



7 PENTECOST  
JULY 8/11/12/2015

1ST, MARSHALL  
PASTOR SCOTT FULLER

Isaiah 44:1-8; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43  
*Weeds-Be-Gone?*

*Dear friends in Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

*Prepare our hearts, Lord, to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own that in hearing we may believe and in believing we may obey your will revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

In our Gospel passage for today, Jesus tells the parable of the Weeds Growing in the Wheat (or the corn, the soybeans, or the beets – you name the crop). He urges the people to *let the weeds and the wheat grow together until the harvest...*

Here's a question for those of you:

- who come from a **farming** background; **or** those
- who enjoy the art of **gardening**; or those
- who simply **long** for a nice, green, dandelion-free lawn...

**What kind of a grade would you give our Lord for his advice in this parable on how to deal with weeds???**

How many of you would give him an A? a B? a C? Who among you would have the guts to make him re-take the class on weed-control???

How many of you teachers would call up his DAD and say that he needs to come to his son's parent-teacher conference???

Gardening smarts – and conventional wisdom – tell us that weeds are:

- 1) unwelcome in places they don't belong; that they are
- 2) prolific propagators – meaning: they grow like, well, like weeds!!!;
- 3) and finally, weeds are very difficult to eradicate, to get rid of, to wipe off the face of the earth...something I know about from personal experience!

But before we go to that dark place in my heart, I want to share with you a couple of quotes to support my **negative** view of weeds:

(from <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/weeds>)

-Said Benjamin Franklin: *A man of words and **not** of deeds, is like a garden full of **weeds**.*

-Said Israelmore Ayivor: *Anger is the **agro-chemical** that makes the **weeds** of failure compete with your **crops** of success. **Don't apply it.***

In both statements, weeds come off **looking** bad...because they **are** bad, right? Well...truth be told, not everybody agrees with my assessment.

Someone by the name of Ella Wheeler Wilcox once said, *A weed is but an unloved flower.*

While L.M. Montgomery, in her book, The Story Girl, said, *When weeds go to heaven, I suppose they will be flowers...*

Here's my point: I believe that Jesus is fully-aware of the frustration that weeds will foment amongst all kinds of folks who love to farm or grow gardens or tend lawns. It's certainly true about me!

A few years ago, I'd had it with the dandelion infestation in our yard – and I was going to get rid of them all without using any chemicals. I was convinced that a few minutes every day spent ripping those interlopers out by the roots would soon leave my lawn lush, and green, and empty of that sunny little scourge...

...Have you ever heard the ancient story of **Hercules'** battle against the monster **Hydra**? Not only did the evil beast have many heads – it also had this demonic ability: when Hercules would kill one of its heads, two more would grow back in its place...

Any idea why I reference that story at this point in my sermon? I swear I'd go to bed after decimating 50 dandelions...only to wake up the next morning and see 100 more little yellow weeds basking in the sun!!!

I think Jesus knew that people like me get absolutely apoplectic when we see those devilish little dandelions swaying in the breeze. So here's my challenge to the Lord – in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, we confess, *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in...green pastures...*

He **does** not say, *green pastures that are defaced by dirty, dastardly dandelions...* Can I get an AMEN! ??? So, you may ask, *What's the message that Jesus wants us to hear?*

While his advice to Let the weeds and wheat grow together **might** appear to be a little **weak**, I believe there's a **deep vein** of **wisdom** in those words. This is especially true if we're talking about more than just weeds in a field... but also the weeds that infest our hearts, our lives, our words and our deeds.

For if we were to ignore his advice and go after those weeds with everything we've got, then some very bad things could happen.

Help me name a few:

1. Collateral damage: rooting out the bad would also destroy the good
2. Fixating on the weeds is a double-edged sword
  - Weeds, just like sinful deeds, are impossible to eradicate – that's a battle we could never hope to win.
  - Plus, focusing our spiritual energy on the negative would eventually take its toll on our hearts and on our souls. It would steal our humor, drain our joy, our ruin our sense of contentment with all that we've been given.

In short, if I were to dedicate my life to destroying weeds, I would become a **death-bringer** rather than a *life-giver* – does that make sense? I would, by default, end up joining the dark side of the devil – using all my gifts...to fight a useless battle.

So basically, Jesus' **first** goal is to **save me** from *myself*...to save all of us from ourselves. We have **not** been called, we have **not** been coached, we have **not** been commissioned to use our time, our talents, and our treasures...to **rid** the **world** of **weeds** – neither those that infest our gardens *nor* those that afflict lives.

The Lord's **second** goal is to save us from trying to do **God's job** here in life, the one that **none** of us is qualified to do...

It is not for us to decide which weeds have to go, which sinners have to be punished, which of God's children are not deserving of God's grace... That's way above our pay grade, isn't it?

Looking out at the crop, and being told that we need to let the two grow together...means that we must **ignore** the weeds in the *wheat*... In short, the first step, says the Lord, is to **let it go**...and, NO, I have NOT seen the movie "Frozen" – and plan **not** to...until the day that my granddaughter may ask me to watch it with her...and then I'll say, *I'd love to!*

No, *letting go and letting them grow together* is a **vital first step**, but it's also a very **frustrating** step. It's difficult to do because it feels like we're doing nothing while evil appears to be winning.

But at its heart, it's more than that. By embracing Jesus' call to **Let It Be**, we reject the urge to be negative, we refrain from doing something destructive, we refuse to single out *those people* as the enemies of God.

As Jesus put it in Luke 6:42,  
*How can you say to your neighbor, 'Friend, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye?*

So we're absolutely thankful that there is **another** side to all of this. It's God's call to spend our time, our talents, our treasures...in doing something POSITIVE...

Now, it's not something **glorious**...but it is very good.  
 It's not something **bold**...but it is very beneficial.  
 It's not something **incredible**...but it is very important.

An author by the name of Michael Flynn, in his novel entitled Eifelheim, has one of his characters, a pastor named Dietrich, speak the words from our bible passage for today:

*Quote: Jesus said the weeds would grow with the wheat until the Judgement... so one finds both good (people) and bad in the Church...I have come to believe, says Dietrich, that there is more grace in becoming wheat than there is in pulling weeds.*

Thanks be to God that you and I **have** been called, coached, and commissioned to do something so much more **positive in** our lives and **with** our lives than pulling weeds.

Says Jesus, **let the weeds and wheat grow together**...

Theologian Robert Capon, in his book on the parables of Jesus entitled, Kingdom, Grace and Judgement, makes a big deal out of that little word, **let**. On the one hand, he says, it gives us permission to recognize and accept our limitations, our human-ness, our inability to solve the world's problems. ***Let both of them grow***, says the master to the farmhands.

*Let it be*, sang the iconic John Lennon. *Let go and let God* says the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous...which carries us right to the other hand.

For when we finally quit worrying and let go...of that which we cannot control, of that which we cannot change, of that which we cannot correct... we are so much better able to focus on the good we can do AND so much better able to trust that God will take care of the rest.

Here you and I are called to do what we've been created to do: let God's Spirit take care of the weeds in life...AND let God's Spirit work the miracle of growth in *our* lives. As the flower needs the sun, water and nourishment to thrive, so we need God's Son, the water of baptism and the nourishment of Jesus' words and body and blood.

I'm convinced that it's **only** when we **give up pulling weeds** that we'll **ever** be able to find grace in ***becoming wheat***...can I get an AMEN?

Letting go and letting God fill us with his grace to bless the lives of all people around us – especially those in need and in pain – that's what it means to find grace in becoming wheat.

But just for full disclosure's sake, you're still going to see me pulling weeds in our yard – especially dandelions!! Amen!