
Growing Like a Weed

A sermon by the Rev. Canon Salmoon Bashir
The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost: Proper 11, Year A

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

However, earlier this week, one of my dear friends asked me about my son Damian. He had not seen him in a while, so I sent him a recent photo. A few moments later, his response came back.

"Damian is growing like a weed."

I laughed. At first, I was not quite sure how to take it. Usually, being compared to a weed is not much of a compliment. But I knew exactly what he meant. Damian is growing so quickly that every time someone sees him, they cannot believe how much he has changed. Every day brings a new discovery, a new sound, a new adventure, and sometimes a new bug that somehow ends up in his mouth. He approaches the world with complete trust and endless curiosity.

Yes, he is growing like a weed. Day by day, without us even noticing.

I wrote back to my friend and said, "Thank you. The Holy Spirit, through you, just gave me the opening for my sermon." Because Jesus, in today's Gospel, tells a story about weeds.

But, as is often the case with Jesus, this parable is not really about weeds. It is about the Kingdom of God.

When most people hear the words *Kingdom of God*, they think about heaven, a place we hope to go when we die. But Jesus has something much bigger in mind. As the Anglican theologian N.T. Wright reminds us, *the Kingdom of God is not simply about going to heaven when you die. It is about God's reign breaking into this world, where God is making all things new through Jesus Christ.*

The Kingdom of God is here and now. That is why, every Sunday, we pray the words Jesus taught us: *"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

The Kingdom began with the coming of Jesus, was revealed through his life and ministry, was made known through his death and resurrection, and continues today through the work of the Holy Spirit and the Church. God's Kingdom is already here, but it is not yet complete.

Friends, we live in that hope, joining God in making this world look a little more like heaven every day.

I wonder if the Kingdom of God grows a lot like a weed. Day by day, without us even noticing.

You don't notice the change from one day to the next. It grows slowly, almost without anyone seeing it happen. But each day something is different. A little more hope. A little more faith. A little more forgiveness. A little more compassion. A little more mercy. Then one day you step back and realize how much has grown.

That is how God often works. Sometimes we think that because we cannot see God at work, God must not be working. But throughout Scripture, God often does his greatest work quietly, long before anyone notices.

Before moving to the city, my family lived in a small village where rice farming was part of everyday life. As I grew older, I spent many seasons watching my broader family and neighbors work in the rice fields.

Rice farming is hard work. The fields are flooded with water, sometimes almost up to your knees, and every young rice plant is carefully placed by hand into the muddy soil. As the weeks passed, something else began to grow.

Weeds!

But the farmers did not pull the weeds out. They waited. Only when the rice was fully grown did the farmers harvest it. They cut the rice and the weeds together. Then the rice grains were separated from the stalks, leaving behind bundles of dried rice plants and weeds.

Then came my favorite part. In the evening, after the harvest was finished, families and neighbors gathered together building fires with the bundles of dried weeds and rice stalks. People sat around those fires, sharing food, telling stories, laughing, and watching the children run through the fields. Everyone celebrated the harvest God had given them.

The weeds were not the harvest. But neither were they useless. They gave warmth and light. They brought people together.

Whenever I hear this Gospel, I remember those evenings.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says that an enemy sowed weeds among the wheat while everyone was asleep. When the servants discovered them, they immediately asked, "*Master, do you want us to pull them up?*"

But the farmer answers, "*No. Let them both grow together until the harvest.*" At first, that answer seems surprising.

But maybe Jesus wants us to pay attention to the field instead of focusing on the weeds.

Those rice farmers in my village were never worried when the weeds appeared. They knew that if they were patient, the harvest would come, and the rice and the weeds would be separated in their own time.

Their attention was never on the weeds. It was always on helping the rice grow.

I wonder if that is how God looks at us. God is patient with us. God is forming us. And God is not finished with us. God is more interested in helping us grow in compassion, mercy, patience, forgiveness, and love than simply pointing out where we have fallen short.

These things grow slowly. Often so slowly that we hardly notice.

Perhaps that is exactly what Jesus wants us to understand about the Kingdom. We wake up each morning and wonder whether anything is changing. We wonder whether our prayers are making a difference. Whether our relationships are becoming healthier. Whether our children or grandchildren are growing in faith. Whether our grief will ever become lighter. Whether our health will improve.

But Beloved, take heart. The God who came into this world in Jesus Christ has not stopped calling you his beloved.

Perhaps that is why Jesus tells this parable. He wants us to trust the farmer. He wants us to believe that even when we cannot see much happening, God is still at work. We do not make the Kingdom grow. God does. Even when we cannot see it. Even when growth seems slow. Even when nothing appears to be changing.

Then one day, we step back and begin to notice. The Kingdom has been growing all along. We are a little more compassionate. A little more loving. We are a little more patient than we once were. A little more forgiving. A little more trusting.

Jesus reminds us that one day God will bring his work to completion. Until that day, we live in hope and trust the Farmer.

When my friend said, "*Damian is growing like a weed,*" he meant that life was bursting out of him. Every day brought something new. Every day brought new growth.

And there is one more thing to notice from those rice fields – that even the weeds were not wasted. They became fire. They became warmth. They became the place where families gathered, stories were shared, neighbors laughed, and the whole community celebrated the goodness of God.

Perhaps that is what Jesus wants us to see.

And friends, until Christ comes again in glory, may we continue to grow with him day by day, growing in faith, hope, and love, joining in the work of the Kingdom that is already here among us. And may our lives become one more answer to the prayer we offer every Sunday: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Amen.

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