

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
23 July – Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

HYMNS: 303 485 497 73 327 509

INTROIT: Psalm 119:57-64

You are my Portion, O LORD. I have promised to keep Your Words.

I have asked for Your favour with all my heart. Be gracious to me according to Your Word!

I have been considering my ways and turned my feet back to Your Testimonies.

I have been hurrying and have not been delaying, to keep Your Commandments.

Although the ropes of wicked people have been wrapped around me, I have not forgotten Your Instruction.

At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to You because of Your righteous Decisions.

I am a companion of all who fear You and of those who keep Your Directions.

The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy. Teach me Your Prescriptions!

COLLECT: O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your final judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here, and dwell with You in perfect joy hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS: Isaiah 44:6–8 Apart from Me, there is no God.

Romans 8:18–27 "The Spirit . . . intercedes for us."

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43 Parable of weeds among the wheat

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Isaiah 44:6-8

⁶ This is what the LORD, Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD of hosts, has said: "**I am the First and I am the Last**, and there is no God except Me. ⁷ Who is like Me? Let him proclaim and declare it! Let him recount to Me what has happened since I established an ancient people! Then let them predict what is to come and what will happen to them! ⁸ Do not be terrified and do not be afraid! Have I not been telling you and declaring it from long ago? You are My witnesses. Is there any God except Me? There is no other Rock. I do not know of any."

Romans 8:18-27

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time do not deserve to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation is waiting with eager expectation to see the revealing of God's children. ²⁰ For this created world has been subjected to futility, not by its own choice but because of the One who subjected it; in hope, ²¹ because the created world itself will also be freed from its slavery to decay, to have the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² For we know that all the creation has been groaning together with them and labouring with birth-pangs together with them until now.

²³ Not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as His children, for the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For we have been saved by hope. If hope is seen, it is not hope. Who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ However, if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it, with patience.

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit also helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what we are to pray for as we ought to, but the Spirit Himself pleads for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. ²⁷ He who searches our hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is. For the Spirit pleads for God's holy people according to God's will.

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

²⁴ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ However, while people were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat came up and formed grains, then the weeds also showed up. ²⁷ The owner's slaves came to him and asked him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?'

²⁸ “He told them, ‘An enemy has done this.’

“The slaves asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them out?’

²⁹ ““He said, ‘No. If you pull out the weeds, you may pull up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest! When the grain is cut, I shall tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles to be burnt but bring the wheat into my barn!””” ...

³⁶ When Jesus had dismissed the crowds, He went into the house. His disciples came to Him and said, “Explain the parable of the weeds in the field to us!”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world. The good seeds are the people who belong to the kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the Evil One. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore, as the weeds are gathered and burnt with fire, it will be like that at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send His angels, they will gather out of His kingdom **all the things that cause sin and the people who continue to do evil**, ⁴² and they will throw them into the fiery furnace. There people will weep and grind their teeth. ⁴³ Then **righteous people will shine forth like** the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let the one who has ears listen!”

THE PARABLE OF THE WEEDS AND THE WHEAT Sermon for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost 2023 Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel from before Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43.

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Last week we heard of the parable of the sower. Today, we have the parable of the weeds and the wheat. The word ‘parable’ ordinarily means something like “a complete, imaginary story that illustrates some spiritual truth,” but the word originally signified *placing two or more objects together for comparison*. In the Gospels, parables are typically allegorical stories that reveal how God is

inaugurating His heavenly reign on earth through Jesus, or such a story teaching disciples how to live in view of God's reign.

The public preaching of our Lord assumed the general characteristic of speaking in parables, and Jesus used parables like the one before us today about weeds and wheat to warn about God's final judgment. However, we do need to realise that accounts of God's judgment *are never portrayed as mere stories or illustrations*. We must distinguish between the parables and the very real judgment they teach. When Jesus interprets these parables, He explains God's real, coming judgment.

Let us now consider this parable and what Jesus is saying to us in it.

Jesus says: **“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ However, while people were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat came up and formed grains, then the weeds also showed up. ²⁷ The owner's slaves came to him and asked him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?’**

²⁸ **“He told them, ‘An enemy has done this.’**

“The slaves asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them out?’

