

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Isaiah 44:6-8

⁶“This is what the LORD says— Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. ⁷Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come— yes, let him foretell what will come. ⁸Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.”

44:6 LORD SAYS – God is speaking, and our charge is simply to listen. The three names used in this verse are significant. They not only tell us who God is, but also tell us what he does. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

The messenger formula, “thus says Yahweh,” suggests that a new subsection begins. As is expected in chapters 40-55, this dictum is followed by a series of divine titles for or descriptions of Yahweh (e.g., 43:1, 14, 16; 44:2, 6; 45:11, 18; 48:17; 49:7). (CC)

King. See 43:15 and note. (CSB)

Here Yahweh is the King of Israel, the nation’s Redeemer, the Commander of armies, and the first and the last. These names form the foundation for the rest of the section as Yahweh asserts he is the only God, period. Monotheism could not be stated with any more clarity. The real power of the universe exists outside of it. Authority resides with the Creator, not within creation. (CC)

Here we see both his relationship to his people in terms of majesty and loving concern. A true king is always mindful of the condition of those under him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

God’s special relationship with His own comes through His governance. (TLSB)

He has administered the affairs of His people efficiently. No single human king who ever ruled over God’s people was a perfect king. They all had faults, some of them serious faults. The Lord is the perfect, wise ruler of His people. He controls all the affairs of His people in a way that is best for them. (PBC)

Redeemer. See v. 24; 41:14 and note. (CSB)

Yahweh is also Israel’s Redeemer. Job makes the same confession (Job 19:25), and in the end Yahweh doubles what Job had earlier lost (Job 42:12-13). In like manner, the exiles will be enabled to rebuild the temple (Is. 42:10-11; 44:23; 49:13; 55:12-13). Deprived of everything, Israel will get back – and much more in Christ (Heb. 11:39-40). (CC)

This is incarnation theology. The King of the universe, who is above time and space, the King of Israel, who rules and cares for his subjects, this King is also our kin. God is the closest relative of Israel, the kin who redeems (Ruth). The rescue of Israel at the time of Moses is recalled throughout the prophet, but the title also points forward to the great Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

Unlike idols, God actually delivers His people. (TLSB)

LORD ALMIGHTY – KJV and ESV have “Lord of Hosts.” The word “Lord” is a special name God revealed. He is Jehovah, the God of free and faithful grace, that is, the God of the covenant. Additionally, He is all powerful in that He controls the hosts of heaven. (PBC)

He is the one who has the entire host of created things always under total control. When such a one speaks he merits attention. (Leupold)

first ... last. See 41:4 and note. (CSB)

Yahweh is “the everlasting God” (40:28). With the double title “the first and the last,” he reiterates this point. To be uniquely the first and the last (Is. 44:6) is to have been the only God in existence and present throughout Israel’s story, the only one working out a purpose in that story in its entirety from its beginning until this coming consummation.” This double title is given to Jesus in Rev. 1:17; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13 as a testimony that he is Yahweh, come in the flesh. There is no other God! (CC)

“Fear not, because I, your Creator and Maker, am also first and last. At all times I am the first and the last.” This denotes the uniqueness of God, as if to say, “If there ever was a God or if there is one now, I am the One.” (Luther)

As first He has no creator; as last, He alone remains standing. (TLSB)

apart ... God. See 43:11 and note. (CSB)

This last part of the verse reminds us of the First Commandment. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

The uniqueness of Israel’s religion recalls the word of Moses and Miriam at the Red Sea: “Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods?” (Ex 15:11). Certainly the Lord is not one god among many. The Large Catechism states, “Their trust is not placed in the only God, beside whom there is truly no God in heaven or upon earth. Therefore, the heathen really make their self-invented notions and dreams of God an idol. Ultimately, they put their trust in that which is nothing. So it is with all idolatry. For it happens not merely by erecting an image and worshiping it, but rather it happens in the heart. For the heart stands gaping at something else. It seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devil.” Hilary of Poitiers in A Select Library of Nicene and Post-

Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Series 2 says, “It is contrary to religion to say that there are two Gods, because we remember and declare that nowhere has it been affirmed that there is more than one God.” (TLSB)

44:7 WHO THEN IS LIKE ME – Here God challenges the idols. Yahweh, the one true God, has been making and keeping prophecies since the beginning of time. As long as the human race has existed, no person, place, or thing has ever foretold the future as the Lord has. Only God’s Word is sure and certain; the exile itself is proof of that. Since God’s Word alone can be trusted, trust it now when God offers a word of comfort, hope and restoration. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

Israel is on trial, again, and before them Yahweh places life and death (cf. Deut. 30:15). Who is like Yahweh? He challenges all rivals with the same argument used earlier (41:21-24, 26-29; 43:8-13). Yahweh alone is able to predict the future and bring it to pass. Like the previous trial scenes, the court is silent. Babylonian gods have no witnesses because these deities have accomplished nothing. Their would-be witnesses have nothing to witness to! Yet none of their adherents dare whisper, “The emperor has no clothes.” These frauds continue their pattern of “no show.” (CC)

PROCLAIM IT – ESV has “set it before.” Again in a courtroom setting, God orders the devotees of a god to act as witnesses on behalf of their idol. (TLSB)

Yahweh continues the cross-examination. He, for his part, established a people from ancient times. This relates to Israel’s beginnings and falls into the same category as his creating, shaping, choosing, calling, and redeeming the nation (e.g., 43:1; 44:1-2; cf. Rom. 8:30). “If there are many gods, what is happening happens in the first place between the gods, between divine beings. If there is only one God, all that is happening takes place between this one God and his creation – including his people. (CC)

ESTABLISHED MY ANCIENT PEOPLE – The Lord has chosen and guided Israel with clear, concrete, historical examples such as the exodus. (TLSB)

foretell. See 41:22, 26 and notes. (CSB)

“Produce someone who can in proper order predict the future and make it come to pass, as I have done and predicted. I speak and I act.” (Luther)

44:8 DO NOT TREMBLE...BE AFRAID – His superiority assures His faithful people that He can take care of them. God encourages His people not fear and tremble as they face the difficulties of the Babylonian captivity or any other catastrophe or problem. (PBC)

You are my witnesses. See 43:10 and note. (CSB)

Contrasted with the witnesses of the idols in v.9. The Lord does concrete historical deeds for Israel that can be seen, but the idols' witnesses can tell of no concrete actions and are put to shame. (TLSB)

Rock. See 17:10 and note. As in v. 2; 43:11–13, Isaiah may be drawing on the song of Moses, which describes God as “the Rock” (Dt 32:4, 15, 30–31), but the metaphor is also common in the Psalms (see note on Ps 18:2). (CSB)

Testifying to the claims of 44:6-7 would be a fearful thing for at least two reasons: (1) the Babylonians may not believe it, and (2) the exiles themselves may not embrace it. A good lawyer briefs his witnesses before they stand in the court. That is what Yahweh does. He encourages his people to recall the ancient pledge that he is their Rock (e.g., 2 Sam. 22:2-4/ Ps. 18:2). Israel is prepped to announce a fact that popular opinion will not tolerate. Yahweh is the only God. “The Lord planned, proclaimed, and announced long ago what is now bringing to pass, and unlike the gods of the other nations, has witnesses to prove it. (CC)

When the flood of troubles roars as a mighty stream toward His people, God assures His people that He is the rock that remains. The waters may swirl fiercely around it, but the rock provides safety in the midst of life's surging troubles. (PBC)

The rock imagery used by God to describe himself is quite common (33 times in the OT), especially in the Psalms, 2 Samuel 22 and Deuteronomy 32. Is 17:10 gives us a good understanding of what is meant by the term. God is our help, our strength, and our refuge. When flood-waters rise, we have security, not in the high places of idol worship, but in the height of our Rock-God. His promises are rock-solid; bad news for the idol-worshiping heathen and good news for Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

