

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

JULY 23, 2023

WEEDS

dealing with the subjectivity of good and bad

by Drew Downs

My Mom is a gardener. I never took an interest. But I took from her a simple view that weeding the garden is essential. We have these meticulously planted flowers in our garden and these weeds...they have to go.

Most of my life, I haven't really been able to tell the difference between weeds and the plants that are supposed to be there. Sometimes it is obvious. But not all. This is a challenge I've assumed I should take as bad.

I mean, we're supposed to know the difference right? One is good and the other evil. We're supposed to hunt weeds and destroy them.

This, of course, only makes sense when we see ourselves as masters in control. Or when we recognize that weeds are hearty and invasive, while other plants can be delicate. In this way, we aren't dealing with bad or evil. Just trying to help those who need our help.

ORDINARY TIME

2023

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!

Letting go (of control)

One of the hardest things about being a good person is that sometimes people can't tell. We're doing good things for people and they don't notice. Or worse: think you're doing something wrong!

"What??? No way! I did this thing for you! How dare you think *I* am the bad one here!"

Of course, we do understand that we don't get to control how other people see us. But we sure do get mad about it anyway.

Part of the challenge of doing good in the world as we are called to do is that, while we *can* control our own behavior, we can't control how others behave. Let alone how they *perceive* our behavior. We just don't. Even if it is infuriating.

Control over things, people, life: these are things Jesus constantly rejects. Even as people try to give him that very power! He rejects the idea of control. Over life and death and livelihoods and economics and armies and all of the things. He lets go of the temptation to power.

He does the work instead. He shows up. And he invites us to do the same.

[This is part 4 of our summer series on apostleship. The series is loosely based on the lectionary.]

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

2023

FOR SUNDAY

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

July 23, 2023

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, and they will collect

PENTECOST

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

Last week, we heard Jesus compare the Kingdom to seeds falling into different types of soil. Most of it inhospitable or too challenging for growth to occur. But some soil is just right. It sounds a bit like the Goldilocks Problem.

Now, we're hearing about good seed and weeds. Now, it isn't the ground we're being asked to scrutinize, but the growth itself.

While many of us will fixate on the Good vs. Evil paradigm that this image sets up, I'm more intrigued by the idea that we aren't scrutinizing seeds or new growth. We aren't condemning or rejecting (as much as some of us just *love* to do that). But that the separation comes at the end. For denying *any* along the way would imperil *all*.

It is hard not to think, then, of how eager many are to condemn LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters in Christ, when *that* act is the problem. Even if God didn't bless some of us (and they do!), it is our condemning of some along the way that imperil us all.

In our neck of the woods, we are quite comfortable with the idea of condemning nobody on principle. So we don't really struggle with this.

I suspect, however, that we may have a greater struggle with caring for the wheat amidst the weeds. Knowing that some of what we are doing is healthy and good and bringing the best out of people and some of it is stifling and stealing that healthy growth. Knowing that is going on and trying to keep the best of us going. It isn't demanding neutrality. But demands we love the best of us the best we can.

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