

Interactive lesson



picture from MMMS collection

What is a weed?

Possibly my favorite definition of a weed is simply a plant where you do not want it.

Are dandelions weeds?

What uses are there for dandelions?

Every part of a dandelion is edible; in addition to its use in salads, it has been brewed in soups, wines, and teas. The roots have even been roasted for a coffee substitute. Dandelions have also been used in tonics for various conditions.

What do farmers growing hay do about dandelions?

In Spring 2022, I posted a picture I had taken of a farm field with a comment that the dandelion crops looked just about ready for harvesting. Why do you think dandelions are not broadly commercialized, sold like lettuce in stores?

Would you consider some people weeds of humanity?

Is there any use for them?

What do you think we should do about those kinds of weeds?

What do you think Jesus would suggest we do about them?

Sometimes people feel like weeds, but God sees them as having value in different ways than we normally accept. Sometimes, like Jacob, they have worn out their welcome in one place and must go elsewhere, that both they and those they angered can do better. Let us always remember God's grace and wisdom in dealing with one another, that we enable all to flourish in love and to see more of God's kingdom on this earth.

Gospel lesson

Today we continue from where we left off last week in the Gospel of Matthew, talking about sowing seeds.



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/photos/nv-wheat-tares/>

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

NRSV

²⁴ He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field;

²⁵ but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away.

²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well.

²⁷ And the slaves of the householder came and said

to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?'

²⁸ He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?'

²⁹ But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them.

³⁰ Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached 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 are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children 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 collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and

all evildoers,

⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

The word of God for the people of God

<Hymn “Bring Forth the Kingdom”

TFWS #2190>

Message: Shine Like the Sun



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-path-of-the-disciple-imagining-a-new-reality/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

Please pray with me?

Eternal light of our world,

as we take time now to further consider today's scriptures, please

- speak Your words through my mouth,
- open our ears to hear Your message, and
- abide in our hearts,

That we may see You shining [in ourselves and in one another] and use Your light to transform the world. Amen.

In Imagining a New Reality along the Path of the Disciple, today we look for the shining of the Son:

“We never know who we might see shining like the sun. We are learning to imagine a new reality where even flawed humans, like ourselves, can be disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”



picture screencaptured from <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=613092403824113>, posted by Daily Mail

Have any of you seen the viral video that went around Facebook recently, of the poplar fluff fire in La Rioja, Spain? I found it fascinating to watch as the line of fire quickly progressed across the park burning away a thick white layer of poplar fluff and leaving behind healthy green grass and trees.

As someone who has had sneezing fits due to poplar fluff because of my hayfever, it was like God was burning away the unwanted allergen and restoring the park to the pleasant place to relax that it was intended to be. This picture does not show as well as the video does how quickly the smoke cleared and how vibrant green the grass left behind was.

I like to think of it as paralleling God burning away our sin. If we have a healthy relationship full of love with our Creator like the verdant grass has strong roots and plentiful moisture in its blades,

then be burning will affect us less and restore us to the good state in which we were created to be. If we are separated from the source of our life and empty of love, we will be like the dried dead leaves that burn up as the poplar fluff is consumed.

Make no mistake, the time will come when God eradicates sin from us. The psalmist talks about how impossible it is to flee from God: In the highest heaven, God is there. In the depths of Sheol, the realm of the dead, God is there. To all the ends of the earth, God is there. For those who reject God, there is no escape; for those who love God, God can always reach you where you are, to rescue and restore you. Note that the psalmist praises God for that – it is a wonderful thing that we can rely on God!



picture from <https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/yo-jacob-esau/>

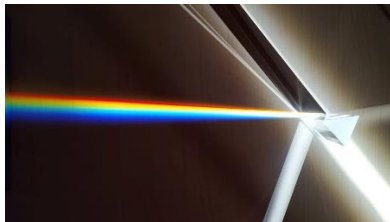
Jacob relied on God, traveling to make his way far from where he grew up. God blessed Jacob, just as Isaac had asked. If you read more of the book of Genesis, you can see that the other twin, Esau, also flourished. God's blessings are not an either/or gift; they are both/and – both are blessed and much greater things can come from sharing those blessings!

Yet we lack faith or get distracted by worldly things, and we forget to trust in God's love. We owe

God everything – Paul calls us debtors – yet instead of tending to the world and one another as good stewards, we try to claim for ourselves at the expense of others.

People sin all the time and try to hide or flee from the consequences of it. We wind up trapped by our sin and suffering for it, and just as we are affected by others' sin, our sin affect others too.

But God knows us, knows what we are into, and calls us to better. We are called to be God's children, to let God burn away the sin that covers us, to let God take care of the weeds as we grow in grace.



picture from
<https://www.pexels.com/photo/optical-glass-triangular-prism-3845162/>;
photo credit: Dobromir Hristov

I had a dusty mirror; I cleaned it, and it reflected images much more clearly. I had a dusty crystal hanging in my window. I cleaned it, and it refracted light much more vividly – bright rainbows danced all around my room when the sunlight hit it. I think we reflect and refract God's love much more vividly when we are cleansed of sin, to make the world more beautiful. Praise God for the refiner's fire!

After all, don't you want to shine in the Son?



picture from

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/the-path-of-the-disciple-imagining-a-new-reality/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes/eighth-sunday-after-pentecost-year-a-graphics>

This week, try taking a good look at your life to see from what or from whom you may be running.

- ✝ That one family member you are mad at?
- ✝ Putting end-of-life documents in order, such as a living will or health care proxy?
- ✝ Getting help for what you want to do yourself but cannot?

Give it to God. Ask for help in dealing with it gracefully. Let God guide you in cleaning up the situation. Let Jesus's grace shine through you; be God's agent for helping others face what they are running from. Share the powerful hospitality of the Holy Spirit to restore healthy relationships of love with all of your family, friends, neighbors, and throughout the world. Shine like the Son!