



Grain

²⁴He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away.’” Mt. 13:24-25

Thoughts by Reverend Peter Heide, Baraboo

Every once in a while, it would be nice if Jesus would show up to clarify a few things. I have a number of questions that would be greatly simplified if he would just come back for an hour or so. A year would be nice.

The first interrogation of Jesus could easily concern this parable and its explanation.

This parable has some good things for us to think about, but the explanation of it is particularly troublesome. Yet as a commentator I listen to points out, “This is the first of many judgment parables in the Gospel of Matthew, If we think that we can duck judgment now, you will have to deal with Matthew’s reporting of Jesus’ judgmental side eventually.”

So, how can our Lutheran identity help us understand this parable and God’s judgment of the world? As Lutherans we are told that we are simultaneously saints and sinners, *simul justus et peccator*. Luther uses this phrase to describe our relationship with Christ. We are always in the state of grace, that is, made right with God, already forgiven of our sins through the ministry—life, death, and resurrection—of Christ, and sinner, that is, always in a state of needing to be forgiven. It is not a 50%-50% proposition. It means that we are 100% saint and 100% sinner. We are both the good wheat and the weeds.

What we learn in this parable is that at some point, it is possible to tell the difference between the wheat and the weeds. At this point the workers can go into the field and cut the weeds out. When the workers cut the weeds out, the wheat which is golden can be harvested safely.

A few years ago, the *Left Behind* series of books was popular. It talked about the rapture and what was going to happen. First of all, let us remember that this series was fiction. As it turns out, the story line was sort of fun, but the entire series is predicated on a false assumption. The series opener begins with the premise that the saved people are whisked away to heaven while those who need to work on their relationship with God are left behind.

Matthew is much clearer about what is likely to happen. The ones who are left behind are the good seeds, the wheat. The ones who are taken away are those who are toxic to the world.

It would be wonderful to be a pastor who was able to say, “Don’t worry. Be happy. God is going to save everybody.” But the harsh reality is that we know that not everybody is going to be saved. Still the wheat and the weeds helps us understand how it is that we are to live with one another and ourselves.

As Lutherans, we say, “Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God determines that all should be saved, but by actively turning away from God’s grace and mercy, there will be some who lose the gift that God has given.” Who is not something that we can know. It is God’s divine wisdom that determines this.

In Lutheran language, we are fully both weed and wheat, redeemed and needing to be redeemed. We are saint and sinner. Yet in God’s great mercy, God, revealed to us in the person of Jesus Christ, intends that all should be saved, for God only plants good seed, but, in our own human self-interest

(those weed seeds) some will choose personal gratification over our relationship with God and one another.

Let us hear the cries of repentance, the weeping and gnashing of teeth and recall the two ways of purification in Scripture—washing and drowning, as in baptism, and burning as in the refiner's fire. We recall the fire of Pentecost itself and the purity of word for God's people that was translated into the many languages of the people.

So it is that we hear the weeping and gnashing of teeth as they realize their sinful behavior. Are they saved after that? We are not told. What we are told is that the righteous will come forth after the time of judgment and show themselves as the leaders for the new way of living.

Let us go out into the mission field, the world, in the confidence of the Son of Man's good seed, as the children of God, proclaiming God's goodness to all that we meet, shining like the sun in the kingdom of our creator and savior. Let us be the beacons of light showing the way of God's new way of living, not trying to determine who the weeds are, but celebrating our life together; maybe even recognizing our own weediness, celebrating life as saint and sinner, giving thanks to the one who gathers us into his barn. Happy Monday!

Share

Send any quotes you'd like to share with our network to cindyc@loppw.org

All Monday Quotes found under the Resources & Advocacy Tools tab at www.loppw.org

Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Peter