

Worship Resources - **Pulling Weeds** - <https://youtu.be/QRRGaBfuvu8>

7th Sunday of Pentecost, Year A,

19th July, 2020

Romans 8:12-25 / Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 CEV

Intro/Prelude *Shall We Gather At The River*, written by Robert Lowry,
arranged for piano by Lee Evans,
played by church musician Annie Center
<https://youtu.be/shX7MrVcc9A>

Call to Worship/Welcome

I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

We gather this morning in all our diversity and needs. We come to celebrate God's blessings to us. We come to open ourselves to God's guidance and love. We come to see more clearly God's presence in our lives. We come to see God in this community of seekers. Let us join in worship together.

Part of our tradition is a commitment to share words of peace and welcome with each other when we gather. But I wonder if we give thought to what is actually meant when we say, "Peace be with you." This morning I thought it might be worth while to learn what peace really means, and reflect on the depth that salutation carries. As you watch the following video from The Bible Project, pay attention to what God's peace really is, and think about those you would offer such wishes for.

Passing the Peace of Christ (video) *Word Study: Shalom – "Peace"*

The Bible Project

<https://youtu.be/oLYORLZOaZE>

Invocation

Join me in a word of prayer.

Holy One, you know us already. Help us to know you better. Let us see you all around us. Fill our worship with your Spirit so that we may learn to recognize your presence in all places. **Amen.**

We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. Amen.

Our epistle reading this morning from Paul's letter to the Romans highlights our relationship with the Spirit and Creation. Let's think about how the Spirit influences our walk with Christ and what we can learn from God's created order to guide that walk as we hear these words of Paul.

Epistle Reading Romans 8:12-25 CEV

My dear friends, we must not live to satisfy our desires.

If you do, you will die. But you will live, if by the help of God's Spirit you say "No" to your desires.

Only those people who are led by God's Spirit are his children.

God's Spirit doesn't make us slaves who are afraid of him. Instead, we become his children and call him our Father.

God's Spirit makes us sure that we are his children.

His Spirit lets us know that together with Christ we will be given what God has promised. We will also share in the glory of Christ, because we have suffered with him.

I am sure that what we are suffering now cannot compare with the glory that will be shown to us.

In fact, all creation is eagerly waiting for God to show who his children are.

Meanwhile, creation is confused, but not because it wants to be confused. God made it this way in the hope

that creation would be set free from decay and would share in the glorious freedom of his children.

We know that all creation is still groaning and is in pain, like a woman about to give birth.

The Spirit makes us sure about what we will be in the future. But now we groan silently, while we wait for God to show that we are his children.^[b] This means that our bodies will also be set free.

And this hope is what saves us. But if we already have what we hope for, there is no need to keep on hoping.

However, we hope for something we have not yet seen, and we patiently wait for it

Scripture Video

Romans 8:12-25

A Wonderful Future For God's People

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9RCjK4pA-w>

A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

Joys and Concerns

This morning let's keep Patti Berg and her family in our prayers, with the passing of her older sister Neva this week.

Also, let's continue to remember Myrna's granddaughter Tammy, as she copes with not being able to work due to her back injury.

We can express joy this week for Goldie's sister Phyllis, as she has made progress with her chemotherapy, and will be moving to a maintenance level going forward.

We can also be thankful that Leilyah has now cleared the Coronavirus from her system, having a negative test in the past week.

May we also give thanks for Bill and JoAnn Shoemaker's granddaughter Tayla as the embassy was able to successfully get her back home from Kenya. Bill and JoAnn also tested negative for COVID19 this week as well.

Let's continue to keep all those who suffer from infection in our prayers this week, as well as our leaders as they make difficult decisions about our path forward. May God guide them to make the best decisions to ensure the health and safety of all.

Let's bring these concerns, and those we carry in our hearts to God in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

Circle us, God. Circle us with the light of your presence within this dark world. Enable us to be overcomers of fear and temptation. Enable us to be victors over sin and despair. Enable us to become that which you would desire

God of creation, Lord of Salvation Circle us with the light of your presence

Circle us, God. Circle our human and faith families within the shelter of your outstretched arms. Protect them in each moment of their daily lives. Protect them in the decisions that they face. Protect their homes and relationships. Circle our families with the light of your presence

Circle us, God. Circle this world with the joy of your Salvation. Where there is sickness and disease bring healing. Where there is hunger and despair bring hope. Where there is torture and oppression bring release God of creation, Lord of Salvation.

Circle this world with the light of your presence, Amen

Jesus tells a parable in this morning's gospel reading about the threat weeds can pose to a healthy field. As we hear these words from Matthew, let's think not only about how weeds can not only affect the growth of the church, but our own personal journeys as well.

Gospel Reading Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 CEV

Jesus then told them this story:

The kingdom of heaven is like what happened when a farmer scattered good seed in a field.

But while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and scattered weed seeds in the field and then left.

When the plants came up and began to ripen, the farmer's servants could see the weeds.

