

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.

"With malice aforethought" is a legal term that means premediated, intentional desire to cause harm to one's neighbor. IOW, you plot, plan, scheme, arrange, devise, conspire, and contrive to hurt your neighbor. And, it all comes from one thing – hate.

"With malice aforethought" helps us understand our Lord's parable this morning. How great is the hatred the enemy has for the man and his wheat in our parable this morning? There is nothing happenstance about it. Exhibit A: People don't ordinarily have a supply of weed seeds, do they? Think about it: Spring rolls around, and it's time to plant the garden, so you go buy carrot seeds, and tomatoes, and cucumbers; do you buy a bag of weed seeds, as well, for your garden? You go to the elevator and buy wheat and durham seeds, canola and corn seed. Would the elevator have a ready supply of weed seeds on hand? Yet, the enemy has a ready supply of weed seeds at his disposal. This is definitely a pre-meditated attack. It shows an evil, bitter, long term -- even permanent -- animosity. This is a hateful, despicable, and cowardly tactic.

My Christian Friends, the enemy, Jesus teaches us, *"is the devil"* (v. 39). Remember, we said malice aforethought all springs from one thing – hatred. The devil hates Christ and His words of eternal life. In our parable this morning, our Lord Christ is teaching us that the devil does his greatest

and most dangerous work here, in the Lord's Church, sowing his lies among the Word of God.

Do you happen to recall the devil's first words to Eve in the Garden, *"Did God really say?" (Ge 3:1, NIV)*. The very first thing Satan does is cast doubt upon the very words of God Himself! 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).

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. Jesus Himself 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 (cf Jn 14:6). Oh, how about this lie: The Bible says, *"For by the works of the law no human being will be justified in [God's] sight,"* yet we hear even within the church that we must do good works to get into heaven (Ro 3:20). 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 the lie that the Lord's Supper is just bread and wine, nothing more. We hear the lie that anyone can marry anyone their little heart desires. And, how about this lie: "you only go around once," so put yourself first; your ego, your selfishness, should be your god.

Wherever the Gospel is sown, there is the father of all lies, sowing and spreading His lies.

In the year 1523, Martin Luther wrote a tract on Baptism. In it, he says this, "Remember, therefore, that it is no joke to take sides against the

devil and not only to drive him away from the little child, but to burden the child with such a mighty and lifelong enemy” (Luther 102).

Look at the life of our Lord Christ Himself. Jesus is baptized, *“the heavens were opened...and behold, a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased’”* (Mt 3:16, 17). And immediately, immediately, the Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. There came the father of all lies, sowing the seeds of his lies to the very Son of God, *“If you are the Son of God”* (Mt 4:1,3). “Did God really say?” Wherever the Word of God is, there is the devil sowing his lies, to cast doubt on what God has said.

Wherever Jesus went, whatever Jesus did, there was the devil with his lies. Jesus heals the blind, mute, demon-possessed man, and the lie is told, *“It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons”* (Mt 12:24). He goes home to Nazareth, and He stands in the synagogue and reads from the prophet Isaiah and proclaims, *“Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”*. And when the hometown folks heard His words, they were filled with wrath...and brought Him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw Him down the cliff (Lk 4:21, 28,29). *“Barabbas,”* they said (Mt 27:21). *“They shouted all the more, ‘Let Him be crucified’”* (Mt 27:23).

The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus was crucified for all the times you doubted God’s Word; all the times you believed the lies of the devil; all the times that you despaired that God doesn’t keep His promises; Jesus carried all those sins to Calvary. By His bloody death upon that cross, the very Son of God crushed the head of the devil to silence all his lies. As we sing in the Battle Hymn of the Reformation, “He’s judged; the deed is done” (LSB 656:3). Jesus was crucified upon that cross so that

you would be forgiven all your sins, and He rose again from the grave the 3rd day to give His victory over the father of all lies to you.

And that's what He did in your Baptism. He made the forgiveness and victory He won for you very own victory over sin, death, and the devil.

But, we must ever remember that it is no joke to take sides against the devil and to be burdened with such a mighty, lifelong enemy. At your Baptism, God declared, "This is my beloved Son, Daughter, with whom I am well pleased". And now the father of all lies comes to whisper in your ear, "Did God really say?"

Daily in this Church Militant, the devil comes with the seed of his lies to deceive and mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. And often, it appears to our human reason and season that all we see is a crop of weeds blooming and blossoming before us. You look at your neighbor's toys, and your thought is, "If only I had that". You look at your neighbor's wife with lust, and say to yourself, "Then I would be happy". We see our neighbor's property, maybe our own property, destroyed by flood waters, fire, and we wonder if God really is in control of His creation. Quite honestly but sadly, it seems Christianity has less and less of a sanctifying effect in our country and in people's lives today. It is disheartening to see empty church pews; especially, when it is our children and grandchildren not filling those pews.

Which is why you, Dear Child of God, you go for a swim every day. You return to the waters of your Baptism, for repentance is nothing more than a daily return to the waters of Baptism. We repent, "I believe; help my unbelief" (Mk 9:24). And the Good News is that God does.

In the midst of it all the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, we rejoice in the words of Scripture, *All flesh is like grass and all its glory*

like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever (1 Tm 1:24-25).

Amid all the weeds that we see this day, the Good News is “the Word of the Lord remains forever”. Which is why we are here this morning. You hear His Word, and your faith grows. Our faith hears those blessed words, “I therefore forgive you all your sins...” As we eat and drink at His table, we hear “This is my body; This is my blood; for the forgiveness of sins,” and you are strengthened to walk by faith, until that day we are gathered into heaven.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.