

**MORNING PRAYER**  
**FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**  
**02.09.25**

When Jesus talks about God, he does it by talking about things we know about. Jesus talks about things like seeds, rocks, fish, pearls, coins, nets, birds, yeast, bread, fishermen, kings, servants, meals, and such like.

Jesus talks about farming, fishing, sleeping, baking, banquets, and building houses. Our Lord uses all these things as ways to describe the kingdom of God.

What Jesus is saying is that the kingdom of God is not “up there,” or, in “the sweet-bye-and-bye.” It’s not just “pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die.” It’s also “steak-on-your-plate-while-you-wait.” It’s here-and-now.

The parables are simple stories. Anyone, as Jesus says, with ears to hear, can understand him. Jesus tells simple stories with a sharp flavor.

One thing that comes out of the parables, over and over, is that God’s kingdom begins with things that are familiar, but it never ends up as “business-as-usual.” Christ takes the natural order we are used to, and often upsets it to bring about His order. It’s been called the topsy-turvy kingdom.

Take his story of the weeds or tares among the wheat. Jesus sets up a simple enough picture: a farmer puts a wheat crop in the ground, and someone comes at night and plants weeds to grow up among the wheat. At first you can't tell which is which, but when they grow up, it's obvious which ones are the weeds and which are the wheat.

Right away there is a twist here: we all know about weeds, but someone coming at night, and planting weeds? That's kind of weird, isn't it?

When they grow up, the farmhands ask the farmer, "Should we pull the weeds out?"

The farmer says, "No, because then you'd pull up the wheat too. Leave them both alone until harvest. Then cut the weeds, bundle them up, and burn them. And then the wheat will be easy to harvest and store away."

If we were listening to Jesus that day, we might wonder, why is he telling this story? We just heard him tell another farming story, about sowing seeds that fell in different kinds of soil: some trampled, some rocky, some thin, and some good soil. Only the seed that fell in good rich soil grew into a good crop. The rest either didn't get a good start or dried up later.

Jesus is saying that people are like that when they hear God's word. Some get a good start with God, but their roots don't go deep, or the weeds of life get in their way. But when the word of God gets deep into a person, it grows. Abundantly. All from a seed that is planted in us.

Jesus wasn't always successful. He got mixed results. Some followed him. Most didn't.

If Jesus got mixed results, maybe we shouldn't be surprised when our efforts don't always work out.

If we look at our own lives, it's probably safe to say that Jesus gets mixed results from us.

Committed and resilient followers of Jesus are hard to come by. To be a lifelong Christian, you have to have deep roots, and be drought proof. You can't rush growth in Christ. You can't hurry the harvest.

We can be like the farmhands in the parable, wanting to rush to the outcome, hurry the result, but it must wait. God's power isn't like our own kind of power. God's power makes things grow, even while we are sleeping.

The parable of the wheat and the weeds tells us again what we already knew: that the world is a mix of good and bad.

Is Jesus telling us to be patient as we see the good mixed with the bad in this world?

It can be hard sometimes to tell the difference between good people and bad people. It requires great patience to let God judge, instead of us doing the judging.

When we judge others, we are liable to get it wrong.

By this I do not mean that we are to leave the weak undefended, far from it. God's justice and God's care for the poor, ring a resounding NO to every kind of evil.

When the farmhands in the parable asked who put the weeds in, the farmer tells them, "An enemy did this." The parable tells us that evil is like weeds. Evil is sneaky, invasive, working in the dark.

Jesus says at John 3:19, "This is the judgement, the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

It's hard to root evil out. The roots of evil are twisted around the roots of the good: in families, in communities, in the world, in the church, and in us.

It's easy to think that the good wheat is the good people in the church, and the bad weeds are everybody else. But that won't hold water, will it? The church is a mix of good and bad, isn't it? The church is both saints and sinners. We are each of us a mix of good and bad.

Trying to create a "pure" church won't work. Believe me, it's been tried. We will just have to wait for God's final judgement, and God's separation of good and bad.

Many of Jesus' parables end with a final accounting or separation of good and bad.

Sheep are separated from goats. Wheat is separated from chaff. The wicked are thrown in jail, or get thrown out of the house, or are slaughtered.

There can't be much doubt about God's judgment on the wicked. Knowing that God's judgment will surely come means we are not in charge of any final judging.

So, where does Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds leave us? Is it telling us to do something? In fact, it may be telling us to lay off trying to fix everything ourselves.

This parable calls on us to trust God, be patient about the outcome, and be realistic about the mix of good and evil in the world. God's got this. God will burn the weeds, but gather the wheat into his barn.

### **Let us Pray**

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honour and praise of thy Name and the spreading of the Good News of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

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