
Sermon
on Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
'THE PATH OF THE DISCIPLE: IMAGINING A NEW REALITY:
SHINE LIKE THE SUN'

::: ZERO :::

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

::: Amen.

::: ONE :::

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Before I together with my family moved to Munich we had quite a garden behind the house which was our official residence—back in Backnang.

Tasks about gardening were thoroughly divided between me and my wife.

Our garden had two parts. An upper one directly adjacent to the house which we kept as a lawn.

And a lower part which we kept as a rugged patch of flowers attractive to bees and other insects.

While we could leave the lower one to itself only mowing it twice a year, the upper one needed a lot of attention...

Mowing, trimming, watering, weeding...

::: TWO :::

Before we moved in, the garden was not exactly looked after very much.

So, as we had moved in, the garden needed quite a bit of attention.

For the upper part of the garden this meant buying a weed puller and pulling out about a billion dandelions.

Actually, it was a kind of work with mixed emotions. Because I love dandelions.

I like the bright yellow colour and how they transform into such a wonderful wind driven, seed spreading, miraculous something you can blow on and just enjoy the effect... the flying seed chutes.

::: THREE :::

On the other hand, if you want to have a nice lawn, a well-maintained patch of green grass, a playfield for the kids and a nice green space to set your sun bed up...

There is no other way than pulling out one dandelion after the other—until there is exactly *none* left.

If you don't get them all you have to start over with your work sooner as you would expect.

I never did anything like this to the lower part of our garden. We just let it grow. And to be honest—it looked much more natural and showed the most beautiful colours during the year.

And I never thought about which plants are weed and which are not. Every single one just belonged there.

∴ FOUR ∴

Now, the parable we have heard does not focus on a garden patch. The parable introduces a field, a well maintained and prepared field.

And it introduces the kingdom of heaven as a man who sows good seed in the field.

SIDE NOTE: There is a slight distinction between the parable itself where the sower is introduced as the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN—while in the later explanation the sower is the SON OF MAN.

This might show a later shift in the understanding of the parable. The earlier implication presents the Kingdom of Heaven as a given active force effecting the world.

While the later understanding connects the effect with the mission of the Son of Man and the Kingdom of Heaven as a result of the Son of Man's acting.

∴ FIVE ∴

One more little story from the book, 'Alex, the little gardener'.

After finishing and passing my theology exam, I spent 6 weeks travelling the Republic of Ireland. Including 2 weeks as a 'WWOOF' a willing worker on an organic farm.

And we had a special very slow-moving tractor with kind of a triple bed on wheels as a trailer.

Three people could lie on the trailer, face and hands down through a hole in the bed so that we could dig out weeds manually with a little shovel-like tool.

It took quite some time to weed a whole field. But a way which completely worked without chemicals.

But indeed, as said in the parable, sometimes it was not so easy to spot what the actual desired plant and what the weed was.

And I'm absolutely not sure how many little whatever-they-were plants we actually dug up.

∴ SIX ∴

The owner of the field in our parable decides differently. When he was asked about removing the weed or not he answered:

‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.³⁰ 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.’ ”

Mt 13:28–30 (NRSV)

The Kingdom of the Heavens is the force that sows the good seed. But there is a counterplaying evil force, an enemy force which sows weed.

Yet, until it is really grown it might be really complicated to distinguish between the good and the bad.

We might be tempted to have a clear idea about what is good and what is bad, about what is right and what is wrong, about what is an act of righteousness and what is sin...

::: SEVEN :::

Let me quote the Rev. Dr. Derek Weber:

„[Here] is the answer to the question, “What do we do about sin?” We live a life of righteousness in a public way so that those who have not yet found their way to God can see in us the power of Christ, the water of life welling up in springs.

No, we don't just turn our backs on sin; we overpower it; we counteract it with love, not judgment.

We transform, even as we are being transformed, through hospitality and grace, not hatred and exclusion. We heal, even as we are being healed, through acceptance and hope, not condemnation and exile. We tend, even as we are tended.

And here's the amazing part of the story.

*There will come a time when we will celebrate our hospitality, where we will embrace the grace that has been poured into us and then came forth from us. [...], **we will stand [...] and see God face to face, and then we will shine like the sun.***

*Compounding the joy will be the surprise of seeing who else is shining with us. Some of whom we might have pulled up and tossed out just might be further along in the journey than we are, and they might smile at us and say, 'You know, I once thought you were a weed in God's Garden and wanted to pull you out. Thanks be to God, I didn't.'*ⁱ

So, let us be patient, let us be contagious in our doing and fostering the good, the righteous, the healing and tending.

And let us continue in supporting our God who continues to seed his kind-dom and let it grow.

Let us not be the judging and weeding ones, but the loving, caring and compassionate followers of Christ, WHO SHINE IN THIS WORLD LIKE THE SUN.

This is, what we are called to.
::: Amen.

ⁱ Rev. Dr. Derek Weber, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-path-of-the-disciple-imagining-a-new-reality/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-preaching-notes-2> (2023-07-22).