

Stained Glass Stories  
Wheat  
Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost  
September 1, 2019  
Pastor Dea Sharp, Pikes Peak UMC

1 Corinthians 3:5-9 (NRSV)

<sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup> So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup> The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. <sup>9</sup> For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

The first time our youngest grandson was able to come to the mountains we found the cutest little spruce tree, just slightly shorter than Cannon. Each year we take Cannon's picture with "his" tree. It will soon outgrow him. We plan for it be there a long time. Frankly, it'll outlive us.

When the Apostle Paul wrote the words of today's reading, to the church at Corinth, he was making it very clear that even if he had sown seed and somebody else watered it, it was God who gave the growth.

God controls God's field and what it produces for harvest.  
We can find comfort and encouragement in that!

I've been in "official" ministry for 10 years.  
I've been reading about Rev. Glenn's prolific ministry here at PPUMC.  
Along with those men and women between our tenures we've pastored this Family of Faith with sermons and hospital calls and home visits.  
We've baptized and blessed.  
We've prayed before and after surgeries.  
And we've hosted celebrations that ushered our saints into Heaven.

Trust me, being a pastor brings me into contact with all kinds of people, with different backgrounds and motives and problems in life.  
But, ONE thing brings us together.

Our paths crossed in the field called the Church of God.

In the furrows of God's Field there's been talking and walking, but always, the grace of God's guiding hand.

And like you, in years of faithful learning and living, we've had some "refinement" let's call it that. We've connected some dots from God's Word and made them real in our day-to-day living. We've grown in understanding.

In the front left (to you) chancel window, towards the bottom, there is a sheaf of wheat.

So here's another stained glass story/Sunday school lesson....today about wheat.

Jesus talked about planting and harvesting often and one of his parables, from Matthew, comes right after the one about seeds on different soils, but it's about the wheat and the tares (which is a kind of ryegrass.)

Jesus said,

*"The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, 'Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"*

(Mt. 13:24-30)

Though it this story kinda sounds like the seeds on different soils, that's where the similarity ends because this one is talking about God's field and those who are in it.

A tare is a plant that commonly grows in fields of grain.

It looks like edible grain, but it isn't even suitable for food.

One commentary said the tare in this parable looks like wheat but is a poisonous weed!

Early in growth you can't tell a tare from REAL wheat.

It's not until near the time of harvest, when the wheat sprouts its grain, that you can discern which of the two is the real thing.

Here's how Jesus explained this parable (with a *little* Pastor Dea paraphrasing:)

God has a field which is the entire world.

And there is divine meaning and purpose being worked out here.

God is guiding history and humankind to an end that will fulfill God's purpose.

This parable has two different works being done in the world.

And it gives us some understanding as to why there is evil.

God plants good seed that becomes God's children of the Kingdom.

Satan, is also planting – those seeds will be his offspring.

Now, because the wheat and tares look alike, it's almost impossible to figure out which is which.

That's why the householder (who is God) tells the servants to let both kinds of seed grow to harvest when the difference will be apparent.

It says in 2 Timothy (2:19) "The Lord knows who are His"

Are the seeds of Satan among the good seeds truly evil people?

No. The parable tells us they look and act similarly; you can't tell them apart.

Until we repent and turn to God, we're all walking "*according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air*" it says in Ephesians. (2:2)

Hold on, Dear Ones, and remember that Satan influences us!

Until we understand that and actively resist his evil spirit at work, we're unwittingly Satan's agents. He's got us all bamboozled!

Here's today's lesson:

We've got to be patient with others; treat them with kindness and fairness. God, who knows our hearts and expects us to do that.

We can't always discern another person's heart, can we?

One of the key points of this parable is the owner telling his servants not to go through the field cutting out what they THOUGHT were tares.

We can't know.

But God does.

So, we need to give folks the benefit of the doubt.

When they sin, help them get back on their feet spiritually.

People may sometimes *act* like a tare but be a person of the Kingdom.

A-n-d people may act like a person of the Kingdom but be a tare.

We're not the ones to tell.

'Cause we don't have all the tools for that job.

As workers in God's field we've got to be vigilant, but we also have to treat people kindly and watch for God's hand in the good results!

If the servants had charged through the fields tearing up the good wheat along with the tares, can you think what kind of mess that would have created?

The good crops wouldn't have grown to maturity to bearing fruit.

As we work in God's spiritual field we've got to be careful not to harm or worse yet, destroy, the good in any effort to weed out the tares.

So WHAT are we supposed to do?

God says to let 'em grow up together until the harvest – which in parable language, is the end of the age, when Jesus Christ comes back.

It's THEN that the distinction between the wheat and the tares; good seed and bad seed; true believers and those who don't will be made.

Only Jesus can do that.

I'm not going to get all apocalyptic on you (today, ha) but Christ will gather up the lawbreakers and cast them into the furnace of fire.

It's not going to be a good time!

Our culture doesn't like to hear "judgment" because that implies that there are standards and absolutes; morally and ethically.

But – and we'd all better get this - God says a time of judgment IS coming and it will deal with lawlessness and unrighteousness.

**The key is: that it's *God's* judgment, not ours.**

Remember I said earlier there's comfort and encouragement in today's message. Well here THAT truth: God judges in perfect righteousness and in God's time.

We need to take God, and God's work, very seriously.

I don't want to be a tare, someone who pretends to be the real thing. Do you? The world's full of good intentions but there are many who can't show themselves to be the real thing – which is a genuine Christian planted by God in God's field.

What we need to do is keep a watch ON OURSELVES.

When we profess Christianity we have to make sure we are following the teaching of Christ and building on that foundation.

Be planted, Dear Ones, like Cannon's tree – for the long haul and for generations after us to see the fruit of our lives in Christ.

Jesus concluded this parable by saying, "Let anyone who has ears to hear, listen."

Amen?

Amen!