really didn't do anything to it. I wasn't around too much to care for it...just looked after it when I was there, and for the most part it was a successful first garden.

I'm trying again this year to do the same thing, but I'm surprised everyday when I look at it because it has no resemblance to last year. I expected to plant seeds again, a few more actually...I was a bit braver, but the garden this year has been a different experience right from the start.

Last year, weeds really weren't a problem. This year I might as well be trying to grow them because that's about all that I am getting. No matter how much time I spend out in the yard, it seems like there are more weeds when I come back the next time. In some cases I can't tell the weeds from the baby plants and so I think that I pulled those, too. I'm to the point that I'm just letting them go and waiting to see what I'm going to get. I'm realizing that if I'm patient, then the healthy plants will grow taller and fuller, and I really won't have to worry about the weeds.

My garden reminds me a lot of our text for today. We have another agricultural parable from Jesus. Last week we heard about the different kinds of dirt, and today we hear about the wheat and the weeds. It's also similar to last week because the meaning of the parable is included right in the text. We know what we're supposed to learn from it, and that's that.

But, is that all that there is to this text? That the angels of the Lord will sort things out in the end and that's that? Just like we are to strive to be the good soil and not rocky and thorny, we too are to be the wheat that is planted and yields when the harvest is gathered. That is all that this text is trying to tell us, right?

Often when we look at a parable of Jesus, we react in just that way. This is the way that I've always been taught to look at this text, and so that's the only way that I'm going to look at it. But when we do just that, we miss a lot that the words have to teach us. By looking beyond what we have always been told to see in the text, often we see many more lessons that the word has to say.

Perhaps one lesson that we could learn from this text is that you should never pull weeds. Never go out; never break your back doing that kind of work. We should just let our yards grow into a jungle and know that it will all be sorted out in the end. Ok, that's probably not a lesson that we should be taking from this text, because there are some weeds that are destructive to a garden. But I'd be willing to use that one on days that I don't want to be working outside. God

told me not to pull the weeds. All right...I'll admit that that's not the best example of another lesson to be learned.

Another conclusion that some draw from this text is that everything bad in the world, the weeds, is the work of one who is not among us...one who is working against God. What is interesting is that the word in this text that is translated as enemy can also be translated as one who slanders, or one who gossips...it doesn't necessarily mean a specific entity...it can also be the actions of people. I don't like to admit it, but I know that I've gossiped and I'm sure I'm not the only one. So does that mean that I've planted weeds among the wheat in this world? Or worse yet, that maybe I'm a weed?

Well, if I have to be a weed, I at least want to be a pretty one. I've heard it said that a weed is just an unloved flower, and I really do think that's true. I can remember picking those beautiful bouquets for my mom of dandy lions and having her tell me they were pretty. But now that I've grown up I detest the sight of them in our yard. But what if the weeds in our text for today were just as valuable as the wheat for a different reason? Or what if you couldn't tell them apart?

Because you see, just as I thought the dandy lion weeds were beautiful flowers in my time; it is hard to tell the difference between the weeds and the wheat in our text. The weeds that are talked about are called darnell, and you can only tell the weed from the wheat once they are both mature, and by that time they are grown together at the root. Tearing up one would kill the other, and you might not even pull the right one anyway. So maybe something we could learn from this text is that we never know who the weeds really are...we don't have the perspective or the knowledge to tell the good from the bad...so maybe we, like the slaves in our text, shouldn't be so quick to pull what we think is wrong.

Yet another lesson that we can learn is that we aren't the ones to do the weeding at all. We might offer, and we might even want to run out into the fields, but in a lot of cases we might do more harm than good. Our intentions of clearing the field of the weeds might just lead to clearing it of everything good as well simply because we can't tell the difference. We, like a lot of the world around us, are very quick to raise our hands and say, I'll go and take care of the weeds. But perhaps the most important lesson is that God, the sower of the seeds, doesn't look at us and say go ahead. Instead, he looks at us and says wait.

Whether we see ourselves as the weeds or the wheat, there is a bit of reality in this parable. It reminds us of the reality that is the world around us. For you see, the setting of the story isn't just the field, or a church or a community. The field is the world, and there are always going to be things that we don't like in our world around us. But if we react too quickly, often we will not see what there is to see, and we will destroy the wheat with the weeds.

We are very quick to do that, though. If you are like me, when you see bad things happen in the world, I want to do something about it, or I at least want someone else to do something. I don't want to just let things go and get worse. But yet, that's just what Jesus is trying to tell us to do. Let things be. Things will work out in the end. Not that everything will ultimately turn into wheat, because after all, the weeds were burned up in the end...but it's not up to us to decide who is good, who is bad, and who should be thrown out right now.

But just like in the text, the Lord says wait. And I think what is implied in that is, I might not be done yet. What looks like a weed to you now might not be a weed when I am done. There are plants in the world that if we saw them we might be quick to pull them and kill them because they might seem like they are unwanted and bad. But given a little time, they might turn into the most beautiful flower, or a source of food. If we are quick to get rid of them, we might miss what God has in store.

I know that when I began my time here at Trinity, I was a very different person than I am today as I leave. And that is really because God has worked through all of you. Now I want to make it very clear that I'm not saying that Trinity is full of fertilizer, but the truth is that you have helped me to grow. And it is because of all of you that I am going to be able to continue growing, and maybe help others to grow in the process.

So perhaps what we need to learn from this text is that we need to be patient. Patient with what God has in store, patient for what will happen in the end. It's not up to us who is the weed and who is the wheat. But it is up to us to help everything that we can to grow, to change, to glorify God in all that it does. By living in the way that we have been called through the waters of our baptism, we can glorify God in all that we do. By faithfully coming to the table, we can grow as we are able. By remembering each other in prayer, we can strengthen others in their growth. And by being patient, we can let God do what only God can do...turn that weedy dandy lion into a beautiful flower...at least in someone's eyes.