

Barre Congregational Church

July 19, 2020: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Seventh Sunday After Pentecost**~

“Weeds Among the Good Seeds”

(This sermon can be listened to on our Facebook Page and Website as part of our worship service)

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13 verse 24 – 30 and 36 – 43

I. Introduction:

Last week we talked about the good seeds that fell on different surfaces, and it grew according to where it landed. It was ultimately the good soil that provided the right conditions for the seed to grow and thrive.

We have had a lot of rain recently, which we are so grateful for. Our grass at one point looked like straw, and I remember standing outside, discouraged, and talking to God about the need for rain, and of course it is amazing how we have been blessed by so much rain recently. Well, with that much rain all our good stuff is growing beautifully, and with the good stuff we have seen quite a bit of weeds in between as well, right?

II. Jesus seeds, weeds, and the Kingdom of heaven!

It seems that Jesus was not done talking about seeds yet. In this parable He tells the crowd about a man who planted good seed in his field, but this time He talks about another way the good seeds are being affected, that is, by the weeds that entangle themselves with the good seeds and spread everywhere they find a place to send their roots!

The weeds, or darnel resembled wheat in the early stages of its growth. It is only recognized as a weed once it forms ears. In the parable the workers are asked to wait until they could recognize the weeds from the wheat, but by that time the roots of the weeds are intertwined with the wheat, so they would have to be careful to break them apart and destroy the weeds and bring in the wheat.

The Kingdom of heaven is like a man / or woman who sows good seed in the field, says Jesus. When the sowing was done, and everyone went to sleep, the enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. This story told by Jesus has careful instructions to the workers to not pull out the weeds yet, but to wait until they were grown and then pull them out with the wheat, tie them into bundles, burn them, and bring the wheat into the barn.

Here we see the Kingdom of heaven where all the good things are going on, being disturbed by the enemy. In His explanation to the disciples about this parable, Jesus identifies Himself as the sower, the Son of Man, Who gives a message of good things, the values of the Kingdom of heaven as we discussed last week. These are values of peace, love, respect, and inclusivity. It is a message given to the whole world, whose option is to receive it or not, to allow it to take root and to grow, or not. The enemy is identified as the devil, who comes to destroy. It sows the weeds in between the good things, for the people of this world to recognize them and avoid them or not. Those weeds are the things of hate and division and chaos and exclusion of others, of nastiness and disrespect, and the people of this world have the option to see those things for what they are and focus on love and peace and healing and reconciliation... or not.

At the end of the parable Jesus describes the final scene, which is the end of the age. The Son of Man will take over and execute the final judgment. The Son of Man will send out special angels to clean out all sin, and everyone who does evil, anything and everything and anyone that disrupts, destroys, and interferes with the work of the Kingdom of heaven. It and they will be rooted out. and those who do the evil things will be thrown into the fiery furnace, which is hell. These are scary images, but they point to the end age when the present dispensation will come to an end, making way for a new era where the righteous, all God's true followers will shine.

Jesus ends with the same phrase used in our parable of last week, "He/she who has ears, let them hear". This is again a reference to the hardened heart, the heart of the wicked, the ones who have thoughts and do things that are not according to the values of the Kingdom of heaven.

III. Conclusion

So...this is a difficult message to preach, because we are all fallible human beings who think and do things on a daily basis, which will all be judged by the Son of Man or Son of Humanity, whose interest is in the values of the Kingdom of heaven.

We all have time, like now, today, to make things right with one another. This pandemic especially gives us the opportunity to think and reflect on how we live our lives, because we are all vulnerable to it. Life has become more precious, and we can do right by God by making right with one another.

So, as we pull out those weeds from our garden, let us all think about those things in our lives that need weeding as well. Let us submit to the Son of all humanity today, for that work to happen.

Be safe and God bless us all. Amen