

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield.

Announcements

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

One: We gather in the presence of God

All: We gather to worship and praise God's name

One: We gather in joy and expectancy

All: We gather to encounter God in beauty and wonder.

One: Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening

All: Speak your Word of life to us, O God

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Creator God, in you we live and move. You have been with us through good times and difficult ones. You provide strength when we falter. You offer us rest for our bodies and souls when the challenges of life are demanding. We turn to you for wisdom this day, trusting we will find the peace and comfort we long for in your presence. We praise you for all you offer us in your great faithfulness. Fill us with your Spirit in this time of communal worship. Open our minds and hearts, so that we may see as you see, love as you love, and follow in the ways Christ. Ever present God, you know our inmost thoughts and our thoughtless actions. We confess our impulsive reactions. We seek forgiveness for refusing mercy to others and ourselves. In your kindness, O God, direct who we shall be through the grace of Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Remember that God is slow to anger, kind and gracious to all. Know that your sins are forgiven through the grace of Jesus Christ, and forgive those who have sinned against you, as Christ teaches us. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn Stand up and bless the Lord #411

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture

God of wisdom, your thoughts are not our thoughts, your ways are not our ways. As we listen to the Scriptures, send your Holy Spirit to grant us understanding of what you desire with resolve to do your will in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture

Tanakh*	Genesis 28:10–19a	[B#25/W#27]
Psalms	Psalms 139:1–12, 23–24	[B#577/W#639]
Gospel	Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43	[B# 14/W#14]

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

Message

O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

We continue with our study of the gospel of Matthew. Last week, Jesus spoke of the good seed sown by a good sower. Today we are drawn into encounters with God through parables that speak of evil, patience, and faith.

In Matthew 13 there are eight parables that teach about God and his kingdom. Jesus did not often speak in absolutes; he spoke in parables—using a simple story with concrete imagery to make a point that requires the listener to consider many perspectives. Sometimes, it may seem like we have to stand on our heads to understand the teachings. It is necessary to set aside our cultural presumptions, our privilege, our 21st century way of living. Michael Green wrote, “Parables are not meant to pat us on the back, but to give us a kick in the pants. They are not intended to comfort us, but to challenge us and change us. Parables speak out against the status quo ... Parables are demonstrators waving signs of protest, speaking out against our ways of thinking, our traditional ways of experiencing and obeying God, our spiritual institution.”

Jesus uses the parable of the weeds in a wheat field to teach about intentional evil created within God's good creation. One plant feeds and nourishes, the other distorts or destroys. Jesus speaks to the evil that will grow alongside the good. He speaks of the reality of evil hiding in plain sight, mimicking the appearance of goodness when describing the weed dandelion - also known as Persian dandelion, poison ryegrass or false wheat. The seeds can cause illness, hallucinations, and death. The doppelgänger to wheat has been used as a hallucinogenic drug. Throughout literature, dandelion has been employed as a symbol for

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treachery and toxicity. Jesus lived in a time of some the greatest minds in science, agriculture, literature, and philosophy. Pliny, Theophrastus, and Dioscorides were writing scientific papers that included references to the poisonous nature of Darnel, influenced Talmudic literature, and references to Darnel appeared in rabbinical literature. In Jewish law, darnel became a negative symbol for mimicry, subversion, and heresy.

In her sermon, Lori Wagner wrote, "I imagine that Jesus may have often told his stories in answer to questions from others, as most of his "sermons" were conversational ... In this case, the parable suggests that someone asked something like this: "If God (you) planted all good into the world, how is it then that evil exists?" The metaphor Jesus uses to explain this philosophical / theological question is the parable of the wheat and weeds. Jesus explains that an "enemy" has planted sin and evil in the world, not God. God has made everything and everyone "good," but an enemy to God (perhaps the "evil one" we might say) has planted "secret seeds"

Is it possible to escape the sin and evil in this world or do we find ourselves conforming to it. The weeds distort our lives and get in the way of living fully in our identity and relationship as children of God. The weeds invade and become intertwined within our lives, within our hearts, and minds. The apostle Paul wrote, "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate". Those who are familiar with AA, AlAnon, and other addiction recovery organizations recognize how the roots of addiction can get twisted up within a person ... just as the weeds can get twisted up within the wheat. The deceptive nature of addiction will mimic the voice of reason in its efforts to control.

the weeds become ingrained within many aspects of our society. Similar to the servants who recognize the weeds in the parable, it may seem a daunting and confusing task to deal with the problem. We look to the issues facing our lives and feel overwhelmed. And...Jesus assures us that God has a plan to restore creation to God's original design. Throughout scripture, from the creation story to the end of Revelation, God offers vision and promise. The vision of God's good plans and the promise of God's steadfast faithfulness.

