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7.19.26

Last week we heard about Jesus preaching to a large crowd from a boat about a sower and seeds. If even some of these seeds fall on good soil, Jesus tells the crowd, they will produce abundantly. The kingdom of heaven, Jesus tells the crowd, is here among us, and no one can stop us!

Today's Gospel finds Jesus in that same boat, continuing to preach to that same crowd yearning for a message of hope. Jesus tells a new parable, in which a new sower sows good seed in his field, presumably on good soil. But then an enemy comes in the night and sows weeds among the wheat.

This parable feels more sinister than the parable of the sower, in which the evil one snatched some of the seed from the path. This story has the devil going in and planting their own seeds, planting weeds right in the middle of the good crops!

Weeds in the wheat.

It's been a weedy time here in our part of the kingdom. Not even a week went by after the fatal shooting of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo in Houston, and there was another killing by ICE, of Joan Sebastian Durán Guerrero, a Columbian immigrant living in Biddeford Maine. He left behind a three-year-old daughter. His blood remained on the street for some time after his death, to the shock of neighbors who took it upon themselves to stand by, guarding the crime scene.

Weeds in the wheat. It is now being reported that the officer who shot Joan is an Army veteran with a history of domestic violence. His ex-wife thought he must be joking when he told her he had been hired by ICE. She was sure he would never be allowed to carry a gun.

Weeds in the wheat. The very air we breathe is weedy this week, as wildfires from Canada turned the air dangerously hazy and smoky. Garbage pickup was canceled, and pools and parks were closed.

A three year old, crying for her Daddy. Blood in the street. Smoke in the air. We have weeds in our wheat this week.

An enemy has done this, says the farmer. The one who sowed them is the devil, says Jesus, and the seeds are children of the evil one.

An enemy. The devil. The devil is not some medieval concept of a guy in a red suit with a tail and pitchfork. The devil is right here, with his pesky weeds, right in the middle of our kingdom right now.

It's easy to become overwhelmed by this, to be panicked by the weediness we see. Our fear and anxiety can grow into a weed right inside our head, the voice of the evil one whispering to us. You can't do anything about this. You are powerless. Better just hide under the covers.

This evil one can get inside our head about other things. We can't take on this big project when people are so strapped and things are so uncertain. I'm not good enough. They must have hired the wrong person. I can't. We can't. These kinds of thoughts can drag us down an anxiety and fear spiral. They can tie us up and paralyze us.

Surely the crowd listening to Jesus preach from the boat that day must have had some of these same fears swirling around their heads. Probably the evil one was right among them, saying into their ear, You can't do anything about the emperor and his soldiers! It's not safe to be out here listening to this radical! Go home and keep your head down!

Jesus, it seems, has added a sobering element to our happy story of the sower. It's not all about the seeds, the kingdom growing at a fast pace. There is an evil one, there are weeds.

But actually this story is not scary or disheartening at all. Jesus is not throwing a wrench into our hopes here. He is actually doubling down on last week's parable and message. Jesus is continuing to preach a message of empowerment, a call for everyone who has ears to listen, to stand up for justice, truth, and love.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus preaches that if even a few of those listening heed the message, that message will bear fruit so abundant that it can not be contained. This week, we see that abundant crop of grain growing, right in the midst of the weeds.

Surely, some of those weeds are influencing the wheat. Some of those children of the evil one hurt and damage the wheat -- the fears, greed, the violent impulses, the forces that drag some of us into despair and make some of us hurt and even kill our neighbors.

But what Jesus says about that is interesting and illuminating. The farmer in the parable does not have the servants pull up the weeds, but says, Let them grow together. When the harvest comes, we'll take care of them. Basically, the instruction is to ignore the weeds. They are irrelevant. They will be taken care of in good time, in God's time.

This is a practice for our times, here in this kingdom, St Martin's. To say to the evil one in our own head, You are a liar. To keep building the kingdom, working for good in the face of evil. To pull the evil one away from our friends and neighbors, like brushing away a weed, like putting down the phone and changing the channel. To say to our friends dragged down by these same voices, Don't listen to those lies. Let's keep working and growing together.

There is evil out there. There are negative forces and negative voices. And still, the kingdom of God in all its abundance, in all our abundance, can thrive and grow. We must keep growing and spreading our seed and moving amidst these weeds and resisting them.

There are weeds in our world, St Martin's. And also, there is wheat. The weeds will fade away in due time. We, the good seed, the children of the kingdom, that is, all of God's children, must keep growing, listening, building, supporting each other. We must keep building a world of truth, justice, and love within us and around us. Our growth, God's growth, is kingdom growth. Our growth, God's growth, is unstoppable. Amen.