44:6–8 The Lord calls the idolaters back to court and swears that He alone is God. If you experience fear about bearing witness before others, reread the passage—even commit it to memory. The Lord of hosts is with you when you share the Word. • You are my only refuge, O Redeemer. Love, care for, and strengthen me from first to last, eternal God. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Romans 8:18-27

¹⁸ I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹ The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it

patiently. ²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

8:18 I CONSIDER – logidzomai – I am persuaded; I am absolutely sure. (QV)

PRESENT SUFFERINGS ARE NOT WORTH COMPARING – pathamata – The suffering Christian stands in close relation to the suffering of Christ. He suffers as Christ did, or for Christ's sake, or in mystic unity with Christ. The word is used both of Christ's suffering (1 Peter 1:11), and the sufferings of persecuted Christians (1 Peter 5:9).

Forms of distress and danger because of loyalty to Christ, as in v 35. Present anguish also includes pains of human frailty brought on by the fall (cf vv 19–23). (TLSB)

glory. God's radiant presence awaiting believers in heaven (2Co 4:17). (TLSB)

8:19 *The creation.* Both animate and inanimate, but exclusive of human beings (see vv. 22–23, where “whole creation” and “we ourselves” are contrasted). (CSB)

Personification of all created beings and things. (TLSB)

waits. Intense expectation. (TLSB)

Luke 21:28, “When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Romans 8:22, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.”

sons of God to be revealed. Christians are already sons of God, but the full manifestation of all that this means will not come until the end (see 1Jn 3:1–2). (CSB)

Full disclosure of the new, transformed existence in heaven. (TLSB)

8:20 *was subjected to frustration.* A reference to Ge 3:17–19. (CSB)

in hope. A possible allusion to the promise of Ge 3:15. (CSB)

8:21 *will be liberated from its bondage to decay.*† The physical universe is not destined for annihilation but for renewal (see 2Pe 3:13; Rev 21:1). And living things will no longer be subject to death and decay, as they are today. (CSB)

Cf Gn 3:17–19 and God's curse on the ground. (TLSB)

Him. Adam. Because of Adam's sin, the creation also came under God's judgment. Nothing in creation has since been able to fulfill its God-given purposes. (TLSB)

When freedom from "the law of sin and death" (v 2) reaches its glorious consummation, creation itself will experience a new beginning (cf Ps 102:25–28; Is 35; 65:17–25). (TLSB)

bondage to corruption. Creation is now trapped in the endless cycle of deterioration leading to death. (TLSB)

freedom of the glory of the children of God. Paul focuses on the indescribable glory that awaits believers. (TLSB)

8:22 *has been groaning.* Creation is personified as a woman in labor waiting for the birth of her child. (CSB)

Powerful metaphor for creation's yearning to be free from the change and death in its current state. (TLSB)

pains of childbirth. Gk implies that there will be an end to the anguish. (TLSB)

8:23 *firstfruits of the Spirit.* The Christian's possession of the Holy Spirit is not only evidence of his present salvation (vv. 14, 16) but is also a pledge of his future inheritance—and not only a pledge but also the down payment on that inheritance (see 2Co 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14). (CSB)

As the firstfruits of the harvest (Ex 23:19; Lv 23:10–11; Nu 18:12; Dt 18:4) indicate more is to come, so the Holy Spirit and His work guarantee future blessing. (TLSB)

adoption as sons. See note on v. 15. Christians are already God's children, but this is a reference to the full realization of our inheritance in Christ. (CSB)

Christians have this status now (v 15), and yet do not have it in its fullness (v 19). (TLSB)

redemption of our bodies. The resurrection, as the final stage of our adoption. The first stage was God's predestination of our adoption (see Eph 1:5); the second is our present inclusion as children of God (see v. 14; Gal 3:26). (CSB)

