

Lessons and Activities for Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (NRSV)

He put another parable before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field,²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds^[c] among the wheat and went away.²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.²⁷ And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?'²⁸ He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?'²⁹ But he said, 'No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field."³⁷ He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one,³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers,⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Discussion Topics/Questions:

Ask: What might this mean? It seems a little strange, doesn't it? Shouldn't we get rid of weeds in a garden, to help the other things grow?

Explain that we sometimes think we should separate ourselves as Christians. In a way, this is somewhat true. We want to live as people of God, called to be set apart from the world. At the same time, though, sometimes we think that this means we should judge people who are different from us, or that we are the ones who determine who is right or wrong in life, and who might be in and out of God's family.

Maybe people come to church, and we don't think they belong there. Maybe we want to cast aside those who are different from us. That's not our job! We cannot know what people are like on the inside.

Ask: So what is going on here?

Jesus is a unique farmer. Rather than sifting through plants and weeds right away, He tells the workers to wait. God is waiting. God's desire is not to bring us to harm, but to bring everyone

into His kingdom. Some people will reject His good news, sadly. He does not force His love on us. But He will ultimately judge. God will decide the state of men's hearts. We might think we know who is right or wrong, good or evil. Only God can truly determine that. Our job is to pray for those who are reluctant to know Him.

Ask: Why would Jesus be explaining things in a confusing way? Are there ever things in our lives that we don't understand right away? Sometimes we need help from others or from the Bible, when we are trying to understand things. Jesus explained His parables, and He is there to help us when we need understanding.

In a way, we are all "weeds." We are all sinful, and only saved by the grace of God. Because of the work of Jesus, we are forgiven and made new. He can turn weeds into flowers! We are grateful for the blessing of forgiveness. And because we know that God has forgiven us, undeserving as we are, we want to have mercy on others.

We might think we know better than other people, or that we can judge who should be in or out of the Kingdom of Heaven. It's important to realize that God will make those decisions. We can love one another, and pray for those who have not yet accepted the Gospel.

Ask: Do you know someone who needs prayer? Do you think you need to pray for a more accepting heart?

Close with a prayer thanking God for His wisdom and love. Ask for help in loving others without judgment, and recognize His control in our lives.

Gospel Story: Weeds Among the Wheat

Once there was a farmer who planted a beautiful field of wheat. One day, his helper comes running to tell him bad news! "Weeds are growing in the wheat." Said the helper. "The roots of the weeds are all tangled with the roots of the wheat! What are we going to do!" The farmer replied, "Never mind. Let the wheat and the weeds grow together. The wheat will still grow and grow. At harvest we will gather all the wheat into our barn, and get rid of all the weeds."

Activity: Wheat and Weeds Game

◆Ask a volunteer to be the farmer. The farmer stands in the middle of the play area. ◆The other players are weeds, who gather at one end of the play area, facing the farmer. ◆When the farmer calls out "Weeding time!" the weeds run to the opposite end of the area. ◆Any weed that the farmer tags changes to a wheat plant. ◆Wheat plants stay where they were tagged. When the weeds run again, wheat plants can tag, too, but cannot move from their spot. ◆Play continues until all weeds change to wheat plants. ◆Repeat with new volunteers as farmers.

Movement: Collecting Walk

Take children out for a collecting walk. Spend 5 minutes collecting any beautiful natural materials that they can find. Participants can collect pebbles, grass, sand, leaves— even weeds that grow between cracks in the sidewalk. Ask children to make a mural of God’s beautiful world using the materials collected. Gather participants in front of the finished mural and read aloud Romans 8:18-21.

Praying Together

Option 1: Invite participants to share their pictures from the Collecting Walk activity. Respond to each person’s picture with a thanksgiving for the item pictured.

Option 2: Make available two sheets of newsprint. On one sheet, participants write or draw things they consider to be bad or evil. On the second sheet, participants write or draw things they consider to be good. First ask participants to offer spontaneous prayers about the situations shown on the first sheet. Then ask participants to offer spontaneous thanksgivings for the good shown on the second sheet.

Option 3: Have children look through current newspapers, independently or with adult help. Ask each to find and clip a situation that could be helped by Christian love. Use the clippings as a prayer list for the group.

Option 4: Have kids make a list of “weeds”: people in life that seem frustrating or unlove-able. Pray specifically for them on a regular basis.

Movement: Beauty Walk

Remind children that the weeds could not spoil the beautiful field of wheat. Invite children on a “beauty walk.” Distribute paper and felt pens or crayons. Then take the children outside for a walk in the church yard, a nearby field or simply on a sidewalk. Ask each child to draw one picture of anything beautiful he or she sees on the walk. Encourage children to discuss their choices. Emphasize all the different, beautiful things there are in God’s world.

Movement: Story Shapes

Children create movements to accompany today’s story. First help the children explore qualities of movement with these directions: ◆Make your body into a shape you have never made before. Now make a different shape. (Repeat several times.) ◆Make a shape while you are standing. Now make a different shape while you are squatting, kneeling, bending and lying down. ◆Make shapes while you move. What different ways can you find to move? Can you find a new way to move forwards? backwards? sideways? ◆Keep making shapes as you move slowly, then quickly. Now stand in one place and make shapes as you rise and fall. Can you make tight shapes? Can you make loose shapes? ◆Ask

children to use the movements they have created to act out today's story. Young children can simply move like the wheat, like the weeds or like a farmer.

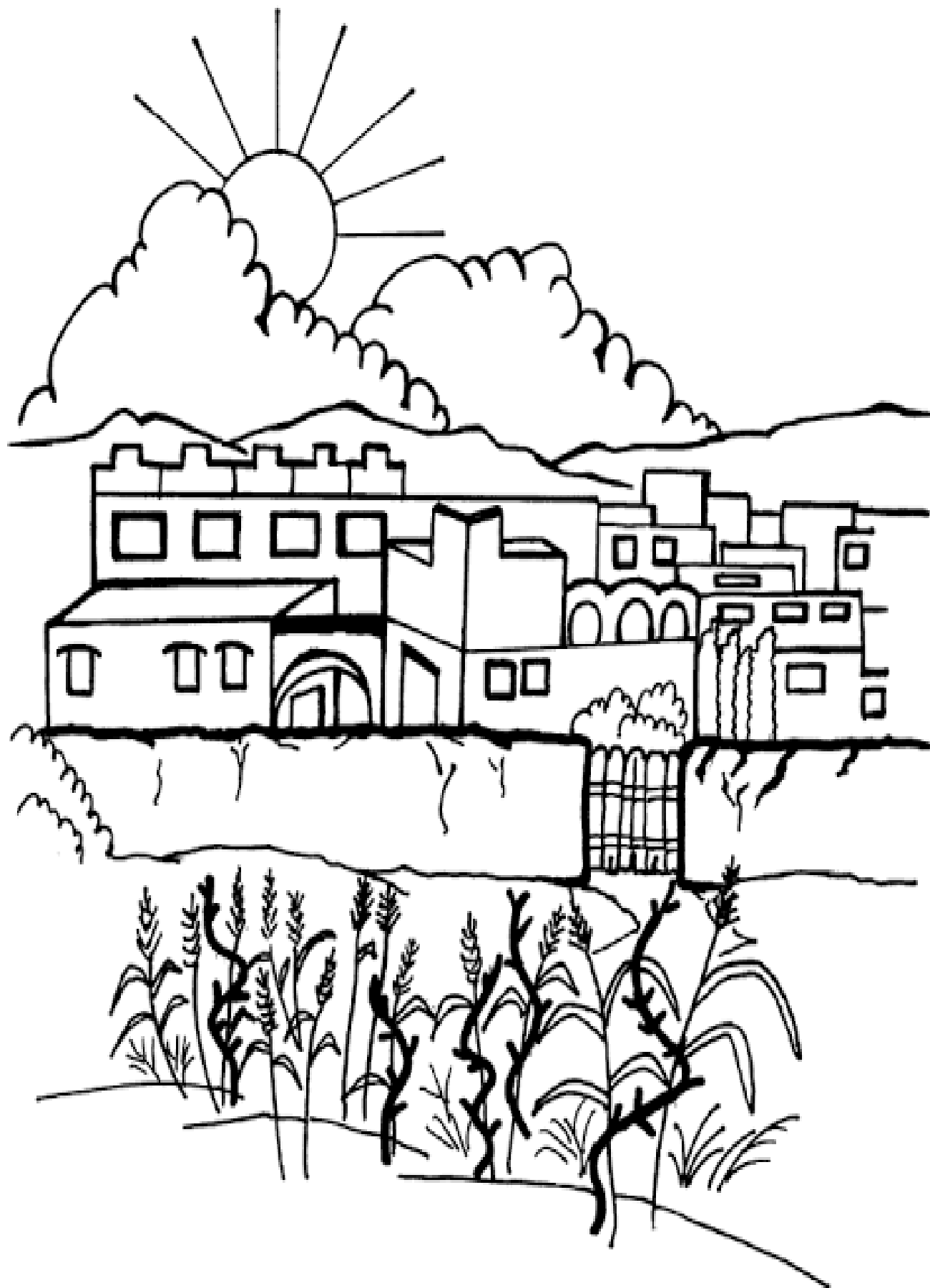
Art: Wheat and Weed

Pictures Ask each participant to draw a picture based on today's parable. Participants can choose any of these options: ♦ Draw a picture of the story, just as Jesus told it. ♦ Draw life as a farmer's field. What good things grow in the field? What bad things grow in the field? What happens in the field? ♦ Make up your own idea based on today's parable. Use these art techniques: ♦ Draw with felt pens, colored pencils or colored chalk. You may want to show participants how to break chalk and draw broad strokes with the side of these chalk pieces. ♦ Glue pieces of torn paper to a sheet of construction paper to make your picture. ♦ Paint a large picture. Use 18" x 24" paper and brushes that are at least 1" wide.

Music

From a hymnal, sing or play a hymn or song reflecting today's theme. Here is an example:

♦ "This Is the Day the Lord Hath Made": <https://youtu.be/ccJhMVFrLs>





**"Let both
grow
together
until the
harvest.."**

Matt. 13:30