

Pentecost 6
Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

7/20/14
11A

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN MAY BE COMPARED TO A MAN WHO SOWED GOOD SEED IN HIS FIELD, BUT WHILE HIS MEN WERE SLEEPING, HIS ENEMY CAME AND SOWED WEEDS AMONG THE WHEAT AND WENT AWAY. SO WHEN THE PLANTS CAME UP AND BORE GRAIN, THEN THE WEEDS APPEARED ALSO.

If you regularly read spy thrillers or watch them on the screen, you are probably familiar with the term “mole.” A mole is someone who appears to be one of the good guys, but is actually working for the enemy. A mole will have information of the highest level, and then feed that sensitive information to the enemy. The results, of course, are usually deadly until the good guys expose the mole.

In today’s parable, Jesus tells us about spiritual moles in the world. He is not teaching us about unbelievers out there in the big, bad world; He is teaching about people who look like Christians, sitting in church pews, but are actually moles. Our parable helps us understand that the devil does his greatest and most dangerous work here, in the Lord’s Church, sowing his lies among the Word of God.

And, Jesus teaches us something that may not occur to us right away -- this is a crime of great pre-meditation. People don’t ordinarily store a supply of weed seeds. Think about this for a minute: If you called your seed salesman, would he even have a supply of weed seeds on hand? Yet, the enemy has a ready supply of weed seeds at his disposal. He’s harvested these seeds and stored them until the next planting season. This is definitely a long term, pre-meditated attack. It indicates an evil, bitter, very long term -- even permanent -- animosity. This is a hateful,

despicable, and cowardly tactic. Yet, this is an excellent picture of the animosity that the devil bears toward Christ and the people of His Church.

When Jesus explained the parable, He pretty much jumped right to the harvest,

“The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

Those who reject salvation in Christ will suffer eternally. Those whom Jesus has rescued from sin, death, and the power of the devil will spend eternity in the presence of God the Father.

Jesus explained the harvest, but He did not explain the meaning of the parable for the time that the good seed and the weeds were growing side-by-side. What is the meaning of the parable during that time? That is what I would like to focus on this morning.

Remember the conversation between the owner and His servants. When the weeds appeared, the servants asked the master,

“Then do you want us to go and gather [the weeds]?’ But [the master] said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

This conversation indicates that the good plants and the weeds are so intertwined that the servants cannot remove the weeds without damaging the good plants. What does this mean? With these words, Jesus is teaching us that the Sons of the Kingdom must endure the presence of the sons of the devil in this world until the Last Day.

Since the sons of the evil one are still slaves to the power of the devil, they serve his wants. The real tragedy is that the sons of the evil one may not even realize who they serve. They are the ultimate moles, who even, perhaps, deceive themselves. Some of these moles may even think they are serving God. Jesus Himself said this on the evening before He died on the cross, "Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God (Jn 16:2)."

The lie is the main weapon of the devil. In fact, Jesus said this about the devil, "[The devil] was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies (Jn 8:44)." If the devil is a liar, then it makes sense that his sons will also lie. Just like the mole in a spy thriller, they spread false doctrine.

Since the devil does not care which lie you believe, he has multiplied lies and spread them throughout the world just like the weed seeds in the parable. The Bible says Jesus is the only name under heaven by which we must be saved, but we hear that we all worship the same god, we just call him or her by a different name. Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me," yet we hear that all religions are just different paths to the same heaven. The Bible says that Baptism forgives sin and gives eternal salvation, yet we hear the lie that baptism is a work of man, not God. We hear that the Lord's Supper is just bread and wine, nothing more. And, we could go on and on.

I believe that all of the devil's lies all go back to one central foundation -- God is too big to care about you. The devil wants to take your eyes off of Jesus, to focus on yourself. Against that lie of the devil, the Bible says, "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with

our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (He 4:15).” Jesus, in His own body, experienced all the evil that there is in this sin filled world. He felt your pain, and the pain of all the world.

Have you ever felt alone? Jesus experienced profound loneliness. When the time of trial came, His disciples ran away. As He hung on the cross, He was alone against the forces of evil. Jesus did not just feel that the world was against Him. The entire world actually was against Him.

Have you ever felt abandoned? As Jesus hung on the cross, He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Even God the Father abandoned His own Son.

Jesus experienced all the sin and all the curse of sin. There is no trial, no trouble, not even death itself, that can come your way that that Jesus has not already faced. The devil does not want you to know this. He wants to you be troubled, in turmoil, pain, so that He can use his lies to offer you “comfort”.

Jesus went far beyond any pain that we can feel in this world. He actually endured and satisfied the full wrath of God’s justice against our sin. When Jesus hung on the cross alone against the world – forsaken by His Father – He literally endured hell for you and me. The devil does not want you to believe any of this because he does not want you to receive the benefit of Christ’s suffering.

The devil does not want you to know that although we were once enemies of God, we are now His children. He does not want you to know that although we were once slaves to sin, we are fully forgiven in Christ. He does not want you to know that although we deserve only God’s temporal and eternal punishment, we now have eternal life with God. He

does not want you to know that all these gifts are yours because of the holy life and the innocent suffering and death of Jesus Christ.

And, He especially does not want you to trust in the resurrection. The Easter resurrection is God's sign that all His promises are true. The resurrection assures us that we have peace with God. The resurrection assures us that when the final harvest comes we too shall rise and our mortal bodies shall be clothed in immortality.

The devil has sown his seed in order to spread his lies. He wants to rob us of the salvation and the hope that is ours in Jesus. Jesus used the parable in today's Gospel to warn us that the lies of the devil will surround us while we live in this world. So, Jesus has promised to be with us and protect us and He has sent the Holy Spirit to work in us to bring us to the true faith and preserve us in it.

Jesus also taught us that a harvest is coming when the angels will remove the devil's lies from this world and throw him into the eternal fire. Then we will live in eternal peace shining like the sun in the Kingdom of our Father. Amen.