**MODIFIED SERVICE FOR THE 7TH SUNDAY OF PENTECOST**

**ZION EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH, PHLIPSBURG**

Welcome to everyone on this 7th Sunday of Pentecost, where we all still gathered safely from the comfort of our homes.

Just a reminder that if there is anyone you would like to include on our prayer list, please call or email me, or send an email through the website. Our GotoMeeting Coffee hour is at today at 11:00, please join us! Church Council met this past Tuesday evening, look for a council report in the August Messenger.

Please remember that Zion relies on your continued support each week to meet our monthly expenses. Thanks to CEWS and your continued support our income has been steady. Thank you to all who support and pray for our congregation.

**GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,

and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray.

Faithful God, most merciful judge, you care for your children with firmness and compassion. By your Spirit nurture us who live in your kingdom, that we may be rooted in the way of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**OPENING HYMN- My Hope is Built on Nothing Less- ELW 596**

**PSALM: Psalm 86:11-17**

11Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart to revere your name.  
 12I will thank you, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and glorify your name forevermore.   
 13For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the pit of death.  
 14The arrogant rise up against me, O God, and a band of violent people  seeks my life; they have not set you before their eyes.  
 15But you, O Lord, are gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger, and full of kindness and truth.  
 16Turn to me and have mercy on me; give your strength to your servant, and save the child of your handmaid.  
 17Show me a sign of your favor, so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame; because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.

**SECOND READING: Romans 8:12-25**

A reading from Romans.

12So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—13for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 15For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.  
  18I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. 19For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; 20for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 25But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

The word of the Lord.

**GOSPEL: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

24[Jesus] put before [the crowds] 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. 26So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 27And 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?’ 28He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ 29But he replied, ‘No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. 30Let 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.’ ”  
  36Then 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.” 37He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; 38the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, 39and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, 42and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

I was weeding my garden this week, and I was trying to be careful around my vegetable plants, they are coming along nicely, and I did not want to disturb them. I was working around my beets and decided to take out a weed that was very close to a perfectly shaped tiny golden beet. I thought to myself, I m careful, I can pull out this weed without disturbing the beet that is growing so close. So, I pulled and out came the weed and the beet plant. I was frustrated, but also laughed to myself knowing that I was living out our Gospel reading this morning!

It appears that we are continuing with the gardening theme in Gospel of Matthew this week. Last week we read about seeds and good soil, this week we read about seeds again, this time it is good seed and weed seed. I find it sort of amusing that Jesus is using parables involving gardening to explain the kingdom of God to a bunch of fishermen. Couldn’t he have come up with a fishing parable that the disciples would have better understood?

But Jesus may well have done this on purpose, because well that is what Jesus does. He turns the world upside down and uses parables as allegories, meaning a story with a hidden meaning that teaches us something about the kingdom of God. The author of the gospel of Matthew speaks much to the conflict that takes place within the kingdom of God, he talks of sending his sheep out into the midst of wolves (Matt. 10:16), and the 10 bridesmaids who had their oil lamps and were waiting for the bridegroom to appear (Matt. 25: 1-13). The writer is talking about evil, and it is not so much about why there is evil in the world….that could be a whole sermon series and I still would not be able to come up with an answer, but more so of what we do when we experience evil in the world.

So, let us delve into the parable a little more. A farmer sows his field with wheat seeds, looking forward to a bountiful crop that would provide for both his animals and his family. During the cover of night, a thief appears; the enemy, who sows weed seeds amongst the wheat. The wheat begins to grow, but so do the weeds. The workers want to remove the weeds right away, because, well, that would be the easiest thing to do, and it would take care of the problem. But as we know Jesus does not think that way, Jesus is again turning our world upside down.

The farmer tells the workers to leave the weeds in the field so as not to disturb the wheat, so that it may grow and flourish. But is there another reason to leave the weeds? What does this parable teach us about the kingdom of God?

