

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

July 19, 2026



WEEDS

as misunderstood friends

by Drew Downs

The difference between a flowering plant and a weed is a matter of taxonomy. I'm not a master gardener, but the reason we treat one as good and the other as evil is that we intend the one and the other just shows up uninvited. Or, as Jesus describes in last week's gospel passage, because the weed may steal the resources of another and choke its life. OK, when we put it that way, it definitely sounds bad. And note that this is the point of his message.

Outside that example, however, when we are so eager to judge the weed, we begin to hurt all wildlife. By better understanding how plants interact and why they are the way they are, we might see how our best intentions for protecting the "good" plants may in fact be detrimental to our ecosystem. Native plants which flower and bloom, are designated as evil, ripped from the soil, and replaced with a tamed variety. A scheme which endangers our most precious wildflowers.

ORDINARY TIME

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Summer Schedule

Summer is a slightly different experience in the church. People's routines change in the Midwest and especially in a college town. As the school year ends, students, parents, teachers, and staff start planning their getaways, summer camps, and opportunities to change their weekly routines. Meanwhile, friends and family sometimes show up from out-of-town. There is a predictably unpredictability to the summer season.

Because of the changing schedules (and the heat) our midweek service takes a break during the summer. It will return in September.

I'll be starting my vacation after next week, with a couple of weeks away before my continuing ed time at Alma College in August. While I'm away from church, we will have one service from July 26th through August 16th at 10:00 am. Services during this time will be a mixture of eucharist and morning prayer.

We started this pattern of moving to one service while the rector is away two years ago to make it easier for supply priests and lay leaders to lead worship. While it certainly impacts our routines, the positive impact on those serving this way is tremendous and makes recruitment to serve much easier.

If you have any questions about worship, tradition, or how you might get involved in leading or preparing the congregation for worship, I'd love the chance to visit with you about it.

With love,
Drew+

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FOR SUNDAY

Proper 11A

July 19, 2026

Collect

Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking: Have compassion on our weakness, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

Jesus put before the crowd another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels,

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and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"

Reflection

Jesus offers a second teaching about seeds and soil, that might remind us of the one we read last week. But Jesus takes this one in a completely different direction. While the former spoke about the hospitality of the soil and the conditions which inspire growth, now Jesus is talking about good seeds and bad seeds and not worrying about which is which! And while I think we follow the transition, we might do so without reckoning with the inherent conflict of the two teachings.

The former feels like a good self-help lesson about preparing to be a better host and this one is similarly recognizable: don't be so judgey with other people. This is a lesson we like a lot more in the abstract than in the particular.

One of the conflicts we have with this passage, however, is dealing with how much the rest of scripture encourages us to identify the bad in our midst—in ourselves and our communities—and to turn away from it, end it, or get rid of it. But here, Jesus is saying that we are to leave it alone and let God deal with it in the end. Again, this makes sense to us by half, and the other half conflicts. Perhaps.

This teaching also reminds me of enduring and striving, of existing in a world in which good and bad is all mixed together. And all we have to go on is that God can tell the difference, God has told us the difference, and we are called to live that different way anyway. Which, if we're being honest, only makes sense if we're surrounded by weeds which look like good, healthy, grain-bearing plants.

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