

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Holy Spirit, empower us to live in the light of the gospel, declaring its truth with our words, and embodying this truth through our actions. Give us love for you and love for one another. Amen

Let Both Grow Together



Slide 1 Theme for today is "Our Lord the Righteous Judge."

In the Old Testament reading today the Lord spoke to Jacob "Behold I am with you and will keep you wherever you go... for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you." "I am with you"-- means practical help. Whatever we undertake, God is with us in the undertaking; whatever we endure, God is with us in the enduring; where ever we wander, God is with us in our wandering.

In the Romans reading Chap 8 Paul is telling the people about the hope of fulfilment. Hope is a sort of universal blessing, and one of the greatest which God has granted to man. To mankind, in general, life would be intolerable without it.

We are not the final judge of the world-that is God's job. We are to remain faithful to God's word even during hard times, but if we do go astray, we have opportunities to mend our ways. We have the time and the grace we need to make changes.



Slide 2 Today we have the gospel reading from Matthew 13, of the Parable of the wheat and the weeds and it is most appropriate, for today is also Social Services Sunday where we recognise all those who work and volunteer for the many social service agencies that are working within our society. Without them the world

would be a lot worse and through their help, not only in NZ but many countries throughout the world, people are given hope.

I know a number of you are keen gardeners and like to keep them tidy. Weeds can be annoying as they continue to come through and also some of them actually have nice flowers. Also most of us like a nice weed free, green lawn but this can be a real challenge. For those who are not gardeners, don't worry if your garden goes astray.

So what is the real story behind today's Gospel from Matthew? What is Jesus trying to tell us?

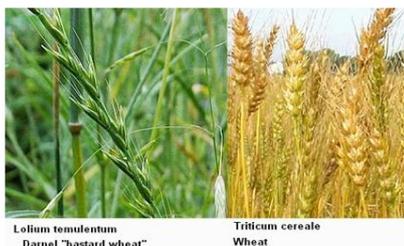
The parable, Jesus tells of the wheat and the weeds talks about a deeper meaning to just weeding your garden. What he is telling us is to leave the weeds for now and sort them out later. Do not discriminate at the time, as that may do more damage in the long term. Be tolerant and put our trust in God.



### Slide 3

In Jesus' day, it was common for a mischief-maker to sow darnel over the original crop. Darnel looks almost identical to wheat until harvest time, and it is mildly toxic.

#### The Weeds and the Wheat



### Slide 4

The servants wanted to uproot the darnel immediately, but the landowner insisted that it grow with the wheat until harvest time. Otherwise the wheat would be destroyed because the roots of both plants would be interwoven. At harvest time, the darnel would be separated from the wheat and burned as fuel.

We are looking at the harvest of the good and the bad that is coming. Jesus has taught us that on that day God will judge or reward the people. The lawless will suffer in hell, while the righteous will rejoice in heaven – those who come to Jesus in faith to be cleansed from sins. All sounds very familiar doesn't it, as Jesus talked a lot about cleansing our sins eg 1 John 1:7-9 "But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light....., and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin." If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling

ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness”, and again in Proverb28:13 “Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy”.

In this parable of the wheat and the weeds Jesus answers the question for us: How can good and evil coexist in the world? As we all know this is a reality in today’s world, and since the world was created. Jesus does not suggest for a moment that the world is free of evil – the world is a terrible broken place. The wheat field is hosting countless weeds as our world today hosts many lawless and corrupt people. Sometimes the enemy – Satan- makes a good job of this. Sometimes the Good News is hard to get across and many people now days are not accepting of it. These are the people that we would like to lock up and then through away the key. Where is God when they commit their horrible crimes? Why doesn’t God do something about those people? Yes, it is easy to be judgmental of others.

It is not always easy to distinguish the good and the bad. [Slide 5](#)

**Sometimes we put people in a box!  
But we are not the final judge!**



---

Sometimes a person we think is good turns out to be bad and vice versa. Sometimes we are very quick to judge others. We put them in a “box” based on our own judgement and first impression, and measure them against our own standards. But who are we to judge!

In this parable the field is the world, not just the Church. The landowner in the story says “Let them grow together until the harvest” and we will sort it out at harvest time. It is a fact of life that good and evil exist side by side in our world. We do not live in an ideal world. Some decisions we’ll get right and others we will get wrong, but the true Christian belief is that God loves us anyway and promises that he will hold all of our choices and our lives together in love. The true sower of salvation is Jesus – He is the one who has the power to transform hearts. We cannot meet God’s standards, as they are perfection and we are only human. About 2 months ago Terry gave us all a set of cards and asked us to sort them into order dependant on our assessment of our values, starting with the ones we found easy and had control of, and going down to the ones we had trouble with and with which we needed to pray for. I don’t know about the rest of you, but I found this quite hard and had to re-order them a number of times. It showed how hard it is to see ourselves and consider how others may see us – we had to use our own judgement.

We do have both wheat and weeds in our lives and they combine to make us who we are as people. Removing the weeds might make us more Christ-like, but we also end up removing part of ourselves and we might end up removing parts that are good in God's eyes or parts that He wants us to have. Sometimes we are wheat and sometimes we are weeds. As St Augustine said "But in the Lord's field at times what was grain turns to weeds and at times what were weeds turns into grain; and no one knows until tomorrow."

