

Read Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

The picture on the screen was my back lawn in January during the drought here in Adelaide - some of you will remember I showed it to you at the beginning of another sermon. It was yellow and dead. The next picture is my back lawn today. It looks lovely and green— the only trouble is it is mostly weed! Recently I set out to pull the weeds up but after 5 minutes I realised I would have taken away most of the lawn and it would have ended up a mess. Better off waiting til summer and letting the heat sort out the weeds from the couch, in the mean time I'll just mow over it and enjoy the green look!

Things aren't always what they seem and it isn't always easy to separate what's real from what isn't. My lawn looks green but it is mostly weed and winter grass and if I pulled out everything that looks like weed I might pull out the real grass and the dormant couch with it and end up with a dust bowl in summer.

The same thing is true when it comes to looking at people. We make judgements about each other on the surface, on the basis of what we see and hear and experience about people, and often we are quick to dismiss and condemn people, but when it comes down to it we don't know everything about a person. We don't know what lies underneath. We don't know what pressure they are under, what fears and hurts they harbour inside, and what their motives are. We don't know what lurks in their background that might not excuse them but would help us understand them. Only God knows those things, so it's best to leave the judging of people to him. It's not up to us to write anyone off, we'd probably muck it up. That's the point of Jesus' story about the weeds and the wheat.

Jesus said a farmer sowed a wheat crop but an enemy sowed weeds in the same paddock while he was asleep. Both weeds and wheat grew and his fam-hands' first reaction was to pull up the weeds, but the farmer said **“no” “let both grow until harvest”**.

If you and I wanted to make a better world we'd probably want to get rid of all the “weeds”, all the “bad” people, the rotten apples, the bad eggs. Trouble is where would we start and where would we stop? Would we want to get rid of all the people in jail or all the drug addicts? But then they are someone elses' family and they'd want to keep them! Who would you keep and who would you throw away? Who would you condemn and who would you save to make the world a better place?

You might have seen the article in the Advertiser this week about Wafah Bin Laden (an unfortunate name in many respects!) She is the niece of the infamous Osama Bin Laden. She is trying to make a name for herself as a model and singer but some promoters won't go near her because of her uncle. She is judged and condemned because of who she is related to. People can't separate her from her uncle and what he did. As a pastor I too am probably lumped with all pedophile priests in some people's minds. And because some Christians are seen as hypocrites we are all seen as hypocrites to some people.

It's not that easy to judge people impartially. That's why we leave judging to judges and juries and sometimes wonder if even they get it right. Who knows the mind and heart and truth about any of us – except God himself. That's why Jesus says in this story to leave it ultimately to him.

Our job as Christians is not to condemn people but to make sure they have the chance to hear about Gods incredible patience and love for them.

You see we know the judge the one who will ultimately weigh up our lives personally. We know him as the one who came into the world as Jesus Christ. We know him as the one who was willing to take our place and suffer what we should have on the cross for our sins. The one who will judge us came into world himself not to condemn us to death but to love us to death on the cross. The Bible says **“God so loved the world that he sent his only son so that we might not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him”**. When God weighed up what to do about all of us who have turned away from him and the way he wanted us to live God chose to come and die for us to forgive and save all of us.

The Christian faith says that God has made an incredible choice for you, and for me, fallen creatures that we are. God still loves us and wants us to belong close to him. The other reading we heard today from Romans 8 reminded us that God brings us into his family by his grace and there we have no fear of him. **“those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory”**

In baptism God waters us with his word and we are given a new start a new beginning, a new life. We are reborn as new people with his divine spirit living in us. We enter a new family, his family, with Jesus our brother who died for us. We are no longer afraid of God as our judge we are his children, and we can call God “Father”. And we become co-heirs of heaven together with our brother Jesus who died for us.

All that happened for Jackson today in his baptism. He is now a son of God who is now his Father in heaven. He has a new life to live for God and with him. He has eternal life in heaven to look forward to and the Holy Spirit at work in him to direct him in his new life.

God sees his baptised children as just that, dearly, loved children and he treats us like his own son Jesus. He sees the wheat not the weed in us. He lets us live and grow even though we still sin and he lets us live and grow together in the church even though we are all hypocrites at times. And he lets all people live on his earth patiently waiting and hoping people will turn back to him and come back into his family through his son Jesus Christ.

Jesus said at the end of his story: **“whoever has ears let him hear”**. We talk about an “ear of wheat”. Wheat has ears. So do those who belong to God in his harvest - they hear the message of his love for them in Jesus Christ and believe it and grow in their lives from it. God sees it even if no one else does. Those of us who have ears to hear what Jesus says to us today won't run around condemning and writing off other people. We know there are more than enough weeds in our own back yard that we need God to attend to and forgive for us. And we remember our task is to share with the world this wonderfully patient farmer God who wants to gather as much wheat as he can in the end and as many children as possible into his family.