²⁹ **“He said, ‘No. If you pull out the weeds, you may pull up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest! When the grain is cut, I shall tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles to be burnt but bring the wheat into my barn!”’” ...**

Like the parable of the sower, *this parable is also agricultural*. Jesus uses the familiar imagery of a landowner sowing seed in his field. But tension is introduced when an enemy comes along at night and sows bad seed into that same field. Weeds are sown among the wheat. The weeds are such that when they start growing, they don't look a whole lot different from the growing wheat. But when the workers do notice that there are weeds mixed in with the wheat, they ask the master whether they should go right away and take out the weeds. The master says, *“No, let it wait. We'll do the separating at the time of the harvest. That's when I'll instruct the reapers to take the weeds to be burned and the wheat to the barn.”* End of story.

So here we have a story with at least seven elements: a man who sows the seed, a field, good seed, weeds, an enemy, a harvest, and reapers. Now in some parables, not all the details need to be “decoded,” as it were. They're just there to fill out the telling of the story. But in this case, we can decode all of the

elements of the story mentioned, and we can do this with confidence because Jesus Himself provides the decoding. Jesus interprets the story for us, explaining what each image stands for. **“Explain the parable of the weeds in the field to us!”** the disciples ask, and Jesus does just that. He says, **“The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.³⁸ The field is the world. The good seeds are the people who belong to the kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the Evil One.³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.”**

The explanation of the story is pretty straightforward. In this world, Christ has His Christians, who listen to, follow and believe in Him, and are counted righteous for His sake in His kingdom of grace. These are the sons of the kingdom, which means they will receive the wonderful inheritance waiting for them in the kingdom of glory.

But in this world, mixed in among the Christians, there are also *unbelievers*, those who do not trust in Christ or follow Him. These are sons of the Devil, for they remain enticed and captivated by the enemy of our souls. In this world, it’s not always immediately apparent which are the sons of the kingdom and which are the sons of the Devil. They can look somewhat alike, and they are all mixed up, the righteous and the wicked, the believers and the unbelievers, living in the same world, maybe even in the same community.

But there will be an “unmixing,” a final separation. At the close of this age, Jesus will send His angels to do the separating. He says, **“Therefore, as the weeds are gathered and burnt with fire, it will be like that at the end of the age.⁴¹ The Son of Man will send His angels, they will gather out of His kingdom all the things that cause sin and the people who continue to do evil,⁴² and they will throw them into the fiery furnace. There people will weep and grind their teeth.”** The sons of the Devil will share in the Devil’s judgment: being cast into the fire of hell, a place of eternal torment. However, **“Then righteous people will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”** The sons of the kingdom, the righteous, will share in and shine in the glory won for them by Christ: eternal life in the kingdom of our heavenly Father.

That’s the explanation of the story, and it is very clear. Of course, it’s not very popular today to be this clear. For notice, there are only two types of people in this parable: the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the Devil, the righteous and the wicked, believers and unbelievers. Contrary to popular opinion, there are not many roads to God. There is only one, and that is through Christ. This

goes against the popular mindset of our culture, which takes a universalist view, thinking that whatever you want to believe or not believe, that's fine, *whatever works for you*. So, this parable of the weeds and wheat *goes against the grain*.

And the truth that there will be a final judgment, with a real heaven and a real hell - *this too goes against the grain*. But Jesus does teach the reality of hell, and actually, He does this in many places. There will be a final judgment, a separation, with two very different outcomes: on the one hand, the kingdom of heaven is for those who by faith in Christ are counted righteous, and on the other hand, there is damnation of hell for those who reject the only Saviour there is and thus remain condemned in their sins. This biblical teaching is very unpopular in our culture. But Jesus teaches it, so we, therefore, preach it.

So we know what this parable is saying. Now we should ask: Why does Jesus tell us this parable? What are we supposed to get out of it? What is the intended effect?

