

# Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 11A

**Romans 8:12-25**

**Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**

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**St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Norman, OK**

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As Fr. Jason said in his sermon last week, the kingdom of God is messy. Different kinds of seeds sown every which way, falling wherever they may. It can make it difficult to discern which are weeds and which are good plants that will produce fruit, flowers, or grain. If you have come to any of our St. Michael's "weeding parties" in the Memorial Garden or the labyrinth, or if you have ever weeded your own garden or flower bed in the early spring when plants are starting to emerge from the soil, then you know how difficult it can be to distinguish between a weed and a plant that you actually want to grow. So, we give the plants time to grow, but even then, it can be difficult to tell if the plant is something you want to keep or not.

To further complicate matters, a plant that is a weed to one person is another person's flower or crop. Take dandelions for instance. Those people who are passionate about a lawn that is a beautiful carpet of grass, see dandelions as a blight upon the landscape and zealously remove them like a general planning an attack on enemy forces. But for other people, dandelions are a cash crop that is purposefully grown, because all parts of the plant are edible and can be used for medicinal purposes as well.

Dandelions aren't the only plant that falls into the weed or good plant debate. There is a long list such as clover, mint, goldenrod, and lamb's quarter. This raises the question, "What makes a weed a weed?"

By definition, a weed is a plant that isn't valued where it is growing because it is considered to be in the wrong place. Which means that ultimately, the term "weed" is a relative one, based entirely upon the eye of the beholder. Whether a specific plant has value or is growing in the right place is entirely dependent upon your point of view. One person's flower is another person's weed.

When Jesus is comparing the kingdom of God to weeds and good plants, He is talking about the family of man. Human beings are one giant family, not all related by direct blood ties, but related as Paul puts it, through "a spirit of adoption". Brothers and sisters, we are children of God; we are family.

And families are messy- different personalities, different quirks, different things that makes us happy, different abilities, different everything, all growing together. Using Jesus' imagery, the family of God is a field or garden that is made up of a mixture of plants, some of which are seen as good and others seen as weeds. But remember, that what makes a weed a weed is entirely in the eyes of the beholder.

Our perception of ourselves, our brothers, and our sisters is fashioned by where we get our information. Which voice do you listen to when you are deciding someone's value or place in the world? Do you listen to the voices of the Trinity that whisper of love, hope, and light? Voices that say that your life and the life of everyone around you has value and worth. Or do you listen to the voices of the world, the enemy that spreads words of hate, despair, and darkness? Voices that say that your life and the lives of anyone who don't fit the world's idea of "good", are useless and worthless. A person may look like a weed to one person, but to another, look like a flower just waiting to bloom.

There are numerous stories that I can share about people that weren't valued or just born into circumstances that left them feeling out of place. People treated like they were a weed, a blight on the landscape that needed removed. These same people, given time, encouragement, and a chance to grow, then blossomed into something wonderful or beautiful to behold.

One of my favorite stories is about Susan Boyle. She was forty-seven years old, unemployed, and lived alone with her cat when strode onto the stage of Britain's Got Talent. Heavy set, frizzy hair, lack of fashion sense, and acting rather daft, her appearance had the audience laughing at her and the judges rolling their eyes. When she declared that she aspired to be Elaine Paige, who is considered to be the First Lady of British Musical Theater, grumbling protests and more laughter rippled through the audience. And then she began to sing "I Dreamed a Dream" from the musical *Les Misérables*. Five seconds later, jaws dropped, and applause began. Shortly after, people were on their feet, and by the time she was done, the auditorium exploded into cheers and riotous applause. Within months, her albums were topping the charts.

When Susan Boyle walked out onto that stage, both the audience and the judges, saw nothing but a weed in the garden of talent. Yet, what stood before them was a beautiful flower. They just couldn't see it, because their perception was shaped by the voices of the world whispering into their ears that she was ugly and without value.

When have you heard that your life is without value or that you are worthless? When have you heard that you were in the wrong place and didn't belong? When have you heard that you are blight upon the landscape? When have you have looked at yourself or at one of your brothers or sisters in the family of God and saw nothing but a weed?

When we see others or see ourselves as weeds, we have tuned out the voices of the Trinity. We have allowed the voices of hate, despair, and darkness to invade our hearts and thoughts, preventing us from seeing the value of ourselves and the people we encounter. It is this darkness that needs burned away, so that we and our brothers and sisters can grow into the person that God created us to be.

Darkness is burned away by light. Despair is burned away by hope. Hate is burned away by love. Open your ears and listen. Listen to the voice of the creator who loves you just as you are. Listen to the voice of our savior and redeemer who brings light to the world. Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit who kindles hope in our souls.

The book of Genesis, reminds us that God looks over all that He has sown and says, "It is good!" Open your ears and listen, so that you can see the family of man through the eyes of God. This

isn't always easy, and in today's times, it is more trying than ever. But as followers of Christ, this is exactly what we are called to do. We are called to bring light to our brothers and sisters, so that they can grow and thrive. We are called to kindle hope, so that they can reach their full potential. We are called to love ourselves and to love one another so that all of God's children can become who God created us to be.

The kingdom of God is messy. God's family is messy. Yet, if we will look at our brothers and sisters through the lens of love, then we see not a weed, but a flower waiting to bloom.

Amen.