



The Seventh Sunday After Pentecost

Sunday, July 19th, 2020

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Sermon Transcript

Matthew 13:24-30;36-43

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will

collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

On Judgement and Forgiveness

When I was young and fair, I had a job that included mowing lawns, painting and weeding. Weeding was the part of the job I disliked the most. I wasn't good at it; I was impatient and the garden in question was an asparagus garden which was very big. I would leave the job of weeding to the last thing I did, only to move the earth around to cover the weeds and hope that my boss wouldn't notice. He did and I would have to do the whole job all over again – a lesson in itself! Weeding has been necessary hard work for farmers and gardeners throughout history, but there is a twist in the parable we heard today. We heard that the wheat and weeds are allowed to grow together, and Jesus will send angels to do the weeding at the time of the harvest. We can take away two learnings from this parable. We are not to judge, while not permitting sinning. We are to forgive as we have been forgiven.

We are not to judge, while not permitting sinning. Today we hear yet another in a series of parables, a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. This parable was traditionally known as the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Jesus actually explains the parable after telling it which he always doesn't do. First a quick explanation of wheat and tares which may be lost on the 20th century North American mostly urban listener. This is the twist which I spoke about earlier. Dr. William Barclay in his commentary explains it this way: The mental pictures in this parable would be clear and familiar to a Palestinian audience. Tares were one of the curses against which a farmer had to labour. They were a weed called bearded darnel (*Lolium Temulentum*). In their early stages the tares so closely resembled the wheat that it was impossible to distinguish the one from the other. When both had grown up it was easy to distinguish them; but by that time their roots were so intertwined that the tares could not be weeded out

without tearing the wheat out with them. This is why the wheat and tares should grow up together, which would be obvious to Jesus' listener, but not necessarily to us.

Secondly, we need to understand that this parable is not universal in its scope. It is not a parable that says we are to let sin abound. Last week's parable reminds us of how thorns can choke the seed from producing fruit and this can happen in families, neighbourhoods and the church. And, God is the only and final judge as we read, amongst many other places in scripture, in James 4:12: There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy. So who, then, are you to judge your neighbour? God's judgement is not immediate like in the movies, but judgment comes.

It might seem like to us that people in this life escape the consequences of their actions. We are reminded constantly that there is a life to come and a final judgement. And so, we find in God, judgment and we also find forgiveness which leads to my second point.

We are to forgive as we have been forgiven. There are a number of sayings or expressions you might call them that I was taught while growing up. The first of which was when you have to do something, do it right away or write it down. This would explain, for those who know me, my constant use of post-it notes. Another one would be, put things back where you found them. This would explain, for those who know me, why I get so upset when I go to use something and it isn't there. And the third one, which is in a way tied to the second one: Don't live by, "It's easier to ask for forgiveness than permission. I hear that last expression a lot, even in church circles, and it's one that I try to avoid. We are not to find ways of getting away with sin hoping that we will be forgiven if we are caught. This would apply to those who knowing sidestep safety protocols during the pandemic and ask for forgiveness afterwards. Paul deals with this issue very well in Romans 6:1 when he says: Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound?

Forgiveness in Jesus is central to the Christian life. Without it, no one lives the Christian life and no one gets into heaven. The church has not had the best record with forgiveness for it has not always followed what it teaches.

Secular society has recently come up with something called cancel culture, which is actually has been around since the beginning of time, we just have a new name for it. Cancel culture is a form of boycott in which an individual who has acted or spoken in a questionable or controversial manner is boycotted. It would seem that forgiveness, if a person repents, is now not in any way shape or form, not an option – this also may not be new.

Here is an example of what I mean, that just happened in the last week. Neil Golightly, the Communications officer stepped down after an employee complained about an article he wrote in 1987 that said women should not serve in combat. Mr. Golightly said of the piece: “Painful because it is wrong. Painful because it is offensive to women. Painful because it reminds me of the sharp and embarrassing education the uninformed and unformed ‘me’ of that time received as soon as the piece appeared.” I would say that that is statement of regret and an apology. The company’s chief executive, David Calhoun, wrote that Boeing “will have zero tolerance for bigotry of any kind” and that the company would “redouble our determination to drive out behaviors that violate our values and injure our colleagues.”

Jesus forgive sins and asks us to do the same. I wonder how many of the churches leadership would still be in place if we were to quote them about their views 30-40 years ago of women in active combat or for the matter, the ordination of women. If we go back to the wheat and tares growing up together, we can judge people prematurely, but Jesus doesn’t. Peter, Paul and Mary, not the folk group, all know Jesus forgiveness. In the case of Peter for denying Jesus three times. In the case of Paul who approved of the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1) and persecuted early Christians relentlessly. And in Mary’s case, we read in chapter 3 of Mark’s Gospel gets it wrong who the family of Jesus is who states “whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.’

We are not to judge, while not permitting sinning We are to forgive as we have been forgiven. Let’s live like we believe that. Amen.