There are several things. First, ask yourself: *Where am I in this story?* Am I one of the sons of the kingdom or one of the sons of the Devil? Am I among the righteous or with the wicked? In other words, am I listening to, following, and trusting in Jesus, or am I going in another direction? If you know you haven't been following Jesus, the thing to do is to repent. If you know you do belong to Christ, then rejoice. This is a parable of both warning and salvation. It warns of the coming judgment and offers salvation, showing where salvation will be found, namely, in Christ. Flee the coming judgment by taking refuge in Christ Jesus, the Saviour God has provided for you and all men! There still is time; the final judgment is not yet. Now is the day of salvation!¹ The door of grace is still open. Jesus is the Saviour. He has died for us. On the cross, Jesus endured the judgment we deserve, dying for our sins so that we may receive His righteousness and resurrection and live forever in His kingdom.

Second, we must realise that *everything is tied to Christ*. The kingdom, our sonship, our righteousness, our eternal future - everything! Jesus comes and reveals the kingdom to us. He makes the kingdom known to us, as He does in this parable. Indeed, Jesus brings in the kingdom of heaven here on earth and brings us into it. Notice that Jesus is the One who sows the seed in this parable. He is the One who plants us as good seed in His field. He gives us life and makes us what we are. We are sons of the kingdom because of the Son, the very Son of

¹ 2 Corinthians 6:2

God, Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the truly Righteous One, *righteous in Himself*. By faith in Him, we become the righteous. We stand justified, righteous before God, for Christ's sake. So as sons of the kingdom, joint heirs with Christ, we shall share in His inheritance, namely, the glory to be revealed when He comes again. Everything good in this parable - everything good we have now and everything we have to look forward to - is tied to Christ, the Son of God, the bringer of the kingdom, and our Saviour.

And then, third, know that this world will not go on like this forever, this mixed-up world we live in here and now. There is something better in store for us. Right now, we live in a mixed-up world. The Devil has been at work. The world is full of weeds all around us, which causes us distress and discouragement. Sin and scandal, offences and causes of stumbling, lawlessness and law-breakers - this is the world we live in. Life as a Christian takes work. How long, O Lord, how long? Well, the answer comes in this parable: Not forever. A day is coming, dear friends. The day we long for, the Saviour we long for, that day is coming. Paul's words in Romans from earlier today fit right in here: *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time do not deserve to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us"* (Romans 8:18). Yes, we wait for that day with eager longing.

The parable that Jesus tells us today, this parable of the weeds and the wheat - is a parable of hope and encouragement! We have something to look forward to! When the final harvest comes, we, the sons of the kingdom, will be gathered in, and we shall receive the inheritance that is ours in Christ, the glories of the age to come. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Most holy and eternal God, You rule over all, and have given us victory over all our enemies. We come before You with humble hearts to praise You.

We thank You that You so richly supply the world with daily bread, that You fill the earth with untold resources, that You give every seed the miracle of growth, and send the rain to make fruitful the efforts of those who farm the soil. But, above all else, we thank You for that great love that has satisfied the hunger of our souls by sending from heaven the bread of life, Jesus Christ Your Son. Grant that we may believe in Him with all our hearts, and find joy and

satisfaction in Him alone. Help us each day to turn to Him who was wounded because of our sins, and bruised because of our iniquities, so that by His punishment we may be cleansed, healed, and forgiven, and may know in Him the joy of unbroken fellowship with You.

Gracious God, You know that we are weak and sinful. Give us the strength that we do not have of ourselves. Fill us with faith, hope, and love, so that we may live as Your children and enjoy life in all its fullness. Give us the power to stand firm in the spiritual battles of this life, the resolve to be Your true and loyal servants, and the ability to conquer our sins and to live in righteousness.

Bless Your Church, O God. Supply it with pastors who pray without ceasing, proclaim Your Word with boldness, call people to repentance and faith, and prepare them for the final coming of Jesus our Saviour and judge. Give all of us opportunities to speak the Gospel to others, and grant that we may do it with certainty and conviction, with a sense of urgency, and with genuine love for people's bodily and spiritual welfare.

We thank You for the many mercies You have shown to our country. Strengthen all forces of righteousness in our midst, and overthrow all the powers of evil. Teach us to trust in You, for You alone help and protect us.

