

Saint Augustine lived at a time of crisis for many ancient Christians. The ancient Christians had made the mistake of thinking that the Church of God was Rome. They associated the Kingdom of God with the empire of Rome. When the Visigoths sacked Rome in 410 ad this left the Christians confused and scared. Saint Augustine wrote reminding them that the Roman Empire was simply another human thing, filled with sin and doomed to failure. The kingdom of God was separate and eternal.

Our parable this morning reminds us that all human organizations are filled with the same sin which lives in our hearts. As long as we are on this earth we will be surrounded by weeds. Our nation will fail, our church will fail.

**Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43** <sup>24</sup> Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup> "but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. <sup>26</sup> "But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. <sup>27</sup> "So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' <sup>28</sup> "He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' <sup>29</sup> "But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> 'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' "

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." <sup>37</sup> He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> "The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked *one*. <sup>39</sup> "The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. <sup>40</sup> "Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. <sup>41</sup> "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> "and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Jesus' parable often have points of absurdity. That is they often have things in them that make no sense from a human point of view. We often miss this because we are so familiar with these parables. But these are often the points where Jesus is trying to teach us something. Exactly because our ways are not his ways.

One such example is the workers in the vineyard . Jesus pays the man who works for one hour a full day's wage. I mean who does that? but that is exactly the point of the parable the grace of our God.

Another example is the lost sheep. One sheep is lost so you leave the 99. That is not the way to be a good shepherd. But Jesus is so concerned over each and every sheep. This parable by the way has it's parallel in today's parable.

The parable of the wheat and weeds has a number of these points of absurdity in it, let us see what they teach us.

### **Number One: The servants are surprised because there are weeds growing in the garden**

Who would ever be surprised to find weeds in their garden?

My mom always told me the story of the time they went up into the mountains and her youngest brother Rolly, jumps out of the car and runs into the snow and then jumps out, looks at them all and says, "It's coooold."

Its sooo silly and it's such a foolish reaction and yet and yet, that is exactly the point that Jesus is trying to make. But that is exactly how we react. Not when we see weed in our garden. But when we see evil in the world, and when we see sin even in the church.

Someone in the church does something we don't like. Or the church isn't vibrant enough for us, or our country passes another law that favors sins and is discouraging to Christians. And immediately we get offended or scared. We think if this is really a church, why isn't it more loving? And if Jesus is really in control why do all these bad things happen.

The world is sinful, and we are sinful, and if you bring a group of sinful people together, you are going to get sin. There will always be weeds, there will be sin in the Church. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

So we go to the master because we are worried about the weeds. And what does the master say.

### **Number Two: The master blames it on an enemy**

If this weren't a parable this would just be beyond ridiculous. Imagine if you stood with a farmer on the edge of his field and you said to him, "Look you've got some weeds out there." Now imagine the response of the farmer was, "Yeah My neighbor hates me, he planted those weeds." Can you imagine the look you would give to such a famer.

It is absurd and yet once again it is true. Satan and the world hate the Lord and they hate us this much.

And you see it happening; the LGBTQ community is actively seeking people who disagree with their view of sexuality. And they are forcing them to participate in their weddings. This isn't I want to buy this cake. This is you have to make us a specialty cake, and you have to bring it to our wedding, and you have to be there and you have to be involved. If you don't actively participate and rejoice with us then you deserve to be punished.

Yes the world hates the Lord, and it hates his kingdom, and it hates us to the point of irrationality, to the point where Satan will go sow weeds in the Lord's kingdom. It doesn't do him any good, He just hates the Lord that much.

In the midst of this anger the Lord responds with Love .

Remember I told you that the parable of the lost sheep has a parallel in this parable, well here it is:

**Number Three: The workers want to pull up the weeds, but the master responds, "No"**

Every farmer, every person in the world knows you get a better crop if you get rid of the weeds. All earthly wisdom says the workers are right, the master is wrong. Pull out the weeds.

But the Lord says NO, and why because you might pull out some of the wheat.

What is the difference here between an earthly farmer and the heavenly one? The earthly farmer cares about the harvest; the heavenly father cares about the individual stalk of wheat. If your goal is the greatest harvest and you don't care about sacrificing a portion of the plants if it will mean a better harvest, then yeah pull out the weeds. But if what you care about is every single plant, then getting rid of the weeds becomes far more precarious.

Such is God's love for me the sinner, that he leaves the 99 for the sake of the one lost. He tells his workers not to weed for the sake of individual wheat plant. This is the grace of God.

And so from this absurd decision by the master, what do we learn? We learn that the reason there is sin and suffering in the earth is because God loves me. And this also is absurd.

The reason my daughter spent the last year in the hospital is because God loves me? The reason my Mom died is because God loves me?

The Lord reveals to us in this parable a mystery about God that is just absurd by human thinking. And that is exactly what the Old Testament foretold,

**<sup>NIV</sup> Psalm 78:2 I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old-**

Think back to the book of Job, the whole point of the book is why is there suffering, and God doesn't give Job an answer. He tells Job simply to trust Him, but He doesn't really give Him an answer. But to us He gives an answer.

My Grace, there is pain and suffering and evil because in My Grace I want all to be saved. You suffer now because the Lord will not yet destroy the wicked, because he is waiting for them to repent, as He waited for you. As He died for you, He also died for them.

This is absurd, as the parable is absurd so the lesson, but it is true.

The day is coming when the Lord will destroy the wicked, and we will be saved from our own sin and the sin of this world, but for now the Grace of God waits patiently. We suffer, but we suffer so that we and others might come to know the grace of our God.

**Amen**

**The Peace of God the Surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**