Transformation of our bodies in the resurrection (Php 3:21). (TLSB)

8:24 *in this hope.*† We are saved through faith (see Eph 2:8–9), not hope; but hope accompanies salvation. (CSB)

hope. Gk *elpis*, confident trust in what is not seen (Heb 11:1). Key to Paul's presentation of the Gospel (Rm 4:18; 5:2, 4–5; 15:4, 13). Grounded in Christ's resurrection, with patient expectation, believers hope in the promise of His return in glory. (TLSB p. 1903)

8:25 WE WAIT FOR IT PATIENTLY – This description of Christian life should compose the suffering Christians and make them content with their present life.

8:26 *In the same way.* As hope sustains the believer in suffering, so the Holy Spirit helps him in prayer. (CSB)

Just as hope proves to be a buffer against weariness and discouragement in times of suffering, so the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness when we don't know what we ought to pray for. Time and again Christians find themselves at their wits end, wondering what the will of God is for them in this situation. They find themselves lamenting, "If only I knew what the Lord wanted me to do; if only I knew what to pray for." At such times the Holy Spirit steps in and does for us what we're at a loss to do for ourselves. "The Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express." (PBC)

In verse 23 it was the children of God who were groaning; here it is the Holy Spirit. Bible interpreters are divided as to whether the Holy Spirit's petitions are framed without words, that is, unspoken, or are spoken in words that surpass human speech. The point becomes unimportant when we realize that the petitions are understood perfectly by Him for whom they are intended, regardless of their form. God the Father, who searches our hearts, knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." (PBC)

The "saints" for whom the Holy Spirit intercedes are not some especially pious and good Christians but are those who are holy by their faith in Christ – in other words, all believers. Therefore, help in prayer is a service the Holy Spirit renders to all Christians. That does not release us from God's command and encouragement to pray, but it does cover for us when we do it poorly or too little. And unlike many of our bumbling prayers, the Holy Spirit's prayers for us are always on target, always "in accordance with God's will. (PBC)

He comes to assist us. (TLSB)

weakness. Frailty of our present condition hinders our prayer life. (TLSB)

The weariness of all things in this world (Eccl. 1:8) infects us too. We do not know how to pray as we ought; the strength of our prayers is not in proportion to the glory that we pay for. But the law of the Spirit of life is no mere general atmosphere in which we live; it is the personal presence of the Spirit, who helps us in our weakness. He knows the world of God and how men ought to pray for it. (Franzman)

what to pray. Our mental horizons are severely limited compared to what God knows and wills. (TLSB)

he Spirit Himself intercedes. Christ prays for us in heaven (v 34; Heb 7:25; 1Jn 2:1), but the Spirit intercedes within us. (TLSB)

Have you ever asked someone to pray for you? I am sure you have. We feel comforted in the knowledge that others are praying for us. And have also said, "I don't even know what to pray

for” or words to that effect? How encouraging to know that someone, whose head is clearer at the moment, is praying with us! This person will know better what ought to be asked. And if that person is experienced in prayer and knowledgeable of God’s will as revealed in the Scriptures, so much the better. We need prayer allies like that. (LL)

How about the best prayer partner of all – the Holy Spirit Himself! If anyone know how our prayer ought to be said, He does! If anyone knows the mind of the Lord, He does! If anyone knows our real needs, He does! What a prayer partner to have! What a prayer partner we have as we wait patiently for our dreams to come true, for our hope to be fulfilled! (LL)

with groans that words cannot express. In v. 23 it is the believer who groans; here it is the Holy Spirit. Whether Paul means words that are unspoken or words that cannot be expressed in human language is not clear—probably the former, though v. 27 seems to suggest the latter. (CSB)