We know better than to judge others, but we do it anyway. [Slide 6](#)

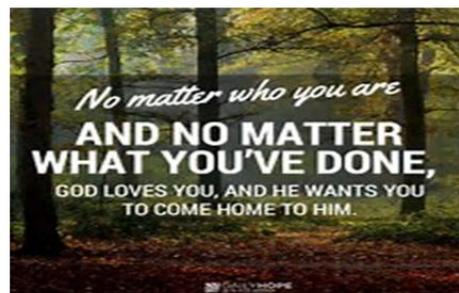
### Do we walk past or stop to help?



We judge people based on how they look, social status or where they live. How many of us have walked past a street beggar and thought "Why do you not get a job?" We wonder why others don't act or feel and think like we do, or we find ourselves getting frustrated or annoyed by others weaknesses. We fail to respect the differences we have in terms of culture, experience, background, character, personality or temperament. We cannot all be perfectionists. The Lord's Prayer gives us meaning to this process of forgiveness in the words "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." How often do we pray that prayer and give no real thought to what we are praying.

This is a costly discipleship to follow. It is not easy for us and Jesus teaches us "God's

### The Grace of God



kingdom does not come all at once". [Slide 7](#) We

must be willing to extend grace and allow this to mature in God's time. We should not attack and destroy the people responsible – the weeds – without understanding the other person's position. We need to show patience and forgiveness which is how God functions in the world. God does not pull people out of the mire of their mistakes by condemning them, but by forgiving them. We must be willing to extend grace.

If we look around us, we see in the world that the weeds and the wheat grow together, sometimes in dramatic, horrible ways – sometimes in ordinary, ugly, everyday ways. It is a strange and horrible world that we live in – disasters, conflict, wars, horrific crimes, malice,

spitefulness, maliciousness, animosity, hostility, ill will, ill feeling, hatred, bitterness, vindictiveness – the list goes on. We wonder why God allows it – Why doesn't God do something about this? God works differently to that. He has a different time frame to us. He is looking at the harvest time – the future.

Sometimes we do have to deal with people who are obviously evil such as dangerous criminals and that is why civilised countries have a robust justice system of practices and directed at upholding social control, deterring and mitigating crime, or sanctioning those who violate laws, with criminal penalties and rehabilitation efforts to reduce crime, and raise public confidence that the system is fair and will deliver for the law-abiding citizen. The majority of offenders in New Zealand are on probation, which means they are serving their sentence in the community rather than in prison. There are over 30,000 offenders serving community-based sentences at any given time, compared to 9,000 in prison. There is a strong focus on reducing the likelihood of their re-offending, and keeping the public safe. The system is not perfect and some do re-offend, but others are rehabilitated and go on to better lives and achievements

Like the NZ justice system, we should be looking for the good in people instead of always looking for the bad and not be the final judge of the world, that is God's job. One prisoner in

Women in Ravensbruck  
"Let all the fruits which we have born  
be their forgiveness."



Ravensbruck, Slide 8 a Jewish women's concentration camp in the north of Germany, who found faith and hope enough to write this prayer:

"O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted; remember the fruits we have bought, thanks to this suffering – our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all of this, and when they come to judgement, let all the fruits which we have born be their forgiveness. Amen."

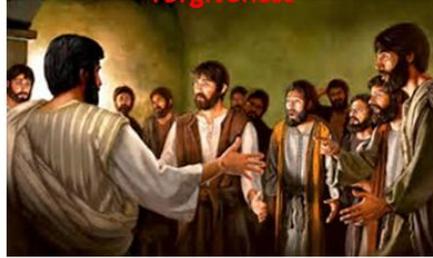
"Father, forgive them, for they  
know not what they do."



But Jesus doesn't rest content with parables. Slide 9 The final display of forgiveness comes when his enemies nail him to the cross, he forgives them

– Luke 23:34 “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Also, having risen from the dead, he forgives those disciples who skipped out on him during his hour of need and then sets them up in “the business” of spreading his forgiveness to anyone who needs

**Jesus tells the disciples to go out and make disciples and spread his forgiveness**



it, which is to say everybody .Slide 10 This is also His command to us to “go out and make disciples of others”. Have a look at the front of our Newsheet ..... What are the words below the St Hilda’s banner ..... “Growing Disciples through the Living Christ”. ..... How can we grow disciples if we judge them and do not forgive them?

We can still see weeds in ourselves and others. Instead of being discouraged, we should be hopeful. The burden of the struggle isn’t ours alone. We get help from the landowner – Jesus, who knows what is happening and helps us to sort things out.

We are not the final judge of the world - that is God’s job. We are to remain faithful to God’s word even in hard times and we do have opportunities to mend our ways. We have the time and grace we need to make the changes we have to make.

**Let us pray together -**

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin  
against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from  
evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are  
yours now and for ever. Amen .**

Slide 11 Let us pray together the pray that Jesus taught us – Taking time to think about the meaning of the words

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. **Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.** Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen .