

God prepares the place in which the weeds are allowed to grow up with the wheat and the place in which all we have for pillows are stones. God wants us to grow until the harvest, to be forgiving of those with whom we disagree, and to be hopeful for a new tomorrow. We need not sit in judgment upon others. We need to grow together in love, patience, and tolerance. We will find that we are part of God's plan in doing God's work and growing the wheat of the harvest that leads us to God.

The Good News is that God is able to make something great come out of this whole, glorious, mess of intermingled wheat and weeds. God is somehow able to miraculously take this mess of ours and bring forth from it both excellent flour and excellent fire to produce life-giving bread.

Yes, we continue to get frustrated with the weeds we detect in ourselves and others. Today's parable reminds us of God's promise, that good seed has been planted in all of us, is growing and is being nurtured. In each grain God sees the beginning of the realm where peace, respect and love can flourish. Lest we get anxious and desperately start trying to pull out the weeds, we are reminded that God is in the midst of working with us.

If we have hope, hope gives way to faith. Then, faith gives us the presence of Christ. Paul says, *"If we see what we hope for, then it is not really hope. For who hopes for something he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."* (Romans 8:24)

If we wait and if we let God move in his mysterious ways, we will find ourselves surprised in the most wonderful of ways. We are different, but we are all children of God to build on the ministry for God in Faith Church. We are different, but we can make this church together to be a faithful community for glorifying God. Let us grow together in love of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

January 21, 2018

New Beginning (3): **GROWING TOGETHER**

Matthew 13:24-30

Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

The Indian poet Tagore told of the day his servant arrived at work late. Like so many of his upper class, Tagore was helpless when it came to menial things, or he made himself helpless because as a member of the upper caste he considered himself above these things. An hour went by and the servant hadn't arrived. Tagore was getting angrier by the minute. He thought of all the punishments he was going to inflict upon his servant when he finally arrived. Three hours passed. Now he no longer thought of punishments, he knew that he would fire him when he got there. Finally noon arrived. The servant came to work and without a word, proceeded to do his work. He picked up his master's clothes, began to make a meal and do other chores around the house. Tagore watched all of this in silent rage. Finally he said, "Drop everything and get out of here. You're fired." The man kept working, quietly, diligently. Tagore said, "Get out of here." The man said, "My little girl died this morning."

We don't often know what goes on in other people's lives. We do not know the burdens other people carry around with them. Yet we think we know enough to make instant judgments and take swift action; often we don't.

The gospel reading today is the parable of the wheat and the weeds. A farmer sowed wheat in his field, but while he slept an enemy sowed weeds so that when the wheat began to sprout and grow so did the weeds. This posed a dilemma: What should he do? If he pulled out the weeds, he'd destroy the wheat. So, he told his servants to let them grow together until the harvest.

The first lesson we need to learn from today's text is that the kingdom of God is a mixed bag in which wheat and weeds grow together, side by side. It's not always clear which is the wheat and

which are the weeds. We can't always tell them apart. As such, we should not try to judge one from the other.

And the second lesson we need to learn is that, when it comes to human nature, not one of us is ever completely a saint or a sinner, but a combination of both. Mr. Rogers used to say, "Have you ever noticed that the very same people who are bad sometimes are the very same people who are good sometimes?"

It reminds me of a story called, "Two Wolves." It goes like this: An old Cherokee once told his grandson about a fight that was going on inside of him. He said it was between two wolves. One was evil: Anger, envy, greed, arrogance, self-pity, gossip, resentment, and false pride. The other was good: Joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. The grandson thought about it for a moment and then asked his grandfather, 'Which wolf do you think will win?' The old Cherokee replied, 'The one I feed.'

We're created in the image of God, yet we bear the mark of original sin. As such, there lies within each of us the capacity for evil and the potential for good. The Apostle Paul said of himself, "*For I don't know what I am doing. For I don't practice what I desire to do; but what I hate, that I do... find then the law, that, to me, while I desire to do good, evil is present...*" (Rom. 7:14-25)

Now consider yourselves. Do you think that you are like the wheat in your ministry? Do you think that you are like the weed in your life? Sometimes we are encouraged to be a faithful servant for God's ministry. We devote ourselves by using our wisdoms, talents, times, efforts, and hearts for God. As such, we are the Christians like the wheat.

However, we sometimes slide back in our ministry and faith life. Sometimes we stumble into unfaithful life. Sometimes we feel that all kinds of services for God seem burdens. Sometimes we ask ourselves "Why should I go to church?" or "Why should I believe in God?"

Sometimes we prefer secular life to sacred life. In these cases we are Christians like the weed.

We do not know what is going to come next. We cannot pin down just where God is and what he is about. In fact we don't know that the weeds about us will remain weeds. And we cannot be sure that the wheat will remain wheat.

In the final act in the drama of salvation, the tensions that exist within us and within all God's creation will finally be resolved and put to rest, and we shall live in peace with God and each other forevermore. But, until then, they coexist – the wheat and weeds grow side by side – even within us – so that to root out the one would be to destroy the other.

The third lesson is this: Ultimately, there will come a day of judgment. In the words of the parable, "*Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the harvest time I will tell the reapers, 'First, gather up the darnel weeds, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.'*" (Matthew 13:30) At harvest time, two things would happen: The wheat and the weed would be cut and taken to the threshing floor where the grain would be separated from the stalks. The wheat would be plump and golden brown. The weed would be small and black. The women and children would then separate one from the other, grain by grain, throwing out the darnel and, of course, keeping the wheat to make flour.

Once the wheat and the weed were threshed and the grain was separated from the stalk, the stalks were bundled and burned as fuel for cooking and heating. And the darnel seed? The Greeks and Romans found that, even though it was poisonous, in small doses it had a medicinal quality. In God's sight, nothing is useless; nothing is lost. In God's hands, even a dastardly deed of a vengeful neighbor can serve a useful purpose: "*All things work together for good...*" (Romans 8:28)