David Lose suggests that the parable of the weeds speaks to ambiguity.[[1]](#footnote-1) It speaks to uncertainty and choices that are made in our lives, it speaks of the need to have to wait and the need to relinquish control. These are all things that we as humans find hard to do! Think of the last 4 months of the Covid 19 pandemic, we have had to live with uncertainty, of not knowing what the next month will be like let alone the next year. We have had to live with waiting and with choices. Do we go out or do we stay inside where it is safe? Do we wear a mask or don’t we?

All throughout our lives there are choices to make. Do we take the job that is safe and stable, or do we take the risk of the unknown? You have just been diagnosed with a severe illness and there are two different choices of treatment, one that offers quality of life, one that offers quantity of life. Which do you choose? You have just been offered your dream job, but it will take you away from your family for longer periods of time, what do you choose? Choices are never easy, that is what Jesus is speaking about in todays parable. The farmer made a choice to leave the weeds in the field, to wait, and let God sort it out.

And that is what God asks of us as well. Jesus is asking us to let go of our judgement and let God in, to let God guide us to the best choice for us. Jesus is asking us to trust in God and to be steadfast in the knowledge that God walks with us in the choices that we make offering unconditional love to all. Our choices may not always be the correct one, sometimes there is no correct choice and that is okay, at those times we put our trust and hope in God. In our New Testament reading from Romans, Paul invites us to live into the trust, hope, and promise of God in the groaning of our lives, in the choices we make.

So, let us be like the workers in the field, let us wait for those weeds to grow, let us not judge one another, let us let go and let God, let us trust in the wondrous power of the Holy Spirit, let us love one another as we are loved.

I would like to end today with a prayer written by David Lose,

Dear Lord, our lives are colored by ambiguity and we don’t always know the right or best thing to do. But we do know that your love is guiding us and that you have called us to live as your people in the world. When we face hard choices, give us eyes to see the best path forward and the courage to follow it. When we make mistakes, forgive us. When we are hurt by our choices, comfort us. When we hurt others, help us to reach out to them in love. And above and beyond all these decisions, remind us that you still love us and call us back to this place that we may be forgiven, renewed, called, and sent forth once more as your beloved children. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY- Almighty God Your Word is Cast- ELW 561**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wgneEoktNlI>

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need. *A brief silence.*

God of the church, we praise you for sowing the good seed of the gospel throughout the world, and we mourn that at this time many Christians cannot assemble to nurture one another for growth in the faith. Tend your people; support bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; give us strength through your word. Lead seminaries to plan appropriately for the fall semester. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all space and time, your whole creation groans in labor pains, awaiting the gift of new birth. Renew the earth, sky, and sea, so that all your creation experiences freedom from the bondage of decay. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the nations, we praise you for the good that has been given to us in this country, and we mourn that many who are poor and trampled upon. Lead us to form communities in which all people are equal and where disputes are settled without violence. Save us from preserving a past that has been harmful to many. Bring an end to warfare around the world, and mend the torn fabric of humankind with your truth and mercy. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of hope, you accompany those who suffer and are near to the broken-hearted. Open our hearts to your children who are lonely and abandoned, who feel trapped by despair, and all who suffer with illness or injury in any way. We remember especially Eddie, Elaine, Susie, Mary Ann, Ruth, David, Donelda, Lynette and those we name in the stillness of our hearts. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of the seasons, in the midst of summer, give us refreshment, renewal, and new opportunities. We pray for all who travel and those who staycation at home. We pray for those who cannot take the rest they need. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of life, those who have died in you shine like the sun in your endless kingdom. We remember with thanksgiving the saints of all times and places and saints close to us. Gather us with them on the day of salvation. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Let us pray.

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

**Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,**

**hallowed be thy name,**

**thy kingdom come,**

**thy will be done,**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;**

**and forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those**

**who trespass against us;**

**and lead us not into temptation,**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,**

**and the power, and the glory,**

**forever and ever. Amen.**

**BLESSING**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord’s face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

**Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING HYMN- For the Fruit of All Creation- ELW 679**

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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1. David Lose, “Pentecost 6A: On Wheat, Weeds and Ambiguity” in *Working Preacher*, written July 14, 2014, accessed July 17, 2020, <http://www.davidlose.net/2014/07/pentecost-6-a-on-wheat-weeds-and-ambiguity/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)