

“GOD'S LIST OF ENEMIES, BUT JESUS IS OUR FRIEND!”

(Matthew 13:24-30)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear friends in Jesus,

Jesus told 36 parables, and 7 of them occur in just one chapter of Matthew's Gospel, chapter 13. Nearly every one of the parables uses nature as the key basis of the story. Each parable deals with a special truth and teaching of Jesus. The weeds and the wheat is no exception.

In this parable the field represents the world, and the good seed is the person in whose heart the Word of God works. The wheat is those who are within the Christian Church and in the purest sense are true members of the kingdom of God.

But the enemy introduces weeds, and these are sown by the enemy of God, the devil. God has enemies, and they are actively engaged in overcoming his kingdom and spoiling God's rightful harvest, But God allows this action, only so that he might be able to save his own at the final harvest. The parable teaches that the kingdom of God on earth is a mixture of good and evil, true and false, wheat and weeds.

The biggest weeds and enemies that Satan plants in our lives are:- 1) death; 2) eternal death; 3) those who prevent children from learning about and loving Jesus are perhaps the biggest problems today.

Now let's ask some questions about the effect of Satan's weeds and about the dwindling Christian Church, especially in affluent countries like Australia. Why are we losing so many people in our church today, especially those aged between 18 and 50? Look at our membership booklet – do we have more irregular attenders at worship than regular attenders? Will there still be a viable Lutheran Church in Australia in 2030?

Why are so many people not worshipping God today?

Let's look at some of the troublesome answers to these questions.

1. We are living in a godless society. God doesn't count any more. In fact many do not even believe there is a God,
2. People think that they are self-sufficient — they live only for money and success in life. God isn't needed. He is irrelevant. (Perhaps coronavirus is a wake-up call.)
3. People are encouraged to search for their own gurus which give them self-satisfaction.

4. Our society is so corrupt drugs and alcohol, sex outside marriage, same sex marriage, abortion, evil worded music, internet abuse and pornography, peer pressure, TV reality shows, biased newspaper and television reporting, evil cults, and greed, greed, greed, and lies, lies, lies.
5. The 10 Commandments, given by God to enhance and help society, are completely unknown and obliterated by society. The thinking is always what we want, not what God wants.
6. Children are either abused or worshipped by their parents. Often they are treated terribly or they are spoilt rotten.
7. Children are not encouraged into a constant warm relationship with Jesus.
8. Lutherans have not been very excited about their wonderful gift of faith in Jesus, to the extent that they really want to share Jesus with others.
9. Our worship at church and home has not been very warm and inspiring, and there has been a tension between set Liturgies and sound Bible Teaching, OR having Worship as entertainment with shallow Teaching and shallow understanding of Baptism and Communion.
10. There has been an inability or laziness by parents in talking about and living their faith in Jesus easily and simply and enthusiastically with family and friends.
11. Many people gad everywhere, spend excessive money on themselves, are slaves to sport and entertainment, live under rat race pressure, travel away on weekends to escape the daily grind, and forget and neglect to worship God. God's intended 'rest day' and 'worship him day' have been changed into 'activity day' and 'forget God clay'.

All of the above weeds affect our regular worship of God and our relationship with Jesus. All of these weeds which affect and hurt us tend to make us negative and feel depressed. Satan is working so tirelessly and successfully. He wants to drag us down with him. He wants to take us away from Jesus.

BUT we do have something FAR BETTER, don't we, the message of salvation and freedom in Jesus! Jesus took all our weeds upon himself when he died that agonising death for all our sins on the cross of Calvary. In pain and suffering he got rid of them. Although planted as a 'dead seed' in his grave, he sprang up as a new stalk of wheat on Easter morn. He fully conquered our weeds of sin, death, hell and Satan. His Spirit has sown the precious seed of faith and salvation in our hearts and lives through Baptism. He has continued to nurture and encourage our faith in Jesus through the Word of God and Holy Communion. Here Jesus personally comes to us and assures us that all our weeds (sins) have been completely eradicated. We have a living and loving Saviour who has given us a living and loving faith.

We have been given the glorious job of planting the seed of the Gospel in other people's hearts and lives. Because Jesus has saved us from eternal death to give us the gift of eternal life, we want to share him as effectively as we can to as many as we can.

What are some of the ways we can do this in our Wodonga parish?

1. Let's set aside time every Sunday to worship our special God with our family and special fellow Christians.
2. Let's make our Sunday worship simple, meaningful, relevant and joyful, without going to extremes.
3. Repeatedly encourage one another over the importance and blessings of Baptism, past and present, and attendance at Holy Communion — re-refreshing and renewing our faith in Jesus, to go out and live for him.
4. Teach our faith, talk our faith, and share our faith constantly with our children and grandchildren.
5. Pray constantly as individuals, families, and congregations for all members and contacts of our parish.
6. Urge older members to encourage young people and families to follow Jesus as their personal Friend and Saviour.
7. Encourage our Pastor and volunteer members to visit families, the lonely, sick, elderly, single people, and those who do not worship regularly or not at all. Why? Because Jesus loves them, and do we.
8. Transfer and/or make sure that our members, especially young people, are connected to another congregation when they leave home.

We have the most exciting message in the world to share with others— Jesus Christ and his love and his salvation! Let's share that exciting good news with our loved ones, our families, friends, members and contacts of our parish, and our community.

Let's plant the good seed into the hearts and lives of others, so that the Holy Spirit can bring forth a wonderful crop for our Lord's harvest! **Amen.**

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

Sermon by Pastor Graham Zweck
19 July 2020