Bless our homes with Your continual presence and help. Put Your Word in the hearts of children, and Your love in the lives of parents, so that they may all enjoy the bread of life for ever.

Deal mercifully with those among us who are suffering, bereaved, lonely, and depressed. Free them from their troubles, and bind them to You, that they may know the security of Your presence, and live to serve and praise You.

All these things we ask in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Article: One of Evolution's Most Famous Stories Gets a Rewrite

We've all heard the tale - for hundreds of thousands of years, humans lived in small groups, hunting and gathering, moving with the seasons and herds of prey. Then 10,000 (or so) years ago, this changed when humans (finally!) thought of farming and building lasting structures - civilisation had begun! Now, of course, in a biblical worldview, we know this view of human history is nothing but a fairy tale - but now (not surprisingly, as evolutionists change their stories constantly), some evolutionists also say it needs an overhaul!

In an article from *New Scientist* titled “*The Civilisation Myth: How new discoveries are rewriting human history,*” the author shares:

In an evolutionary eyeblink, our species has gone from hunting and gathering to living in complex societies. We need to rethink the story of this monumental transition...

Their most prevalent narrative describes a sort of trap: once people started farming, there was no way back from a cascade of increasing social complexity that led inexorably to hierarchy, inequality and environmental destruction. This bleak view of civilisation’s rise has long held sway. However, the more societies we look at, the more it falls to pieces. Confronted with inconvenient evidence, we are being forced to retell our own origin story. In doing so, we are also rethinking what a society can be.

Indeed, the author, science writer Michael Marshall, goes on to state this regarding the popular narrative of early human history: “Now, growing evidence suggests it is a fiction.”

Yes, it is fiction! But more on that in a bit.

Why does Marshall say the evidence now suggests this “fact” of evolution is “fiction”? The major problem is: “It misrepresents hunter-gatherer societies, which turn out to be far more variable and complex than we thought... [There] are dramatic examples of hunter-gatherers acting in unexpectedly sophisticated ways.”

Various archaeological findings, including structures such as Turkey’s amazingly complex Göbekli Tepe, confound archaeologists by subverting their expectations for these “simple” peoples. And it’s not just ancient peoples. Modern hunter-gatherer societies are not “simple.”

In recent decades, studies of modern hunter-gatherer groups have upended our ideas about their social structures, too. “Typically, people think of hunter-gatherers as living in small, nomadic bands that are fairly egalitarian and cooperative,” says Adrian Jaeggi at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. “But actually, there are quite a few examples of what some call ‘complex hunter-gatherers’. Those are people who can be fairly sedentary and have a high degree of political stratification. There can be a hereditary ruling class, for example, where you have chieftainship that is inherited. They have slavery and warfare.”

In other words, people are complex, and the simplistic view of the past that evolutionists have touted for decades doesn’t match the archaeological record or studies of modern hunter-gatherer peoples.

The remainder of Marshall's article shares the "twists and subtexts" that he believes "shed new light on our past" - but he still doesn't get it right! Because he has the wrong starting point (evolution and millions of years), he interprets the evidence in the present incorrectly.

It's not a great mystery how and why human civilisation developed because humans didn't spend hundreds of thousands of years hunting and gathering. Humans were created to tend and care for the earth right from the very beginning (Genesis 1:28). Within just one generation, humans had flocks and herds (Genesis 4:4), practised farming (Genesis 4:3), and even built cities (Genesis 4:17). And a few generations later, they had instruments (Genesis 4:21) and used bronze and iron (Genesis 4:22). Humans were created intelligent from the very beginning!

Now biblical history tells us that human civilisation was interrupted by a catastrophic global flood. The human population was reduced to just eight people, and all of humanity's achievements (other than the ark and what was saved aboard the ark) were lost to the floodwaters. After the flood, the population began to grow, and civilisation was reestablished, only to be broken up at Babel's time (Genesis 11). As the new language families spread out from Babel and settled in different parts of the world, they began to build their own civilisations - and that explains why we see civilisation "beginning" at around the same time in various places all around the world, particularly in the Near East and surrounding area.