The servants came and asked, "Sir, didn't you scatter good seed

"An enemy did this," he replied.

His servants then asked, "Do you want us to go out and pull up the weeds?"

"No!" he answered. "You might also pull up the wheat. 30 Leave the weeds alone until harvest time. Then I'll tell my workers to gather the weeds and tie them up and burn them. But I'll have them store the wheat in my barn."

After Jesus left the crowd and went inside,^[a] his disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the story about the weeds in the wheat field."

Jesus answered:

The one who scattered the good seed is the Son of Man.

The field is the world, and the good seeds are the people who belong to the kingdom. The weed seeds are those who belong to the evil one,

and the one who scattered them is the devil. The harvest is the end of time, and angels are the ones who bring in the harvest.

Weeds are gathered and burned. That's how it will be at the end of time.

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom everyone who does wrong or causes others to sin.

Then he will throw them into a flaming furnace, where people will cry and grit their teeth in pain.

But everyone who has done right will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom. If you have ears, pay attention!

Gospel Video

Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

Weeds Among The Wheat

Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBFV4DLuuB8>

Message – Pulling Weeds



The bearded darnel is a devil of a weed. Known in biblical terms as “tares,” bearded darnel has no virtues. Its roots surround the roots of good plants, such as wheat, sucking up precious nutrients and scarce water, making it impossible to root it out without damaging the good crop.



Above ground, dandelion looks very similar to wheat, until it bears seed. Those seeds can cause everything from hallucinations to death. No wonder Jesus uses this noxious “cheat wheat” to illustrate evil incarnate. Bearded dandelion, also known as false wheat, is the botanical equivalent of the “ravening wolves...in sheep's clothing” of which he had already warned earlier in Matthew's gospel. Jesus' audience would have known exactly what he was talking about. This weed was the bane of the Palestinian farmers of his day. Not only was it difficult to tell the weeds from the crops until they went to seed, it was virtually impossible to remove them without harming the good plants they infested. It's a good

analogy for our interactions with other people in our lives. It can be difficult to tell the good crops from the bad, to tell from outward appearances.

Former President Ronald Reagan liked to tell a story, which he said was true, about a newspaper photographer out in Los Angeles who was called in by his editor, and told of a fire that was raging out in Palms Verdes. That's a hilly area south of Los Angeles. His assignment was to rush down to a small airport, board a waiting plane, get some pictures of the fire, and be back in time for the afternoon edition. Breathlessly, he raced to the airport and drove his car to the end of the runway. Sure enough, there was a plane waiting with all the engines all revved up, ready to go. He got aboard, and at about five thousand feet, he began getting his camera out of the bag. He told the fellow flying the plane to get him over the fire so he could take his pictures and get back to the paper. From the other side of the cockpit there was a deafening silence. Then he heard these unsettling words: "Aren't you the instructor?"

Amusing as it may be, it highlights the assumptions we can often make about others that aren't accurate. Just because they look a certain way, or fit a certain assumption we have, we can make our own assessments of who they are which may not be correct. This passage can easily be applied to disagreements within the church when there is disagreement over theology or doctrine, but there is a personal aspect to it as well.

Likely written in the context of the early church at Antioch, Matthew's gospel reflects the struggles of that young congregation. Founded by people of Jewish descent living in Gentile Asia Minor near present day Turkey, the early founders of the church had similar backgrounds and core beliefs. But with the upheaval caused by the Jewish

revolt and war, and subsequent diaspora, the area was flooded with refugees of every ilk, with differing ideas of right belief and doctrine. So this parable was well-suited for an audience struggling with discord and conflict within the body. But there is a personal component to this comparison as well. Sometimes our own lives resemble a farmer's infested field, with weeds and wheat intertwined in our souls, hearts, and minds.

The apostle Paul certainly knew that struggle. He repeatedly speaks of the “thorn in his side” and in Romans 7 comments that “I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.” Members of AA or Al-Anon do too. The First Step confesses, “We are powerless over alcohol and our lives have become unmanageable.”

The Fourth Step is to do a “fearless moral inventory,” sorting out the wheat from the weeds within. Our personal experience of our internal adversary's sowing may be more subtle, as in the countless distractions we let derail us. Emails, phone calls, and endless meetings can make it look as if we are working on the realm of God, but they may be symptoms of our own divided souls.

Often our employment can feel weed infested as well. Like the servants of the parable, many face the challenge of separating the weeds from the wheat in their workplaces. Maybe it is the middle manager who is glad about her company's big profits, but unsure about the bookkeeping behind them. Perhaps it is the lawyer who is asked to look the other way for the “good of the firm.” Or maybe it is something as simple as lacking compassion and taking a tough stance, because it's “just the way business works.”

We all confront the challenges and temptation of weeds in our lives every day. Which only highlights the difficulty of trying to pull the weeds in our own communities of faith. When we all struggle with our own internal infestations, how can we decide who is truly worthy or not to be tended in our field? Yet the problem is a real one.

