

Sermon 2009 Pentecost 10
Text: Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43
Theme: "Weeds and Wheat"

As I was doing my research for this sermon, I came across another Lutheran Pastor's sermon on this text. Apparently he thought it pretty good because at the end of the sermon he printed, "you may use this but please give credit." I promise you, he would not want me to assign credit to him for that Calvinistic, pietistic mess. He got it wrong just like many Christians do.

His central point in his sermon is to get the hearers to ask themselves, "Am I a weed or am I wheat?" I can't help but think of Dirty Harry,

"But being as this is a 44 Magnum, the most powerful handgun in the world, and would blow your head clear off, you've got to ask yourself one question: Do I feel lucky? Well, do ya punk?" Essentially this pastor is trying to scare his congregation into being nicer people. "Don't act so weedy or you might go to Hell!" is his central message.

WRONG! He missed the point of the text because he's so busy being a flaming pietist that he forgot how grace works. Now

there's nothing wrong with asking God to empower his wheat to act like wheat. That's what we prayed in the prayer of the day.

"O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your final judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell in You in perfect joy hereafter."

Who has control of all those verbs? God! We are praying that he will govern our hearts and minds and when God is governing your heart and your mind, how can you live any way but holy?

Look at the Old Testament today.

"Fear not, nor be afraid;

have I not told you from of old and declared it?

And you are my witnesses!

Would God tell people who he is about to throw into eternal fire not to be afraid? What kind of mean, nasty God would do that? No, you are wheat and the only thing you have to fear is your own pride and arrogance. It is human pride and arrogance that leads us to believe that we know more than God and that we determine who is wheat and who is weed. That's the point of the parable. We can't tell weeds from wheat until the last day when

the master will harvest and the weeds and the wheat will be shown for what they are by their works. Until then weeds and wheat look a lot alike. Wheat sheaves do good stuff. Weeds do good stuff. Can you look into another person's heart and determine whether that good stuff was done to God's glory or to human glory? Nope, I can't either. So even if you are a great giver, a superlative volunteer and a faithful church attendee, you might still be a weed and doing all of that for some unknown and unrighteous reason. On the other hand you might give practically nothing, never help with anything around here and only show up in the pew occasionally and you might be wheat that is just having some difficulty acting like who and what you are; wheat.

See it is God who makes us wheat – nothing we do. Neither is it our job on this earth to toe the line so that God doesn't punish us by throwing us into the fires of hell. Jesus Christ has already been punished for our sin. Our job is to relax and enjoy the gift. We can enjoy the freedom of being wheat and knowing that while there seem to be a good many weeds around us; God will take care of that on the last day. It's not our job.

On the last day is when we get to shine – shine like the sun as a matter of fact. That is the glorious promise in this text. If you are wheat, you know it because the light of Christ is alive in your heart and you know that one day all of your fascination with weediness will be gone and you will shine like the sun. If you are a weed, you know it, because you are going through the motions of looking like wheat but you don't have a relationship with the Lord or care to have one; and for you, the last day will hold no end of terror – so better enjoy the field now because there's no joy in eternity for you.

Having said that, we are done because we cannot know anything about the hearts of others and even if we could, it's not our business anyway. Just a postscript: if you are wheat, and you are sitting there thinking it seems unfair that some of the wheat acts rather weedy and seems to get to do whatever they want without punishment, remember a couple of things. First remember the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son. He too was upset because his father showered blessings on someone who had acted rather weedily. The father reminded him

that all he had was the son's and that the father had freely given him everything. While the younger brother had been out wallowing in the weeds, the older brother had been in a loving relationship with the father. If you are wheat, you are ONLY wheat by the grace of God and it is nothing you did. Rejoice in the gift and quit obsessing over how the Father is dealing with someone else. Second, if wheat is acting weedy, the law will not change the path of the wheat. Only the Gospel changes people's hearts. Only love and forgiveness can rescue wheat because while a weed cannot become wheat of its own will, wheat can become weeds if it rejects the gift of God for too long. AMEN.