

“Made Right” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – Pentecost 8 – July 23, 2023

- I. **Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43** – previously read
- II. **The trouble with weeds...**
 - a. Last week we heard a parable that warned us about weeds that grow up among our faith life – the weeds of the cares of this world and the love of money.
 - b. This week, the weeds are a little different, but still bad for our faith life... the weeds are the followers of satan, the evil one.
 - c. We don't always recognize the work of weeds that were sown by satan, but sometimes they grow around us, sapping our nutrients and sunlight – lowering our health in mind, body, and spirit.
 - i. It can even seem futile as we look around at all the evil around us – kind of like when we let the weeds grow up in a flower bed to the point that it's impossible to separate the flowers from the weeds.
 - d. As the parable goes, a farmer sows wheat in a field, but an enemy sows weeds among the wheat.
 - i. The crop is ruined and should be started over, but the owner has other ideas – to let them both grow together until harvest time, then the wheat and the weeds can be separated.
 - ii. In a way, the owner allows the good wheat to mature and bring forth a harvest, even while the weeds are right there, intertwined in the same space.
 - iii. It's interesting, but the servants come to the master and ask him, “Did you use good seeds?” (vs 27)
 1. The people standing around looking at the mess of good and evil sometimes go to the Master, God, and ask if He did it right.
 2. “Why is there all this evil in the world, and why is all this suffering and tribulation tolerated by a loving God?”
 3. No answer is sufficient, except God is God and we are not.
 - e. Jesus starts this parable with, “the kingdom of heaven is [like]” (vs 24)
 - i. Jesus is talking about the current state of God's reign... or that God's reign has come in the person of Jesus, and now it's like this...
 - ii. And then Jesus shares the parable that God's reign in our world has become like a bunch of good wheat that was sown... along with weeds that were tossed in middle of it all.
 - iii. Weeds are all around us, which means we live in a world of evil and chaos right along with the good and holy.
- III. **The disciples of Jesus need help understanding the parables.**
 - a. Once again, like last week and the Parable of the Sower, Jesus' followers are looking for answers.

- b. So, Jesus outlines that He has given faith to some people as the good seed sprouted into wheat, but satan's followers are close beside all who believe as he sowed weeds everywhere in the world too.
- c. In God's wisdom and understanding, He has decided not to destroy the good and evil now, but to wait until a day of judgment.
 - i. It seems good to read our Old Testament reading for today in Isaiah 44 as God clearly pronounces that He alone is God – and if anyone has more wisdom or knowledge, they can step up or forever hold their peace.
- d. The interesting part of this parable is how much time Jesus spends on the Last Day and the judgment to come.
 - i. We, along with Jesus' disciples, need to hear the difficult truth of hell, judgment, and the consequences of sin.
 - ii. I know that it's very popular today for everyone to say things like God is love and Jesus is all about love as a way to give people a pass for their behaviors.
 - 1. In other words, because God is love, how can He punish someone for just trying to be happy?
 - 2. Why would God judge a person for living in ways that they see as best for them?
 - iii. Yet, we know that sin and evil do not "get a pass" on judgment day, nor the people who practice them to the end.
- e. However, before we get too self-righteous in condemning the sins of others, don't forget Whose job it is to judge.
 - i. Jesus Christ Himself will be the final judge – not you, not me, and not anyone in this world.
 - ii. He will be there when the angels go forth pulling apart those who are forgiven by grace through faith, and those who don't believe or who have rejected Him to the end.
 - iii. We might see ourselves as the ones in charge of judging the weeds and yanking them out of the harvest field – kind of like the master's workers wanted to do – but no, it is God's responsibility.
- f. So, we all need to be reminded of what's going on in this parable today –
 - i. God is almighty and can be trusted to do what is best.
 - ii. We are surrounded by people who do not have faith in Jesus and their destiny is hell unless they come to faith by hearing the Word of God... and,
 - iii. God will ultimately bring justice *and* peace on the Last Day... in other words, all things will be made right by God.

IV. **In a world of sin, it's so difficult to envision all things made right.**

- a. At this point in the world, we are constantly reminded that for all the good we see, evil is right there beside us.

- i. The crime, hatred, and toxic behaviors in our midst can sometimes make us wonder if anything we do even matters.
 - ii. That's where Paul is coming from – when he points to the trials and tribulations we face, while even creation itself groans for redemption. (Romans 8:22)
- b. We also, in our bodies of brokenness and helplessness over sin and evil, are groaning for the day of our redemption – our eternal life in heaven.
- c. The reason we look forward in hope is because by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sowed the seed of faith in us...
 - i. We have faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross for our salvation, so that means we know that regardless of how bad it gets in the present, all things will be made right.
 - ii. Jesus was crucified – the God of the universe nailed to a cross to secure the victory –
 - 1. The victory over sin and its consequences.
 - 2. The victory over death and separation from God.
 - 3. And the victory over satan and all his weeds.
 - iii. Our trust and faith that Jesus really won the day for our sake is why we keep toiling in a world full of weeds and hardship... in the end, we know who already won!
- d. None of us need to let the evil of the world get us down, because the victory in Christ is far greater than the worst of our struggles here... as Paul says in Romans 8:18 – “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

V. **A final consideration about the wheat and the weeds.**

- a. There is no middle ground.
- b. Either a person is wheat, or has faith in Jesus... or a person is a weed without faith in Jesus.
- c. Recognizing the vast number of unbelievers all around us, along with the warning of the final judgment in this parable, gives each of us encouragement to witness our faith as we live out our vocations.
- d. Jesus does not tell us this parable is about witnessing but more about living in the consequences of sin – but it is clear that we are closely intertwined with unbelievers everywhere we go.
 - i. We never know when the end is coming and the harvest will be reaped, but we do have our current time to witness about Jesus.
- e. As I mentioned last week, the booth that our Outreach Board has set up every Sunday at the Rockwood Peoples' Market is such a great example of sharing our faith in Jesus.
 - i. You can join them any time on Sundays between 1-5pm – as they hand out bibles, Gospel bracelets, Fully Rely On God (F.R.O.G.s), and witness Jesus to the people who stop by.

- ii. If you wonder what it looks like to witness Jesus, you can just sit and watch – and you will be blessed by the things you see...
- f. In a world of constant struggle and sin, we do have a very different perspective as Christians....
 - i. First we want to share our faith because we know it is the only hope.
 - ii. And finally, no matter what happens we are the victors in Jesus – and we know deep down that all things will be made right in the end.
Amen.