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

He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, **25** but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. **26** So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. **27** And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ **28** He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ **29** But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. **30** Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’” **36** Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” **37** He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40** Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. **41**  The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, **42**  and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

**“Overlooking The Weeds Saves The Wheat”**

 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. During the youth trip last week, the last topic discussed before heading home was scientific eschatology. It seeks to figure out the last days by observing the present to predict the future. Of course, no amount of scientific hopefulness on how to deal with impending threats to humanity can avoid the inevitable fact of decay throughout the universe. As the writer for the study states, “…these scientists also fail to take into account the present threat of death and the promise of a soon-returning Messiah.” It is easy to study “the end” as something seen far off when the bigger question is “How can we be ready for our death and the Last Day?”

 Jesus in our parable takes up the topic of eschatology that looks to the future. This story the crowds heard from Him, but an explanation He gave only to the disciples. They would be the ones authorized and sent out to preach His salvation to the ends of the earth. Jesus describes what appears tangled up and overgrown with weeds still to be a precious field filled with wheat. Rather than figuring out how to deal with the mess at the present, the better way was to wait for the future harvest. Like the sheep and the goats, so the sorting of wheat and weeds would be at the hands of the good sower who sowed good seed. In the end, the judgment of Christ is to save the wheat so we shine with His righteousness on the Last Day.

 There are plenty of things not right with the parable. We see Jesus does not hide from us that there are two different sowers. Where God works good news to save sinners, the Devil stands nearby sowing just the opposite into sinful hearts. Of course, since the devil does not own the field. He seeks a way to spoil what is not his and does it at night when no one is looking. Luther states, “The devil thus constantly tries to mimic God. He cannot bear to hear God speak. If He cannot prevent it, or forcefully obstruct God’s Word, he counters with a beautiful representation, using God’s very words but twisting them to peddle his lies and poison” (House Postils 265). There is no free will, either Christ sows His Word or the Devil sows His bad seed.

 This “poison” of Satan is the bad seed, the weeds, those who hear the Gospel but reject it in their hearts. There is no pristine field, no glorious church at the present where everyone who hears the Word believes it. To such hypocrisy standing alongside the wheat Jesus told the Pharisees and all others, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts” (Luke 16:15). Open actions by the Devil have no place against what God says in the light of His Word. Yet, this enemy goes out of His way to sow even at night a poison that only God sees. These weeds appear to have good works, just like Judas, but hold up false teaching and worship that tempt man to look at his own merits and life as justification before God.

 Finally, we must face the frustration of a not so perfect field. The servants were reacting reasonably responding to the enemy who had sown the bad seed against the sower. Peter did this when drawing His sword in the garden to strike out at the soldiers taking away Jesus. The danger of judgment looks to yank at the weeds, but ignores the plank from our own eye before dealing with the speck in our brother’s eye. The Christian Church in history cannot hide from the sad use of the sword and force to root out wickedness or put down threats. God seeks not fear to rule, when faith in His Word is how we face things at the present. Anything else becomes a threat to the wheat no matter how absurd the weeds may be.

 For all that is not right, this parable of the weeds holds up the future promise that there is an end. As much as the Devil continues to be the relentless enemy, the redeeming fact is the field belongs to God. Christ is the good sower and those who hear His forgiving Word are the good seed. He is the Son sent by the Father unashamed to save sinners. Regardless the devil’s tactics to spoil the field, God knows what He sows will not fail. Isaiah points out this promise revealed by the Lord saying. “Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses!” What stands out in the death and resurrection of Christ shines with righteousness that comes from God. Rather than self-justification, the root and cause for all good works comes from faith in Jesus able to justify sinners.

 It means the wheat has good news admits the weeds. The baptized into Christ look to a new life not clouded by sin, death, and the Devil. St. Paul says, “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” While people reject belonging to the church because of hypocrisy, it still does not dismiss the Son of God who sows good seed by His Word. Our Lutheran fathers recognized what hides in the field. They say of the church, “It is, rather, made up of men scattered throughout the world who agree on the Gospel and have the same Christ, the same Holy Spirit, and the same sacraments, whether they have the same human traditions” (Tappert 170:10). Wheat conceived and sustained in the weeds comes from the work of a good sower and longs for righteousness that shines in a kingdom not of this world.

 The Last Day will be a purifying work of God where His angels, “…will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace.” Instead of fear, Christ draws near at the present to give His peace. Out of love by His Word and Sacrament He reveals the future promised for all in Him. In other words, He does not seek to yank out anything during this time of grace, but leaves room for repentance. As the Psalmist declares, “But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Psalms 86:15). Since all are law-breakers and have contributed to causes of sin. Only Christ lets us escape the fires of judgment by what He declares. His absolution is what enlivens the promise of baptism that has washed away every sin. His body and blood to eat and drink is cause not of sin, but to celebrate the lamb that was slain.

 How can we be ready for our death and the Last Day? It will not be staring off as if we can study it or treat the matter as if it does not matter to my life. Instead, two sowers are at work in the field one of life and another of death. The field might be a mess, but it does not bother the good sower one bit. He is patient in what He planted for a glory that is to be revealed. His seed are those of His kingdom hidden in a cross at the present where weeds clutter the picture. In the end, the judgment of Christ is to save the wheat so we shine with His righteousness alone on the Last Day. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.