



**THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
JULY 19, 2020
"BLESSED WEEDS"**

THIS MORNING WE OFFER A CHANGE OF PACE. BECAUSE OF A NUMBER OF REASONS, WE ARE RECORDING OUR SERVICE ON MONDAY AND SOULSPIRIT IS WITHOUT OUR BASSIST, JASON MILETO.

WE'RE ALSO CHANGING UP THE FORMAT A BIT, SO I'LL BEGIN BY READING THE GOSPEL:

MATTHEW 13: 24-30

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

"An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

"No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

SONG

A Showman's Life (Buddy Miller)



Bb

F

They told me all about the pretty girls

C

F

And the wine and the money and the good times

Bb

No mention of all the wear and tear

Dm C

Bb-Bb/A-Gm

On an old Honky-Tonker's heart

F

Well, I might have known it

C

F----C//

But nobody told me about this part

In his parable, Jesus attempts to love us into a both/and world where God eventually is the one who sorts it all out.

But, man, we do like to play God, don't we?

SONG

Broken Halos (Chris Stapleton)

When I got serious about caring for my lawn, my goal was to create an expanse of lush, green grass. No dandelions, no white clover. No thistles, no weeds.



Our 1900-era Victorian home in Bloomington, Illinois had been built on a once large property owned by a colleague of Abraham Lincoln called Cloverlawn. And so, rather than accept the clover that naturally had covered our lawn for decades, I spent years eradicating it, along with every dandelion, thistle, and weed I could find. Of course, we have entire industries built on de-weeding our lawns, leaving nothing but grass, which by the way contributes nothing to bee, butterfly, bird, or insect life. Go figure....

I find that life is often a process of unlearning as well as learning.

So, I have been schooled lately by Pat Milliken, an extremely knowledgeable woman at CLC. A master naturalist and environmental educator, Pat has begun to teach me that:

Dandelions attract bees and butterflies. Birds, especially gold finches, eat their seeds.

I discovered, to my chagrin, that white clover is good for the soil, transferring nitrogen to the soil. It is also attractive to pollinators and a food for wildlife.

Milkweed attract monarch butterflies, which are in decline.

Bees and butterflies love the flowering thistle and birds eat their seeds.

Broadleaf plantain, found naturally in almost every yard, is another nutrient accumulator for the soil.

Nettles are the host for the admiral butterfly.

And joe pye weed, a beautiful tall plant, provides a habitat for pollinators and beneficial predatory insects that control insect pests.

So, as I worked my tail off to eliminate weeds from my lawn, I was destroying the natural habitat for bees, butterflies, birds and helpful insects.



Carl Jung points out that once we become aware, we are then faced with an ethical dilemma. As we become aware that we are destroying the natural habitats for non-human life, we have to decide whether we will change the way we care for the habitat of our yards or continue the destruction of non-human life.

All of our environmental organizations are advocating that, as homeowners, we provide some of the habitats for wildlife because of the extensive habitat life due to farming road to road rather than leaving edges, to housing and commercial development and pesticide use.

Whenever it is safe to gather, clc will be re-creating our landscape as a friendly habitat for bees, butterflies, birds and helpful insects. If you're interested in helping, just contact us through the church office or our website.

Just like broken halos are somewhat an oxymoron, so are good weeds.

There are always deeper meanings to Jesus' parable about the wheat and weeds that fertilize and enrich all of life.

SONG

Elephant (Jason Isbell)

One of our earliest unhealthy defenses as children is called splitting. And it often continues into adulthood.

Christians can see faith as wholly positive and doubt as wholly negative. God and Satan, once held together spiritually in the old testament in sayings such as "I am the God who kills and makes alive, who wounds and heals" the Christian psyche later splits the image into Christ and Satan. Anger is seen as wholly negative whereas, for example, anger is a healthy response to our boundaries being violated.

In the song, elephant, we find Jason Isbell finding love, laughter, intimacy, and empathy in the midst of a woman dying of cancer. Wheat among the weeds.



Spiritually, psychologically, archetypally, wheat and weeds are two sides of the same coin. As are faith and doubt, love and apathy, life and death. If we live at a depth of soul and height of spirit, we get both sides of the coin simultaneously.

As Luther writes, “in the midst of life, we are in death.”

We have to be careful what we try to pull up and remove in life. Elsewhere Jesus warns us that if we cast out a demon dogging us in life and do not replace it with something healthy, we only create room for eight demons to replace the one.

For example, alcoholics who white-knuckle their way to sobriety, without replacing the spirit of the bottle with the spirituality of the twelve steps, just end up foisting their bitterness, resentment, and misery on everyone around them....

One of the strengths of Lutheranism, we offer the church universal, is that the Lutheran approach teaches us how to live with ambiguity. We become willing to live with the various shades of gray, leaving it up to God to sort out the finer points.

As Lutherans, hopefully we come to know what Leonard Cohen sings, “there’s a crack in everything, but that’s how the light gets in.”

SONG

God is in the roses (Rosanne Cash)

The rose is an apt metaphor for Jesus’ teaching. We don’t get one without the other. And so, there is no healing without being wounded. There is no Jesus Christ without the fall of Adam and eve. How would we know man without woman? Woman without man? And today, we are learning of the ambiguity of masculine and feminine energies. We are being asked to live into life that exists on a continuum in so many ways.



We may be finding that life right now is more than a bit confusing. But, as a wise man once told me, confusion is a good thing. It is when we are in the midst of confusion that we are in the midst of letting go of old ways of thinking and living.

Wheat and weeds. Growing together. Growing within us and bringing us new life.

May you experience God being with you this coming week. May you remember you are yoked to the Christ. May you open to the risk and reward of the holy spirit.

Amen.