

19 July 2026
Pentecost 8

Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“Worth the Wait”

Text: Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43; Romans 8:18–27; Psalm 86:11–15 (Introit)

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

Do you want us to go and gather them? the servants asked their master. We’ll get rid of those weeds! Yank ‘em up! We’ll have that field cleared in a jiffy!

And I think they expected the answer to be yes. So how surprised, how disappointed they were when they heard ***NO***. But . . . but there are weeds in the field! ***NO***. But . . . but an enemy did this! ***NO***. But . . . ***NO***!

Let both grow together, He says. For now. For a while. ***Until the harvest***. The time will come. But it is not yet. Wait. *Be patient*.

I don’t know about you, but *I’m not good at that! Patient*. When I have a doctor’s appointment and *I* get there on time, only to have to spend 30 minutes in the waiting room, I’m not a happy guy! Or when I’m driving on the beltway and the traffic is crawling or stopped . . . yeaaaaah. This is the world we live in. And have-it-now world. A world where time is no longer measured by days or hours or even minutes, but by milliseconds and nanoseconds. Where texting has replaced conversation. Where emojis have replaced words. A world of *Doordash* and same-day delivery.

That’s not all bad. But it’s also not the way of God.

For to Eve He said: one of your offspring will be the Saviour of the world. Eve thought it was Cain, her firstborn! Right away! But no, the fulfillment of that promise would take a while.

He said to Abraham: you’re going to have a son! And he did . . . 25 years later. When he got tired of waiting and had a son another way, without his wife . . . that didn’t work out so well.

Israel spent 400 years in Egypt, followed by 40 years in the wilderness. Later, 70 years in exile. There were 400 years or so between Malachi, the last Old Testament

prophet, to when God spoke again through John the Baptist.

Getting the drift?

It's tempting for us, like the servants in the parable, to want to be weed-whacking crusaders! Get rid of evil, and the evil-doers - *now*! The disciples of Jesus wanted to do this, too. When a village of Samaritans wouldn't receive Jesus, James and John wanted to be weed-whackers! They said, *Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them* (Mark 9:54)? And you know the answer: **NO**.

It's not that God *wants* evil in the world. He doesn't. He created the world without it. And it's not that we must accept evil in the world. We don't. And it's not that God and the Church do nothing about it. It's just that what we do *isn't* weed-whacking, pulling, or burning. What we are called to do is **confess, pray, and wait**.

Which is an answer I don't particularly like! As I said before, *I'm not good at patient!* But what we are called to do as Christians is speak the truth, confess Christ and the Gospel, pray, *and wait*. Wait for the Word to work. Wait for the Lord to return. And so we sang in the Introit this morning, ***Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Teach me!*** Teach me how to live - not a weed-whacking life, but a Christian life. The life of Christ.

For how did Jesus deal with sin? He didn't ignore it; He addressed it. He spoke the truth and confessed the Gospel. He didn't wipe out those who were arrayed against Him - *they* didn't die; *He died for them*. He took all their weed-whacking, over-zealous, lack of love sins upon himself - along with all the other sins of the world - and died for them. That's how God deals with your sin. He doesn't yank sinners up; He dies for them and rises for them, that we be saved. That death not have the final word.

And it doesn't! Those who thought Jesus a harmful weed in *their* religious garden weed-whacked Him to death. They flogged Him and yanked Him up from the ground, hung Him on the cross, and then rejoiced when He breathed His last. Nothing could be better, they thought.

But this time it didn't take God long to act! *Just three days*. Just three days in the tomb before Jesus came out alive. When Jesus came out *without* the sin that put Him there. Your sin. That your life be saved. Life for you now and life for you forever.

But life now among the weeds.

Because as we sang in the Introit, our Lord is ***a God merciful and gracious, slow to***

anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. And so the weeds are not pulled or whacked. Not yet.

But wouldn't it be better if they were? If all the unbelievers in the world were just gone. *Seems like* that would be better.