Gk *alaletos*, without words to express present longings (cf v 23), but the Spirit brings these longings to God. (TLSB)

stevagmois alalatois – This literally means “in groans unspeakable or with sighs too deep for words.” Words often fail us in prayer. We are overwhelmed by circumstances and anxiety. We cry out for relief. Sometimes, too, our hearts are numb. We cannot think clearly enough to know what we need from God. Our perspective is so limited compared to his. In times like that, our cries to God take form in groans or sighs through which the Spirit speaks to God on our behalf. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 6, Part 3)

8:27 SEARCHES OUR HEARTS – He searches the inmost being of Christians. He knows what the Holy Spirit intends by his intercessions even though we may not understand.

mind of the Spirit. What the Holy Spirit is thinking. (TLSB)

according to the will of God. Lit, “according to God,” i.e., in tune with His will. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

24 Jesus told them another parable: **“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ ²⁸ ”“An enemy did this,” he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ ²⁹ ”“No,” he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”**

13:24-35 We may treat the parables of the Weeds, the Mustard Seed, and the Leaven together for three reasons. First, they are a triad of reign of heaven/God parables that Jesus speaks to the crowds who are not His disciples. Second, these three parables are set off from the triad that follows; Jesus will tell the latter grouping in the house and only to the disciples. Third, these parables seem to share a common major theme, namely, that Jesus' ministry entails an important not yet character. (CC)

13:24–30 See vv. 36–43 for the interpretation. (CSB)

The tension between the parable (13:24-30) and its interpretation (13:37-43) can be explained, I would suggest, by the different audiences that are involved.

13:24 ANOTHER PARABLE –Jesus introduces the second of his seven parables in Matthew 13 by making a comparison (*hōmoiōthē*) to the kingdom of heaven. A man is sowing the seed, and it is qualified as good (*kalon*) seed in the field. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

This little story is about what it is like now that God has begun to restore His royal rule in the present time of Jesus' ministry. This is a story that communicates at least the following to the crowds: for the present time, do not expect Jesus' ministry to be different than it has been. The crowds have not yet believed. Though curious and at time positive toward Jesus, they are not His disciples, His true family (12:46-50). They are not satisfied with Jesus; they must find something lacking in Him. (CC)

I would suggest that the basic impact of this parable on the unbelieving crowds, if they were listening at all, would have been for Jesus to tell them this: "Stop looking for something other than what I am offering you. I must seem truly strange, like a man who has an enemy so evil that he scatters weeds in the man's field at night, and then the owner doesn't even weed out the harmful plants from the midst of his own crop. This must seem strange to you, but what you are seeing in me is the present manifestation of God's reign here in the world. (CC)

The kingdom of heaven is like. This phrase introduces six of the seven parables in this chapter (all but the parable of the sower). (CSB)

The remaining parables in this chapter make comparisons to aspects of God's kingly rule (cf. v. 11; 3:2; 4:17). (TLSB)

compared to a man. Another parable about a sower, but one with a different problem. Jesus will interpret this parable in vv 37–43. (TLSB)

13:25-26 In contrast, at night a hostile one (*echthros*) sows seeds of weeds (*zizania*) that resemble the wheat. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

13:25 WHILE EVERYONE WAS SLEEPING – The enemy worked in a stealthy fashion at night when no one was aware of it.

weeds. Probably darnel, which looks very much like wheat while it is young, but can later be distinguished. This parable does not refer to unbelievers in the professing church. The field is the world (v. 38). Thus the people of the kingdom live side by side with the people of the evil one. (CSB)

Likely bearded darnel, which is botanically close to wheat and difficult to distinguish from it when the plants are young. (TLSB)

AND WENT AWAY – kai apalthen which implies that the enemy did not want people to know that he had been there. This was a criminal’s way of acting.

13:26 WEEDS ALSO SPROUTED – This is what caused the workers distress.

13:27 WHERE...COME FROM – They are distressed.