The parable cautions against a rush to judgment. Although it can be difficult to wait, rather than destroy the whole field, we are encouraged to be patient. Some of you may relate to this parable when you are out in your gardens. Even experienced gardeners wonder about the new plant that has sprung up. It can be difficult to tell a weed from an

intentional plant. Early in my gardening days, I yanked what initially seemed to be a patch of weeds. It was disappointing when I realized that a patch of poppies had been destroyed. God is able to sort out the good from the bad. In a world where seeds of hatred and injustice are too easily nurtured, this parable reminds us that God is in charge. In the passage from Genesis we discover Jacob dreaming of an encounter with God. You may recall that Jacob had significant difficulties with his family of origin. One commentator described Jacob as 'the sort of man who has you checking to make sure your wallet is still there' when he walks by. He manipulated his brother, Esau, out of his birthright. With his mother's guidance, he tricked his dying father. He was on the run from an angry brother. In the passage today he encountered a ladder to the angels and God reached down into the messiness of his life and promised to be with him and keep him wherever he went. Do you wonder why God would choose him? This flawed man who has done so much wrong. Yet, Jacob was able to seek out good purpose in his life. He awakened from his dream in awe and astonishment. He immediately began to worship God as he poured oil to mark and rename the location. The name, Bethel, means the House of God. This passage reminds us of the ways in which God has purpose for each of us.

We are complex people. The loyal and faithful who follow in the ways of Christ can sometimes be led astray, betrayed, or duped and they can bear good fruit when nurtured. This world holds both good and evil, upright and sinful. Our task is to focus on God. You will endure perils, hardship, and unfair practices. But God sees and knows those who love and worship him.

Jesus said, "Do not judge, lest you be judged." Our own vision is not always clear. Our own clarity is more murky than we realize. And, there are a few weeds in our own garden. Even our best efforts can be tainted by self-interest and twisted out of shape. So, if you think you might be pulling up the weeds, you could end up destroying the good crop. The day will come, said Christ, when the fisherman's net has caught all kinds of fish, and the good will be separated from the bad. Faithful discipleship persistently works for good within God's creation.

In closing, I would like to share a short portion of an interview. Columnist David Brooks interviewed a young politician named Barack Obama. During their discussion, when Brooks discovered that Mr. Obama was a prolific reader he asked him, "Have you ever read the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr?" Obama sat up straight and said, "I love him. He's

one of my favorite philosophers.” Brooks said, “What do you take away from him?” Obama replied, “I take away the compelling idea that there’s serious evil in the world, and hardship and pain. We should be humble and modest in our belief we can eliminate those things. But we shouldn’t use that as an excuse for cynicism and inaction. I take away the sense we have to make these efforts knowing they are hard.”

We are encouraged to trust in God. We are offered glimpses of a patient God who offers grace and encourages us to be in relationship with him and with each other. As we reflect on these accounts may we discover a renewed understanding of our purpose within God’s creation. May your roots always be securely planted in Jesus, from whom you receive your nourishment, your hope, and your life. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn **Precious Lord, take my hand** **#675**

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

Our offerings express love and gratitude for God’s gifts to us in Christ and in creation. Our lives overflow with the goodness of God. Sharing what we have so abundantly received, we bring our offerings of time, talent, and financial resources to share within God’s creation with gladness and gratitude.

Doxology We give Thee but Thine own, What e’er the gift may be; All that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee.

Blessing of Gifts

Gift-giving God, we are so grateful for all that we enjoy in the world around us, and in the assurance of your faithful love for all of creation. Bless the gifts we offer today, that they may express your love for the world itself and to all who need to know you care, through Christ Jesus, your greatest gift.

Prayers of the People,

Thank you, O God, for welcoming us into this community of faith. Sometimes we can simply breathe in the wonders of your creation, on a summer evening or in a quiet forest, and know you are near. Other times you surprise us in a word,

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an unexpected kindness, a sense of your tenderness with us in prayer. Whenever, however we meet you, we are so grateful for your presence at the heart of our lives. Assured of your great love for us, we bring before you the people we love and the situations that cause us deep concern.

We pray with those whose work has found success and reward, and with those who are anxious because there is no work to be found...We pray with those grateful for renewed good health, and with those who find illness, anxiety or uncertain health lingering... We pray with those who have found peace or safety after turmoil, and with those who fear what today and tomorrow might bring...We pray with those who enjoy the love of family and friends nearby, and with those who feel lonely or isolated...Ever present God, we thank you that you are with us in our joy and sorrow. We are thankful that you hear us in challenging situations when we stumble. Help us to support each other, standing together in times of challenge. Strengthen our life together as your people.

O God of the bruised and broken, we are grateful that, in Christ, you have taken up the cross and know by heart all that causes suffering and pain. We pray today for all those in need of healing and comfort, whatever the source of their pain.

Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. Equip us to offer support for those who are near to us. O God of the lonely and sorrowing, in Christ you experienced the loss we know when loved ones die and the pain of betrayal by friends. We remember before you those who grieve the loss of their beloved and those who are lonely. God of light and love, draw near to those who must confront illness, loss or changing circumstances. We are thankful for healing and we are thankful for the end of suffering. God of compassion, we lift up families who travel the long journey of grief. We ask you to linger with all who mourn Rudy and Danielle.

God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with health challenges:

Stephani, Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Don, Phyllis, and Shawn; Audrey & Grace; and, Warren & Lori. We lift up all who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

O God of hope and new possibility, in Christ you opened the way into the future for us through the power of your redeeming love. Give us the courage we need to face our

future, assured of your presence and power to sustain us. We offer all that we are and all that we hope for through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together as his people: Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn Brother Sister let me serve you v 3-5 #635

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Remember that Jacob met God in an unexpected place. So, as you leave this place, keep your eyes open for God at work in the world. Expect that God will meet you, perhaps when you least expect it.

May God be with you, Christ walk beside you, and the Spirit prepare you to serve.

Postlude Amen