

## **Wheat and Weeds Together**

**Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...**

It's been said that *"those who spend their time looking for fault in others, usually spend no time to correct their own" ...*

Another person once said, *"When you judge another person, you do not define them, you define yourself" ...*

And still another once said, *"Do not judge people for the choices they make when you do not know the options they had available – or what you would have done differently" ...*

I want to begin this morning with something sort of funny (that a member of Faith sent to me) – that sort of ties in with this idea that we shouldn't judge others (but let God be the judge of all)...

It says, "A minister dies (and he's waiting on line to enter the Pearly Gates)... ahead of him is a man who's dressed in dirty jeans, a leather jacket, and he has tattoos all over (including his face)..."

Saint Peter looks at the man and says, "Who are you so that I may know whether or not to admit you into the Kingdom of Heaven?"... the man replies, "I'm Tony Pizano, a taxi driver from New York City"...

Saint Peter looks at the list, smiles and says to him, "Take this silken robe and golden staff and you may enter the Kingdom of Heaven."... The taxi-driver goes into Heaven with his silken robe and golden staff, and not it's the minister's turn...

The minister stands proud and booms out in a loud voice, "I am William Snow – pastor of Saint Luke's Lutheran Church for the last 43 years"... Saint Peter looks at his list and says to the minister, "Take this cotton robe and wooden staff and you may enter the Kingdom of Heaven"...

"Wait just a minute!", says the minister... "That man was a taxi-driver and he gets a silken robe and a golden staff – How can this be?... why am I only getting a cotton robe and a wooden staff?"...

"Well, up here we work with results" says Saint Peter... "When you preached people slept; but when he drove (people prayed)...."

In case you haven't guessed – this morning in the time that I have with you I want to talk to you about judging others...

And in our reading this morning from the Gospel of Matthew (the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter) we read a parable that Jesus once told to illustrate the Day of Judgement... and it was a parable that was told to people who depended upon agriculture to make a living...

In fact, it says that a farmer planted good seed in a field – but under the cover of night and enemy came in and planted weeds... and at first, no one noticed... at first, no one could distinguish between the good seed and the bad seed...

Now, I've read that there was a common weed in Palestine called, 'Darnel' (which was also a common curse for farmers) because in it's early stages it looks just like the wheat... but when both have 'headed out' or produced seeds on the top of the plant – the two can be distinguished only by color... and at the harvest the Darnel would have to be separated from the good grain (because its seeds were slightly poisonous)...

Of course, the parable continues with the farm hands coming to the owner and asking, "Do you want us to pull these weeds now?"... but the owner says, "No, because if you try - you might damage the grains in the process... Let the weeds alone - and at harvest we will separate the two."...

What this parable is revealing (is the nature of the God that we worship)... and it says that the one who sows good seed is the Son of Man"... and, as we know, the sower could have immediately pulled the weeds out of the ground, but instead he allowed it to grow with the good seed... he was a patient farmer... just as God is patient even with those who do terrible things, even with those who make mistakes, even those who fail to do His will on earth... and if we're honest, God is patient even with us...

The Bible tells us that Jesus came into the world for the sinner... hoping to turn back those who are lost (and not sure where to turn in order to find peace)... Hoping to give comfort to the sick, and the grieving, and the worried... hoping to shed light in the darkness... and hoping to turn weeds into wheat...

You know, Martin Luther once observed that we have a paradoxical nature – in that we are both saint and sinner simultaneously... in fact, all of us have our good

sides (and things that are so beautiful within us) – but we also have the side to ourselves that has not been weeded out... that we hide away from the world... and sometimes we even try to hide from ourselves through denial or looking down on others (so that we can feel better about ourselves)...

And it's easy to look around and find the weeds in others... in fact, some of us may think if we removed certain people from the world we would all live better lives... maybe some of us believe that if we just removed the weeds from our community there would be fewer problems.... And, I am sure that if you looked around long enough you could think of some weeds that should be removed from the church...

But the parable reminds us that we are not the farm owner... we are only God's hired hands and it is not our place to judge others...

In fact, I am reminded of a poem that tells the story of a woman who forgot that truth (who in judging another – ended up judging herself)...

It says,

**A woman was waiting at an airport one night.  
With several long hours before her flight.  
She hunted for a book in the airport shop,  
Bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop.**

**She was engrossed in her book, but happened to see,  
That the man beside her, as bold as could be,  
Grabbed a cookie or two from the bag between,  
Which she tried to ignore, to avoid a scene.**

**She read, munched cookies, and watched the clock,  
As the gutsy “cookie thief!” diminished her stock.  
She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by,  
Thinking, “If I wasn't so nice, I'd blacken his eye!”**

**With each cookie she took, he took one, too.  
When only one was left, she wondered what he'd do.  
With a smile on his face and a nervous laugh,  
He took the last cookie and broke it in half.**

**He offered her half, as he ate the other.  
She snatched it from him and thought, “Oh brother,**

**This guy has some nerve, and he's also rude,  
Why, he didn't even show any gratitude!"**

**She had never known when she had been so galled,  
And sighed with relief when her flight was called.  
She gathered her belongings and headed for the gate,  
Refusing to look back at the "thieving ingrate."**

**She boarded the plane and sank in her seat,  
Then sought her book, which was almost complete.  
As she reached in her baggage, she gasped with surprise.  
There was her bag of cookies in front of her eyes!**

**"If mine are here," she moaned with despair,  
"Then the others were his and he tried to share!"  
Too late to apologize, she realized with grief,  
That she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief!**

This is why the Bible reminds us in Matthew 7:1, "*Do not judge, so that you may not be judged... for with the judgement you make, you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get*"...

But what IS beautiful about our Lord's parable is that in what appears to be weeds, it is true that God sees that there is still some good... we know that God does not ignore violence and social injustice... He does not ignore the wrongs He sees in our world, the Church, or even in our families... but He also doesn't ask us to judge in others (what is wheat and what is weed)... that was never our job (because only God can judge)...

Instead, our job is to prune away the weeds that grow in our own lives... and to have faith that one day God will eradicate all sources of evil... to believe in a place far greater than the world we live in today.... To hold onto the hope that God's love and mercy might forever surround us and keep us safe... and to prepare ourselves for the Great Harvest that will surely come... and to know, that we are on the way...

Friends, the Good News is that our god is patient, and loving, merciful and kind (and this is not only the day that the Lord has made – but it's also the day that He invites you into His forgiveness, His Grace, and His Love)... so that as the Righteous ones of God – You too shall shine like the sun in the Kingdom of our Father...

May the peace of God be within you... may His mercy show you favor... and may our Lord's forgiveness be a treasure in your heart...

In Jesus' name we pray...

**Amen!**