The difference between the weeds and the wheat is barely discernible, too close to call with certainty until the plants mature. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

13:28-29 The servants ask if they should gather the weeds, but the master says no, lest they uproot (*ekrizōsēte*) the wheat along with the weeds. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

The master’s servants inquired whether they should collect the weeds prior to the harvest. But pulling darnel weeds, with their strong and deep roots, would uproot the emerging wheat plants. (TLSB)

13:28 DO YOU WANT US TO – They are letting it entirely up to him.

13:29 NO...BECAUSE – The point is that their action would be entirely harmful. He is saying, “Don’t be rash.”

The servants are most emphatically not to try to change the situation; that would be dangerously premature, and not their calling. The danger is that if they were to attempt such a separation of the weeds, wheat would also be uprooted. (CC)

13:30 I WILL TELL THE HARVESTERS – They are both growing but for entirely different purposes. He, the Master, is in complete control.

The reapers in the harvest season will first bind up and utterly burn (*katakausai*) the weeds and then collect the wheat into the barns. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

BURNED - To prevent the weeds from spreading seed and causing future damage, they were burned after being separated from the wheat. (TLSB)

barn. Wheat was stored for future use. (TLSB)

13:24–30 The master does not seem overly upset by what his enemy has done and shows great patience in delaying until the harvest the separation of weeds from wheat. He warns his servants not to judge prematurely by assuming they can distinguish between these plants. A mark of God’s rule is His patience (2Pt 3:8–15). For us sinners, this is a great comfort and also an encouragement for us to endure evil patiently (2Tm 2:24). • O God, help me to accept the fact that in this world good and evil will grow side by side. Lead me also to count on Your wise timing and judgment. Amen. (TLSB)

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” ³⁷ He answered, “**The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.**

13:36 THEN HE LEFT THE CROWD – The third and fourth Kingdom parables were spoken before Jesus dismissed the multitudes.

After the crowd departs without understanding, Jesus reveals to the disciples the meaning of the parable of the weeds. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

EXPLAIN TO US THE PARABLE – Scholars routinely observe that the interpretation of the Weeds of the Field (13:36-43) in some ways doesn’t seem to match up very well with the parable itself (13:24-30). For the crowds the message is: “Look – this what the reign of heaven is going to look like for now. Don’t look to someone else; keep listening and inquiring after Jesus and His significance.”

The disciples, on the other hand, are following Jesus in a ministry that is becoming increasingly more difficult and more discouraging. The disciples do not, of course, fully understand the mysteries of the reign of God now at work in Jesus. Nor are they even close to fully understanding Jesus. God has, however, revealed to them that this Jesus is the one in whom the reign of God is happening, and they are His disciples. As they look around at how things are going and they wonder about how things will transpire, Jesus interprets the parable of the Weeds of the Field for them and lays deliberate emphasis upon the final goal toward which the reign of God will inevitably press. His purpose is to reassure them. (CC)

In contrast to those who rejected Jesus, the disciples persisted in seeking understanding. Jesus explained vv. 24-30, interpreting seven key elements: sower,

field, seed, weeds, enemy, harvest, and reapers (vv. 37-39). “You must always have God’s Word in your heart, upon your lips, and in your ears. But where the heart is idle and the Word does not make a sound, the devil breaks in and has done the damage before we are aware” (LC I 100). (TLSB)

13:37-39 Jesus now draws the comparison between the characters in the parable and those in the kingdom of heaven. Sower of good seed: Son of Man; the field: cosmos or world; good seed: sons of the Kingdom; the false seeds: sons of the evil one; the hostile sower: the devil (*diabolos*); harvest season: completion of the age. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

13:38 *field*. Represents the world, where “the sons of the evil one” continue to live. See Ap VII and VIII 17–19. (TLSB)

The community of the people around Jesus, however, is in that world, and within the community, there will always be an inseparable mixture of people. That tension must not be destroyed, and Jesus’ disciples must accept that fact. That difficulty will only be destroyed by the angels on the Last Day. (CC)

GOOD SEED – This represented the Gospel, the life-giving Word.

