

Sermon Proper 11 A

5th Sunday after Pentecost

July 17, 2011

“While everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat...when the slaves said to him do you want us to go and gather them He answered...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”

I believe the parable of the wheat and the weeds is a parable about God's unconditional love and grace and...above all, God's patience.

Let me tell you a story about a young girl. She was raised in a loving family with a father that was kind, gentle and a righteous man. When she was very small, he would take her up on his lap and tell her wonderful bible stories. He didn't have to read them to her; he had committed large volumes of scripture to memory. She grew to love those stories and, because of them, developed a great love for God's word.

Once she learned to read, she was given her very own, brand new,

pretty, white bible. She read it every night. Her father even disciplined her with scripture. He always knew just the right passage to gently correct her. As always happens with young children, she grew up and went away to school...and there was so much to learn, and so much to do, and so much to read, and so many sporting events, and so many parties. And after all, Sunday was the ONLY day she had to sleep in...Saturday nights were so much fun and they weren't over until it was almost time for the sun to come up. And...wasn't Sunday suppose to be the Sabbath, and didn't that mean rest...and what better way to rest than to sleep in until one or maybe two in the afternoon. She could always go to church next week or the next week or maybe even once a month.

This saddened her father, but he was a wise and patient man, he understood the follies of youth and he knew she was planted in good and fertile soil and had strong roots in the Word of God and would...in time...be able to withstand the weeding out of any evil that had been sown.

Towards the end of her freshman year, she was home for a long weekend and she and her father were very happy to be together again ...to talk and laugh...they always laughed a lot.

She was so relieved that there had been no condemnation from her father. She had been a little fearful that there would have been.

On Saturday afternoon, after a great morning spent together, her dad went out the back door to mow the lawn as she started out the side door to go to the mall...after finally finding her ever elusive car keys.

That was the last time she ever saw her father alive. As she was getting into her car, she heard her mother's screams. Her dad had suffered a ruptured aorta and had died instantly. She was in shock and she did the only thing she could think to do...she went to her knees in prayer and there, in the quiet of her room, she immediately felt an emptiness that she had not even known was there, fill with the love and comfort of God. She was so grateful that God was a patient and forgiving God and had been right there waiting the second she came back to Him.

She returned to her church and to reading God's word. Later she married and had children of her own and raised them as she had been raised...with God's word and in a community much like this one.

As time passed, the young woman realized many of her dreams and throughout her life she continued to grow in God's word .

She was always thankful of God's patience with the weeds that came and went in her life...and there were always weeds.

She watched her children grow and do as she had done...go off to school and yes...leave the church. She knew, though, as her father had known before her, that they had strong roots...they would survive the weeds.

One day...many, many years later, she received a phone call from her eldest..."Hi mom, I just called to say thank you."

The woman answered...well I'm sure you're welcome, but what are you thanking me for? "For raising me with the LOVE OF GOD in my life"

AHHHH...it just doesn't get much better than that.

How great it is that we have such a loving and patient God, who showers us with abundant grace and who's not willing to lose one grain of wheat...who waits to remove the weeds of evil until the wheat is mature and won't be harmed and can be harvested into the kingdom without losing one stalk that can be saved.

We all know that the wheat in today's parable represents the people of God and the weeds, the evils that Satan puts in our lives...

Jesus tells us that at the end of the reading. But, Rev. Wanda Copeland of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Minnesota puts forth a different take on this parable in one of her lectionary meditations ...

“What if we were to imagine that God loves us so much, that it would be unconscionable that even a stalk of wheat be lost?

Can we even comprehend a God that loves the world and all of His creations so much that EVERY grain of wheat is SIGNIFICANT? “

And what if WE started living our lives as if that were true?