

“The Harvest is Waiting”

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

During pioneer days, a group of people was making its way across the Midwest to a distant place that had been opened up for homesteading. They traveled in covered wagons drawn by oxen, so travel was slow. One day they were horrified as the notice a long line of smoke to the west, stretching for miles across the prairie, and soon it was evident that the dried grass was burning fiercely and coming toward them rapidly.

They had crossed the river the day before but it would be impossible to go back that way before the flames would be upon them. One man only seemed to have understanding as to what should be done. He gave the command to set fire to the grass behind them. Then when the space was burned over, the whole company moved back upon it. As the flame roared on toward them from the west, a little girl cried out in terror, “Are you sure we won’t all be burned up?” The leader replied to her, “My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has been!” The fires of hell burned themselves out on Jesus, and all who are in him are safe, for they are now standing where the fire has been.

In our parable, Jesus is talking about the kingdom of heaven or the church as it expresses itself in our world. He is warning about judging too quickly about those who believe and those who don’t. In the harvest, or the judgment, God is the one who will decide. Until that time we will trust His providing and leave that decision to Him for-

THE HARVEST IS WAITING

I. The timing is in God's hands

II. Our mission is urgent

I.

A. At times it appears that some people are more “religious” than God himself. Every age produces them and in Jesus’ day it was the Pharisees. They saw themselves as a holy community. In one of their books The Psalms of Solomon, they advocated the separating of sinners from saints when the Messiah came.

In order to illustrate this, Jesus uses the example of dandelion, which appears very similar to wheat, especially in its beginning stages. The owner had planted good seed, so they wanted to uproot the weed so the field would be pure again.

Do you see the point? There is no such thing as the perfect church. The church is a hospital for sick people; we are all sinners.

When people in our day, or any day want to do that, they are well intentioned. They may desire only certain types of people in the congregation. They become suspicious of outreach to people who may have been guilty of gross sinning. We all have that tendency because the law is written on our hearts that is our natural inclination. In the Creed, we confess that we believe in the forgiveness of sins, but aren't sure it applies to some people or to us!

As we confess, “I believe in the Holy Christian Church”, we know that that is made up of all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. In a church like Trinity there will be those who believe and there will be some who don't believe.

B. It is dangerous for us to judge. We don't know the hearts of people. We can get an idea. People, who worship regularly, attend Bible class, frequently attend the Lord's

Supper, and are involved in the life of the congregation give and indication of a living faith. Again, only God knows. St. Paul says, “The Lord knows those who are his,” (II Timothy 2:19) I remember a man from the last congregation I served. He ran into one of our infrequent attendees and asked why he didn’t worship any more. The man replied that there were too many hypocrites, and beside all that, he knew who the real believers were anyway!

The servants had good intentions. If they pulled up the darnel, they might have pulled up the good wheat as well. This was best left until the harvest. At that time it would become rather obvious what was wheat and what was weed. Our job is to use the means that God has established. Rather than judging people we can feed them on God’s word and sacrament. Placing our trust in God’s providing is the answer to this dilemma.

II.

A. We have work to do. This text is about judgment at the last day. What will be the result of those who reject the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Jesus said that his word would be the judge at the last day.

There is a great need and much work that needs to be done when we consider the outcome of those lives that will be lost forever because they do not know the Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus told his disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Weed pulling instead of feeding can be dangerous. One man told the story that he spent so much time weed killing that his garden never quite got started and once it did it couldn’t withstand the elements. Now this text is not a proof text against Church discipline or speaking to the sin

of the world. God does his work in his time for St. Peter writes: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but all should reach repentance.” (II Peter 3:9)

B. The final distinction between those who believe and those who don't believe will be made at Judgment Day. Sometimes the line in making distinctions is threadbare. Some call themselves Christians but live like every one else. On the other hand, there are those who give certain outward appearances through destroyed lives and continual problems who come to faith in Christ.

We can only trust in God's providing as he has done in our own lives. We are those who know the blessing of a life lived in him. Again, St. Peter encourages us, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (II Peter 3:18) Knowing all the God has accomplished in our lives we can trust his operation in the lives of people and the life of the church. Amen.