SONS OF THE KINGDOM – Those who are spiritually alive because of the Son of man.

SONS OF THE EVIL ONE – They are actively evil. They are products of the devil. Judas was a hypocrite. God did not predestine Judas to damnation. Judas rejected the shield of faith to ward off the fiery missiles of Satan.

There is likely no significance, for instance, to the fact that the enemy sowed his seed “while people were sleeping” (13:25). Nor, interestingly are the servants of great significance, other than to note what Jesus says their vocation is not. Farthest of all from the story’s intent is any thought that the weeds should not be uprooted because, in God’s gracious time, perhaps they might change from weeds into wheat. (CC)

Contra Augustine, Sermon 73, cited in Simonetti, Matthew, 1:277. Of course, unbelievers may repent and believe in Jesus, and then they would metaphorically be considered wheat, but this parable is not about conversion. (CC)

Second, the parable does teach Jesus’ disciples that they must expect the public company of those who gather around Jesus to be confusing, confused, and flawed. The church in the world is real, and flesh and blood; it is not “invisible” in that sense. No one, however, will ever be able to determine of whom the true church consists. Nor is anyone called to purify the company of disciples by “weeding out the deadwood.” The One who teaches this parable, after all, is the One who was betrayed by means of a kiss from one with whom He had shared bread for years. (CC)

Third and perhaps most importantly, the parable's interpretation reminds us of the great framework within which all that we do and say in the name of Christ takes place. The ongoing presence of sin and evil that shocks and shatters our Christian communities is just that: the presence of sin and evil. People who publically confess the Gospel also fight and quarrel with one another, all too often unjustifiably. The church militant seems to be the only army that shoots its own wounded. Pastors and leaders are seduced by power and show themselves to be great hypocrites. It is not hard to become disheartened and discouraged. One may be tempted to decide simply to protect oneself and to withdraw. (CC)

Yet the hope remains. The day is coming. It will be the Son of Man's day, and His angels will do the sorting. God may seem slow, but He is never late. The parable of the Weeds and its interpretation can encourage us, give us hope, and stands us on our feet so that we may continue to follow the Son of Man and to serve Him. (CC)

13:40-41 The sons of the evil one are further defined as those who cause others to fall into sin (*skandala*) and those who practice lawlessness (*poiountas tēn anomian*). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

13:40 END OF THE AGE – Parable illustrated the final judgment. (TLSB)

13:41 ALL WHO DO EVIL – John Hus: “They gather up from the kingdom of holy church all that offend, that is, those who commit iniquity, namely, the sin of final impenitence” (*The Church*, p 41). (TLSB)

13:42 *fiery furnace*. Image of punishment in hell (cf 3:12; 18:8–9). (TLSB)

WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH – This is figurative for excruciating pain.

Jesus describes a grim judgment and fate for the sons of evil. They are thrown into the fiery furnace. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

13:43 EARS, LET HIM HEAR – Both Law and Gospel.

SHINE LIKE THE SUN - The righteous will reflect light similar to Jesus at His transfiguration (17:2; 1 Cor. 15:39-49). (TLSB)

Jesus' description paints the image of golden wheat at harvest shining in the sun with Christ's righteousness. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 24, Part 3)

their Father. Jesus referred to the righteous in the third person to indicate a future event. (TLSB)

13:36–43 At the close of this present age, the Son of Man will send His angels to gather all people. The law-breakers will suffer eternal punishment, and the righteous will enjoy the

Father's heavenly glory. Since all people are law-breakers, all deserve to be cast into the fiery furnace. Only those who have faith in Christ will escape this fate. They are declared righteous (Rm 3:21–26). “He who has ears, let him hear” (v 43). • Bless me, Jesus, with a believing heart, that I may remain a child of Your kingdom. Amen. (TLSB)