

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Jul 28th 2018**

According to the classic definition, a weed is a plant out of place.

Here in the great North American breadbasket we see considerable advertising for products to help farmers rid their fields of nasty water- and nutrient-guzzling weeds. Meanwhile, the rest of us are reminded not to forget our lawns. A local seed and sod company trumpets its “Idiot-proof lawn program . . . . Even your husband can do it! Eliminates crab grass, fox tail, goose grass, etc., etc.”

Today’s gospel confirms that undesirable plants have been bedeviling folks for ages.

But the point of the parable lies elsewhere. Christ is not talking cultivation or landscaping. He’s talking about the kingdom of God: Who has a place in it. And who decides.

There are those in every time and place who will survey the Church and see the need for a vigorous purge. They will look around and say, “This sure would be a better Church without him. Or her. Or them.”

The scribes and Pharisees sniff at the company Christ keeps. “He eats with sinners [a euphemism for sex workers] and tax collectors” (Luke 15:1-2). They go so far as to suggest that, if this fellow from Nazareth were a true prophet, he would find better folks to hang with (Luke 7:38ff.).

Yet Jesus answers quite pointedly: “The tax collectors and sinners enter into the kingdom of God before you” (Matthew 21: 31). Why? Because their hearts are ready.

The Pharisees looked at the sinners and tax collectors and saw weeds.

Christ looked at them and saw wheat.

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