Jesus is well aware of the threat and disruption antagonists can cause within the body. Just before he tells this parable, the Pharisees, leaders of his own faith, try to trick him and begin their plot to destroy him. They look like true leaders, but they are as false and deadly as any bearded dandelion. Jesus and the author of Matthew also know that these weeds can cause powerful infestations. Elsewhere in the Gospel, Jesus warns against “false messiahs and false prophets,” those who cry “Lord, Lord,” and seem faithful and caring, but who lead people astray and harm the community.

There is plenty of this to be seen in the greater church today. Those who use their voice to proclaim truths that are at odds with the teachings of Jesus, those who support policies and leaders which embody the antithesis of the Sermon on the Mount. That very visible and public embodiment of what Jesus defines as evil is often easy for many of us to spot. But among the individuals within our own communities, is it always so easy? Like the early church in Antioch, we are a diverse mixture of people from different backgrounds with different ideas of what proper theology and doctrine is. The truth I may consider clear as day, another may see quite a different reality, both based on sound discernment from different perspectives. Which is why Jesus in his parable clearly cautions against a rush to judgment.

Talitha Arnold, a UCC pastor in New Mexico, tells the story of her grandmother's struggle with discernment. A master gardener, her grandmother once transplanted some flowers from her garden into her daughter's front yard. Two days later, she was back, frantically digging up the same plants. "I made a mistake," she said, sweat dripping from her eighty-year-old face. "There are weeds, not the flowers I had intended! Quick, give me a hand before your mother gets home!" Although her beloved grandmother is scarcely the evil one of Jesus' parable, her story underscores the challenge of distinguishing good from bad, wheat from weeds, loyal opposition from heresy, healthy conflict from destructive antagonism.

So what do we do? How do we deal with the potential weeds among us? Well, we start with ourselves. The weeds within our own souls can lead us from discerning the real threat without. If we water down the teachings of Christ to suit our own situations, if we allow ourselves to be convinced those who differ from our understanding deserve exclusion, then our ability to see the true weeds among us is compromised. But we still have the troubling question of how to deal with the true weeds among us.

Jesus gives some pretty clear direction there as well. We need to wait to see the fruit they bear. While we are not the arbiters of their final judgment, like the bearded dandelion, we can see their true identity by what they produce. Do they promote division and exclusion or radical welcome? As Jesus points out, we cannot judge a new plant by outward appearances. Does the path offered lead to compassion and justice, or callous injustice? Are their teachings in line with the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels or do they try to water those down to suit the ways of this world? Too often we let ourselves be caught up in debates of doctrine, theology, and scriptural interpretation that we lose sight of what the actual fruits a particular view produces. Unfortunately, intellectual debate often has real world consequences. We see that in

our own denomination's never ending debate of scriptural interpretation, particularly around issues of human sexuality and gender. Jesus makes clear that the ultimate pruning of who is truly in and who is truly out is beyond us, as we do not have windows into the souls of each other. But we can let the real fruits we produce be our guide in our interactions with one another. How do they impact others, and are they furthering the radical kin-dom of compassion and justice at work here and now, or are they furthering something quite different?

We are not called to pass judgment. But we are called to follow the example Jesus set: to offer radical welcome, and to be real with our sisters and brothers in Christ when their fruits do not reflect the gospel they claim to follow. Having frank interactions with others is never easy, but it is part of this calling we've accepted, how we hold each other accountable. I hope and pray that we work to rid our own lives of the weeds that threaten to choke our own faith, and that we seek to work together to ensure the fruit we produce is reflective of the wholesome, life giving and affirming seeds planted in each of us by the Master Gardener. Amen.

Call to Serve.

What we have received comes from seed sown in us by Jesus Christ. Having received the blessings of the harvest begun in us, let us return to God fruits of the blessings we have received.

As we continue to seek to sow our own seeds in our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's seeds of shalom around us. As we listen to the following song, Good Soil, let's think about how we can be good soil that encourages the God's good crops to grow and flourish in our own journeys of faith and our life together.

**A Time for Reflection *Good Soil (Lyric Video)*
*St James in the City***

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8_4t0skuV0

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Loving God, we offer back to you what we have been given:
our treasure, our time, and our lives.

Bless our gifts and multiply them for your purposes.

Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God has a plan that is always moving and in motion.

We all have our part in that plan. May we constantly seek to find God at work around us, and do our part to help that work grow. Seeing the beauty that growth brings, regardless of our place in its planting. Amen.

Sending Forth

As we extinguish this candle, the visual representation of God's spirit at work within and among us, let us carry this inside each one of us this week, letting it guide us to lives focused on seeking the unexpected growth of God's kin-dom and justice in the world around us. Amen.

Postlude *The Ash Grove*, a traditional Welsh folk melody,

played by church musician Annie Center.

<https://youtu.be/wLDq6XxPBfU>