But no, Jesus says. Because when you whack the weeds, the good plants get hurt as well. Our lives are intertwined in this world - believers and unbelievers, wheat and weeds - and God uses *all* people to provide for us, what we need. And maybe you have family, friends, neighbors, co-workers who are not believers - I don't think you want them whacked! So maybe just the really bad ones?

NO, Jesus says. Leave them. And it's good that He does. For that was you once. And if we're honest, those weeds are growing in us as well. *Still*. Just because you're a baptized child of God doesn't mean satan has stopped sowing his bad seed in you and growing weeds in you. Sins. That's why we examine ourselves every Sunday, and then confess those weeds in us. And risen Jesus deals with them. *I forgive you all your sins*, He says. And they are. For Jesus was whacked for them. And by His blood you are healed.

And not only on Sunday. *Everyday*. For weeds don't just grow on Sundays! And so in the Lord's Prayer we pray: *And forgive us our trespasses*. And He does. *Every time*.

For that's how our Lord deals with weedy people: with His Word of grace. The time will come for judgment, for the angels to come and weed the earth and the weeds will be burned. *But not yet*. Now is still the time of grace and forgiveness, of mercy and patience. For us and for others.

But *I* still have my problem . . . *I'm still not good at patient!* So how do I get patience? How can I stop wanting to whack weedy people and instead, maybe even forgive them, as Jesus forgives me and my weeds? *How can I be better at that?*

Well, first let me tell you how that's not going to happen! How you can't and won't: by just telling yourself you're going to be more patient and forgiving, and trying harder. That might work a little, for a short time, but it doesn't last long. Before you know it, you're right back to the same ol', same ol'. So there must be another way.

And there is. And here's some good news: it is the same way Jesus deals with us and our sin: through the Word. For my lack of patience (in spiritual things anyway) is sin. It is a First Commandment sin. A lack of trust in God sin. And patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The Spirit who works *through* the Word of God. Now, you're not going to get suddenly zapped with patience, and go from 0 to

60 all at once! No. But by the Word of God, consistently and persistently applied, you will grow in patience.

So the fruits of the Spirit . . . there are nine of them, but here's the first few . . . The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience . . .

So first in that list is love. The God of love, who is love, loves you. In love, Jesus was whacked for your sins, in love, He rose from the dead, and in love, He now lives for you and forgives you. By that Word of Jesus' love and faithfulness the Holy Spirit plants love and faith in you. Love.

Then from that love springs joy. Joy that Jesus would do that for you. Joy when you hear the words of Absolution. Joy in having the promise of eternal life.

Joy that leads to a heart at peace. For the sin that troubles you, that weighs you down, that makes you less than God created you to be, is forgiven. You don't have to worry if God forgives you. Peace. You don't have to pay for, make up for, or atone for your own sins. Peace. You don't have to wonder what's going to happen to you when you die. Peace. Jesus is risen and so are you. Peace.

And then when you have such peace, in all that Jesus has done for you, His patience with you then grows patience in you for others. For Jesus is in control, not me. I'm not most important, Jesus is. Jesus will provide, I can be sure. Jesus forgives me. And even if everyone else lets me down, He won't. And knowing that, focusing on that, believing that, that Jesus is taking care of me and working in me, yields the fruit of patience. Which means my being patient with others is really just trust in God and waiting for God.

And no better place is there to do that than here, coming to the Lord's Table, to receive the Word of God made flesh, His Body and Blood. His whacked Body and Blood, raised Body and Blood, and returning Body and Blood. So if you're impatient for Jesus to come again, or for Jesus to do something now, then come here to receive Him now! That won't get rid of the weeds in the world, but it will the weeds in you. It will focus you on Him and help you wait. And as you wait, instead of weed-whacking, to pray.

It'll be hard. Weeds always are. But as the apostle Paul reminded us today, ***I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*** That glorious day is coming, because Jesus has risen, is risen, and will always be risen. To raise you and all people. So wait a little longer, He says. He's still working. Working in you and for you, and *for others*. Just a little longer. *It'll be worth the wait!*

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.