The groups that left Babel and headed for northern climates soon had to compete with a harsh world under the grip of an ice age. Farming would be difficult, so many people likely lived a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, making their homes in caves and other temporary structures as they followed the herds and seasons. This wasn't a lifestyle that endured for hundreds of thousands of years, but for only a few hundred years until the ice age peaked, the glaciers retreated, and the land became farmable again.

If we want to understand history correctly, we must begin with the right foundation, the history that God, the eyewitness to all of history, has given us in His Word. This history provides the framework we must use to understand the world around us. Without it, evolutionists will have to write, rewrite, and re-write mankind's "history" because the evidence will never confirm evolutionary ideas! The Bible has never changed and never will.

Children's Message:

I want to tell you a story about when I was younger, still going to school.

One day my school teacher decided to give us a surprise maths test. Whoever received the highest mark would receive a Mars Bar. I remember that I scored the highest, so I got the Mars Bar! But, there was a catch - I was not allowed to eat it at school but had to wait till I got home. I couldn't wait for school to finish that day! Anyhow, during the day, a boy in a higher class, and much bigger than me, decided to take my Mars Bar. I tried to stop him, but he was stronger than I was, and he just laughed and grabbed my Mars Bar and walked off. How do you think I felt? I felt mad! How dare he do that. It was wrong, wasn't it!



What do you think I wanted to do? I wanted to punish him. He shouldn't be allowed to get away with that, I thought. But something very different happened. The teacher who gave me the Mars Bar saw what happened, and the big kid who took my chocolate got in trouble. That same day, he said sorry to me.

Jesus teaches us about how we should act when somebody does something wrong against God and His Church. Sadly, not everybody knows Jesus. People sometimes say false things about Him or the Church. Somebody may teach something about God that's just not right, that doesn't agree with the Bible, and nobody can get them to listen. People can give us a really hard time because of our faith. When that happens, we could get really sad, or perhaps really angry - like I got mad at the kid who stole my Mars Bar - because what they're doing is just not right.

But Jesus wants us to act differently. Only one person can judge and punish when people do evil. Who is that? Yes, Jesus Himself! In His Word today, we learn that He is the Judge and knows the right way to handle people who do what isn't right.



When I got my chocolate stolen, I wanted to punish that kid myself. But the right person, that teacher, stepped in. It's like that with Jesus. He's the One who can judge rightly and sort things out when people do bad things. And you know why that's so good? Because we also do bad things, and He has a way of handling us. How? By dying on the cross to save us from the punishment we should get. And how do we know that we won't receive punishment? Because God the Father raised His Son Jesus from the dead, showing that He has fully accepted His payment for

all our sins! *Thank You Jesus, for stepping in on my behalf, taking the punishment for my sins. Help me to always be joyful with this news. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

30 July Mission Day	6 August 10 Pentecost	13 August 11 Pentecost
10.00am TMBA HC AELC Mission Day Service	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am LOWOOD HC	8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR
Sunday, 30 July		
READINGS: Isaiah 62:1-7; Romans 10:11-17; Luke 24:44-53		
HYMNS: 221 215 45 65 (287 [293 if needed]) 845 (tune 391)		
Sunday, 6 August		
READINGS: Isaiah 55:1-5; Romans 9:1-13; Matthew 14:13-21		
HYMNS: 526 560 268 (284 282) 466		

Next Sunday, 30 July. All offerings received at our Mission Day Festival will be used by Bethlehem Toowoomba to cover the printing costs of more Statements of Faith, as well as other tracts/booklets/CDs etc, to be used for mission outreach in our communities. Please consider helping to support this.

Wednesday, August 2, 10.00am. Women's Guild at Marburg. Opening devotion: Fay. Choose a Bible verse from Leviticus 25-28. Item of Interest: An item of fancy work.

Sunday, August 13, 1.30pm. Seminary Committee meeting at Bethlehem Toowoomba.

JULY BIBLE STUDIES:

Friday, 28 July, 7.30pm, Oak/Aub at Aubigny.

Sunday, 30 July, 8.30am, Toowoomba.