

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

We usually enjoy looking at flowers; here in church, in our homes, worn as a corsage. What manner of person would be against flowers? Who would despise flowers so much that at the very sight of them, he would yank them up and throw them out to be burned? How about a wheat farmer? A farmer who sees colorful flowers mixed in with his wheat is not going to be pleased, for these flowers are nothing but weeds. When he looks out at his field of wheat, the only color the farmer wants to see is a deep, rich, golden brown. Purple-blue and red flowers have no place in a wheat field.

And so it is in the Kingdom of God. In His parable, Jesus says that after a man sowed wheat in his field, an enemy sowed weeds among the wheat. These weeds are a bearded darnel. They look identical to wheat as they grow. It would be nearly impossible to tell which of the green blades growing in the field were blades of wheat and which were blades of weeds. But when the darnel reaches maturity it produces brightly-colored flowers of purple-blue and red. When the servants in the parable saw the flowers in with the wheat, they came to their master and told him about it. "Should we go out and gather up all the weeds?" they asked. "No," the master said, "For in doing so, you may root up the wheat along with the weeds. Let both grow together until the harvest and then we will gather up the weeds to be burned and put the wheat into my barn."

Now Jesus' parable here does not instruct us on how to deal with open sinners within the church. The wheat field is not the church; it's the world. Unrepentant sinners in the church are not to be left alone to grow with the wheat until the end. Jesus tells us clearly through His apostles that open sinners are to be dealt with, both for their sake and for the sake of the congregation.

You and I, however, live in two spheres. We who gather together around Jesus' Word and Sacraments are members of His church; but day-in and day-out we are also members of society. We live not just as Christians; we live as Christians in an evil world. This is not a paradise, for Satan has sowed weeds among the wheat. God's world was, at one time, a perfect wheat field. But no longer. Thanks to the devil who brought sin into God's perfect world, the weeds will be with us until the harvest. Then, on the Last Day, Jesus will cast the weeds into hell and bring His wheat into His barn of heaven. But until that day, both grow together—wheat and weeds, believers and unbelievers, those who love the Lord and those who have no use for His Word and Sacraments.

And as we grow together, who wouldn't love even more than the wheat, the weeds with their brightly-colored flowers? The church, many will say, is a boring golden brown. The weeds—now they have color; they are much more attractive to the eye! On a typical Sunday morning which will draw the interest of people more: a "golden brown" church service, or a "brightly-colored" day at Six Flags amusement park? Which book will people in general want to pick up: a plain-looking Bible, or a magazine full of gossip, interesting articles, and pictures of glamorous celebrities? Which is going to interest people more: golden brown talk about Jesus and His church, or colorful talk about our neighbor's problems and who's dating who?

God may have sowed wheat in His field, but it's pretty evident that Satan's weeds are much more appealing. Which fruit did Eve take and eat? Not the fruit of which God said, "You

may eat of it;” but the fruit which Satan pointed her to so that she and Adam and their children fell into sin. Which woman did King David desire? Not the wife whom God had given him, but Bathsheba who was the wife of another man. Satan’s weeds are more appealing than God’s wheat, and this is true not just of people in general, but even of people within the church. Even to the wheat, Satan’s weeds colorful as they are, are appealing and attractive. Churches, even those who are Lutheran, are discarding the plain, golden brown worship services and replacing them with colorful weeds. Confessions, Creeds, and rich Gospel-packed hymns are thrown out, and in their place they offer songs and liturgies which are not Christ-centered, but man-centered. The ordination of women, the practice of open communion, joining with other church bodies who do not agree in the Faith are all attractive weeds which the wheat find appealing, and so many churches are forsaking their Lutheran heritage and the truths of God’s Word and are glad to have these weeds among them.

What about us? Do we go through life each day ignoring Satan’s colorful weeds and sticking fast to the golden brown truths of Scripture? I hardly think so. We, too, are tempted to look on God’s wheat as plain, simple, and boring, and to run with the flowers. We are tempted to turn our back on the good gifts of God and desire what is not good for us. After all, how can flowers be harmful? How can bright purple-blue and red flowers hurt us, even if they were not put there by God?

But these weeds are deadly. The beautiful dandelion in the parable, mixed in with the wheat, sowed there by the enemy, is a poisonous plant. And what’s worse is that this deadly plant is so attractive and appealing. A father and his young son were driving through a section of a city one day where there were brightly-colored lights, the sounds of alluring music, and beautiful women wearing smiles and little else. “What is this place, daddy?” the boy asked. “Son,” replied his father, “this is hell.” The boy was surprised, but the father was absolutely correct. For as appealing as the sinful world may be, it leads a child of God away from Jesus toward the gates of hell.

What weeds are in your life? What in this world is alluring and appealing to you, so much so, that its deadly poison is tempting you away from Jesus and His word of life toward the sentiments of the sinful world? Remember who sowed these weeds in God’s field. God did not put them there; Satan did. He sowed weeds among us to grow up with us and even to draw us, God’s wheat, away from our Savior to his beautiful but deadly poison—this sinful and alluring world.

Look forward to the harvest. In the end this world with all its causes of sin and all its law-breakers will perish in eternal fire, and you God’s wheat, will shine like the sun and be brought safely into His barn of heaven. Since this will be the outcome of the wheat and the weeds do not, as you and I live each day, become so attached to the flowering weeds so attractive to us. We live in an evil world, but let us not make our permanent home here. We mingle with those in society, both believers and unbelievers, but let us not allow the weeds to influence us. Let us be careful that we do not, as God’s wheat, join with those who are weeds.

Remember who you are: God’s wheat. God planted you into Christ in your baptism. He carefully waters you with His Word and nurtures you with His Sacraments. And He will not allow anything to bring you to ruin. “Do not,” He told His servants, “Root up the

weeds or you may also root up My wheat with them.” You are precious to God. He has in mind not just your life here each day, but your days with Him in heaven forever.

He knows that Satan is against you. He knows how tempting this sinful world is for you. He, too, was tempted by Satan’s attractive weeds. He knows, therefore, that you and I would fall without Him. Perhaps you think that you and I come here each week simply for instructions; that we come to hear what God has to say to us. But friend, you are here for life itself. Here God makes wheat, sowing you into Christ. Here God tends to His wheat. Here God carefully preserves His wheat for eternal life. Even though deadly weeds are all about us, He keeps us through the power of His saving Word with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Has Satan tempted you with his beautiful weeds? Here in Word and Sacrament God strengthens you to resist him. Have you fallen into sin this week, even so deeply that you see no way out? Have you lived more like a weed than like wheat? Here God gives you His forgiveness. He pardons your sins with His absolving Word. He cleanses your guilt with the body and blood of your Savior. Each one of you is forgiven by God. No matter how much of Satan’s poison you have drunk, here at His altar Jesus gives you the cup of life to drink; here is pardon and salvation for you in the blood of Christ.

Do not fear the end of your days. Do not fear the harvest. You are God’s wheat. He will not allow you to be burned up with the weeds. Your Savior, you see, already felt the fire for you. Jesus burned in hell on the cross of Calvary in your place. Jesus suffered and died for you, and He rose again to be here for you, His precious wheat, in His powerful, living Word. We are not yet in His barn. We still live out in the field. But the barn is coming. Heaven is coming. It’s coming for you, God’s wheat, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.