Faithful in a Field of Weeds

Genesis 28:10–19a

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

If you've lived in Green Valley very long, you've learned something about weeds.

You can clear a flower bed one week, and after a good rain—or sometimes without any rain at all—they seem to return overnight. They appear where you didn't plant them. They grow where you didn't invite them. Sometimes they seem healthier than the flowers themselves.

Most of us have spent enough time pulling weeds to know one simple truth: when you see weeds, your first instinct is to get rid of them. That instinct isn't limited to gardening. We do the same thing with people. We look for what doesn't belong. We notice failures before faithfulness. We see weakness before possibility. We are often quick to divide the world into wheat and weeds, into those who belong and those who do not. Jesus knew that tendency. That is why he told a story that surprised everyone who first heard it.

A farmer sowed good seed in his field.

But during the night, while everyone was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. When the plants began to grow, so did the weeds. The servants saw the problem immediately. "Do you want us to pull them up?" It is such a reasonable question. It is the question most of us would ask. Let's fix it. Let's clean it up. Let's separate the good from the bad. But Jesus places unexpected words into the mouth of the farmer.

"No."

"If you pull up the weeds now, you may uproot the wheat along with them." Wait. Trust. Let the field grow.

That answer runs against almost every instinct we have. We prefer immediate solutions. Jesus prefers patient faithfulness. His concern is not merely removing weeds. His concern is preserving wheat. There is a profound difference. The Kingdom of God is not built through anxious control. It grows through the patient work of God.

That truth reminds me of another field. Long before Jesus told this parable, Jacob found himself in a lonely place. He wasn't looking for God. He was running from the consequences of his own deception. He stopped because the sun had set. He placed a stone beneath his head and fell asleep in the middle of nowhere. By every appearance, it looked like a wasted place. A forgotten place. Certainly not holy ground. Yet while Jacob slept, heaven opened. He dreamed of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And above it all stood the Lord, who renewed the covenant promises made to Abraham and Isaac.

When Jacob awoke, he did not say, "I found God." He said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it."

That may be one of the most hopeful sentences in all of Scripture. God was already there before Jacob recognized Him. Grace arrived before awareness. God's presence did not depend upon Jacob's faithfulness. It depended upon God's own faithfulness. That is the thread that binds Genesis and the Gospel together. In both stories, God is already at work before anyone sees it.

The servants see weeds. Jacob sees a wilderness. God sees something altogether different. God sees a field where wheat is quietly growing. God sees a place where heaven touches earth. A future still unfolding under His gracious care.

So, When Jesus explains the parable later, He tells us the field is the world. Not the church. The world. That means we should not be surprised that wheat and weeds grow side by side. The surprise is not that weeds exist. The surprise is that the Farmer refuses to give up on the field.

There is a kind of patience that only love can sustain. It is not passive. It is not indifferent. It is the steady confidence that God is still at work, even when His work cannot yet be fully seen. We struggle with that. We want quick answers. Quick justice. Quick growth. Quick certainty. But the Kingdom of God has always grown differently.

A mustard seed becomes a tree. Leaven quietly works through the dough. A child is born in Bethlehem. A cross stands outside Jerusalem. An empty tomb changes history. Again and again, God works patiently, faithfully, and often unnoticed until the harvest finally reveals what grace has been accomplishing all along.

Perhaps that is why Jesus warns against pulling the weeds too soon. Our vision is limited. We see only the surface. God sees the roots. We see today. God sees eternity. There have been people every one of us would have written off who later became faithful disciples. There have been seasons in our own lives when someone could have looked at us and seen only failure. Only regret. Only brokenness. And yet Christ was not finished with us.

The Farmer knew something was growing that no one else could yet recognize. That is good news, not only for the world, but for every one of us. It means God is more patient with us than we are with ourselves. It means God's grace keeps working beneath the surface when we cannot yet see the fruit. It means hope is never based on appearances. It is based on the faithfulness of God.

I think that is what Jacob discovered when he woke from his dream. The place had not changed. The rocks were still there. The wilderness was still a wilderness. The road ahead was still uncertain. The only thing that changed was Jacob's vision. He suddenly realized that God had already been present in the place he thought was empty.

That may be one of the greatest gifts of faith. Faith does not create God's presence. Faith awakens us to the presence that has been there all along. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Jacob's dream. In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells Nathanael, "You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

Jesus is the meeting place of heaven and earth. He is the true ladder. He is God's presence among us. He is the One through whom heaven comes near. That means wherever Christ is, no field is merely a field. No wilderness is merely a wilderness. No life is beyond hope. No person is beyond grace. So perhaps the invitation this morning is not to spend all our energy looking for weeds.

There are plenty of weeds. We already know that. The invitation is to look for the Farmer. To notice where Jesus Christ is already at work. To trust that His grace is often growing quietly beneath the surface before anyone else can see it.

Here in Green Valley, it is easy to believe the most important seasons are behind us. Many people arrive believing their story is winding down. Jesus says otherwise. He still sows. He still tends His field. He still brings life where others see only endings. He still grows wheat in unexpected places.

Perhaps that is the greatest surprise of all. Before we recognized the Kingdom, the King had already been here. Before we noticed His grace, He had already been sowing. Before we arrived this morning, Jesus Christ was already at work in this congregation, in this community, and in every life gathered here.

Our task is not to make the Kingdom appear. Our task is to recognize it. Because the Farmer has never stopped walking through His field.

And He never will. Thanks be to God. Amen.