

Sermon: What about the Weeds
Text: Matthew 13:24 – 30
Date: July 20, 2008 AM
Place: Jesup First UMC

There was once a farmer who bought an old, run down place with great plans to turn it around. The fields were grown over with weeds; the farmhouse was falling down; and the fences were broken down. Well, on the first day, the pastor stopped by and blessed the farm and wished the farmer well. Then, a few months later, he stopped by again and discovered a completely different place. The farm house looked awesome, the fences had been repaired, and the fields were filled with crops. The pastor said: “*Man, it’s just amazing what you and God have accomplished here.*” And the tired old farmer said: “*Yea, preacher, but just remember what the farm looked like when God was working it by himself.*”

God is an expert farmer. One of the first things God did on the newly created earth was plant a garden. Genesis 1:8 says: “**And the Lord planted a garden in Eden.**” And from the very beginning, God was the gardener and He placed Adam and Eve in the garden to love Him and to serve Him by taking care of the garden. And God told them, “**Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.**” In other words, God wanted Adam and Eve to expand the garden beyond Eden so that the whole earth would become God’s Garden!

So, while I don’t know much about gardening, God does! God knows a lot about soil. You see, there is hard soil, and rocky soil, and thorny soil, and good soil. What kind of soil are you?

In our text this morning, Jesus tells another farming story. A man went out into his garden and sowed good seed, but that night, while he was sleeping, the enemy came and sowed weeds among the good seed. And when the wheat started to grow, so did the weeds. Right there, side by side, in God's garden, wheat and weeds were growing side by side. And so, the servants came and said: "*Hey, Master, somebody has sowed weeds in your garden. Do you want us to pull them up?*" And the farmer said: "*No! Let the weeds and the wheat grow together, side by side, until harvest time. Then, we will harvest the weeds first and throw them into the burning fire and we'll gather the wheat into my barns.*"

What a strange way to run a farm – never pulling up the weeds, just letting them grow. But you get the idea: this is not a story about farming; it's a story about people, you and me. And this wonderful story is meant to teach us a few things about the Church.

1. JESUS IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

Verse 37 says: "*The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.*" Jesus is the supreme sower. As He traveled throughout Galilee, He proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom to anyone who would listen; He healed the sick and raised the dead; and He invited everyone to follow Him. Later, He sent 70 of His disciples into the villages around Galilee and after the resurrection, He commissioned His disciples to go to the uttermost parts of the earth "*to make disciples of all*

nations.” In Acts 2, Luke tells us: “And the Lord added to His church daily those who were being saved.”

Even today, right here in Jesup, Georgia, Jesus is actively involved in His Church. You’re not here by accident. I pray we are here because Jesus has planted us here – right here in the center of His garden.

Jesus is working in His church today.

2. SATAN IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

Jesus said that while the farmer was sleeping his enemy came and sowed weeds into the garden. Now, believe it or not, this was common in Jesus’ day. If you were arguing with the farmer down the road, sometimes the only way you could get even with him was to ruin his crop, sow a few weeds in his garden. It was so common that the Romans even passed a law against it.

Jesus said: “The enemy who sowed the bad seed is the devil.” The Bible is clear that Satan is the enemy of God and the enemy of the church. And He is so intent on the destruction of the church that from time to time, he sows bad seed in the church.

You see, you and I would like to think that everybody in the church has been planted here by God and that we’re all on the same page. But the Bible says that’s not necessarily the case. Sometimes the enemies comes and sows bad seed in the church, bad seed that causes conflict, bad seed that causes division, bad seed that tears the church apart by gossiping and lying and laziness.

Listen, God is alive and well and keeping watch over the church, but so is the enemy. We don't like to talk about him much. We don't like to think about these things, but I believe the church's biggest mistake is failing to recognize Satan and the way he works.

Satan is still working in the church today.

Yes, Jesus sows good seed into the church and Satan sows bad seed into the church. And you and I know enough about farming to be dangerous. We naturally assume that the best thing to do when you have weeds growing in the garden is to pull them out. I don't know anybody that wants weeds in their flower bed. And I don't know anybody that wants weeds growing in their garden. Weeds will take over the garden and if you leave them there long enough, weeds will multiply and you'll have weeds again next year.

So we want to pull them up, weed 'em out! But here's the problem: How can you tell the wheat from the weeds? You see, when Jesus talked about weeds being sowed in the garden, He was using the term for "Bearded Darnel." Bearded Darnel is a plant that is very similar to wheat. In fact, when the two plants are growing side by side, only an expert farmer can tell them apart. It's only when the top of the plants open and the fruit becomes evident that you can tell them apart.

So, if the servants had gone out into the field and began to pull up everything they thought was weeds,

chances are, they would have pulled up the wheat too. So in verse 30, Jesus said: “Let both of them grow together until the harvest.” And that’s really the third thing we have to consider this morning ...

3. Saints and sinners co-exist in the life of the church.

The early church fathers had a difficult decision to make. They had to decide: is the church a home for saints or a hospital for sinners? And for 2000 years, the church has proclaimed that it is both! As we gather for worship today, there are people here at every step along the journey of faith. We are baby Christians and mature Christians. We are saints who are sinners and we are sinners who are sinners. And everybody is welcome.

Imagine what the church would look like today if we went on a witch hunt. What if we said people with long hair couldn’t belong? What if we said women who wear makeup have to leave? Or what if we focused on other behavior like drinking or smoking or cussing? If we did that, a lot of people would be hurt. And according to Jesus, we wouldn’t just weed out the bad seed, a lot of good wheat would be ruined in the process.

And so, we wait the final harvest; we wait and allow God, the supreme judge, to do the weeding. And until then, we open our arms and our doors to everybody, because ...

4. Only God can transform sinners into saints.

Now, in farming, weeds never become wheat. But remember, we aren’t talking about farming here.

We're talking about people. And in God's garden, the church, weeds can be transformed into wheat by the grace of God.

Romans 12:2 says: "*Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds!*" You see, it's the power of God's love that transforms every soul and every circumstance.

When Vic was a young man, he had the world by the tail. He had a promising career in baseball in the Detroit Tigers organization. But Vic had a problem, he was addicted to alcohol and when it finally took over his life, it ruined his baseball career. Everybody gave up on him: his wife left him and the Tigers released him. Vic was just an old weed that needed to be weeded out and thrown into the fire.

But something happened in Vic's life. At his lowest point, Vic had an encounter with Jesus Christ and because of that encounter, he joined AA and spent the next 55 years, influencing others to stay sober. And when he died at the age of 96, 200 people attended his funeral and for over an hour, they sat as one by one, they all testified how a sinner turned saint, pointed them toward Jesus.

Vic's was a life transformed by the love of God. Only God can transform a sinner into a saint.

You see, friends, this story really hits at the heart of the Great Commandment, because we are left to ask: what am I, a weed or wheat, a saint or a sinner? And then, we are left to ask: How do I respond to the people around me? Do I try to weed them out or do I leave that up to God? Do I really love God and do I

really love others? Friends, the harvest is coming and
Jesus really wants to know!