



## **“No More Crying, No More Fear”**

Pastor Andy CastroLang

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### **Scripture (CEB):**

#### ***Matthew 13:24-30***

24 He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 27 And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, "Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?" 28 He answered, "An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" 29 But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. 30 Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

#### ***Romans 8:12-25***

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. <sup>13</sup> If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. <sup>15</sup> You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with him so that we can also be glorified with him.

I believe that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup> The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God's sons and daughters. <sup>20</sup> Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God's children. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation is groaning together and suffering labor pains up until now. <sup>23</sup> And it's not only the creation. We ourselves who have the Spirit as the first crop of the harvest also groan inside as we wait to be adopted and for our bodies to be set free. <sup>24</sup> We were saved in hope. If we see what we hope for, that isn't hope. Who hopes for what they already see? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we don't see, we wait for it with patience.

### **Sermon:**

There is comfort and reassurance in this passage of Paul's letter to the Roman church. He reminds them, and us, that we do not live in futility, trapped in a cycle of meaninglessness, death and decay. That creation groans with us as we suffer, die and decay, but that is not the end.

He reminds them, and us, that we have faith in a God whom we trust, as a loving parent can be trusted.

He reminds them and us that we are brothers and sisters with Jesus; and all of us, like Jesus, believe that God is loving and trustworthy and full of purpose and creativity, and powerful enough to even overcome death and decay.

That indeed, as Helen Keller said so eloquently, "though the world is filled with suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of suffering".

In the gospel reading from Matthew, we hear Jesus tell his followers that it is impossible to root out all evil, it is impossible to live the perfect life, create the perfect community. That in fact, all that happens in life is a mixture of love and fear, of faith and faithlessness, of joy and sorrow, of sin and redemption, weeds and wheat.

"Let it all grow together" Jesus tells his community.

This is life on Earth.

It is an admixture of what we treasure and what we despise in ourselves, in our world.

You and I cannot see what Jesus, ascended Lord sitting at the right hand of God, sees. You and I rarely understand ourselves, our own mixtures of love and fear, our own internal battles between doing the good and doing the lazy, or selfish, or cowardly sinful thing. How can we know the ends of the harvest, of all human life, of all purposes of all people? How can we comprehend what will be weed and what will be wheat, when all is finally known?

We hardly know our own motives, how can we know the hearts of all creation?

So Jesus tells his followers, live without judgement and condemnation. You don't get to go around saying to others that they are no good. That they are unwanted, without value, a weed. You and I certainly don't get to uproot another person's life.

We don't have the skill to uproot a single weed without doing damage to the rest of the plants. Heck, we can't tell which is the weed, and which is not, sometimes.

Clover makes sweet milk in cows, but it is a weed in my lawn.

Bluebonnets are the state flower of Texas growing over great swathes of the hill country and blooming in blue profusion in the Spring, but they are simply "wild lupine" up here, and in your yard they are weedy!

We don't talk much about "the last days", the "final judgement" in this church. Yet, there is a presumption, within our Christian faith, and at least with some of us here, that we do not live in vain, that creation is not created in futility, that it points toward a future in which we can hope.

Paul assures us this is true. That we groan and weep with the earth itself, we suffer now, but we await the glory of completeness that comes with the fulfillment of time in God.

There is so much we do not know! There is so much that is unclear to us, who look at our world and at our lives and see only a jumble, a sometimes-chaotic mess.

Not so for the Farmer.

Not so for the Creator.

The creation groans, the world groans, but it is not destined to groan forever. It is “bound for glory”, as the old song sings. The Creator destined it for this.

Like Paul, we hope for the future. We do not despair. We are the brothers and sisters of Jesus and we are valued by our Creator Parent.

We have been sown in the world, and even though we sometimes feel ourselves growing up weedy and wild...we have been sown by a good Farmer who sows good seed in the world.

Paul says, “the whole creation waits breathless with anticipation...” (vs.19). There is excitement, hope, potential yet unrealized, in this beloved world of ours. God sees it, created it, full of such hope and potential, such beauty and glory. Surely our task is to look for it, nurture it, grow it everywhere!

We all have to wait to see all things fulfilled at the end of time as we know it. But we need not fear it. Like Paul has written we can wait in anticipation.

And at this time, we all have to care for the garden we are given, right here, right now. Grow faith, hope and love in every nook and cranny of our hearts, and through-out this creation.

Against the weeds of “aimlessness and despair” (words from our UCC Statement of Faith) we sow, and we grow; love and justice, kindness and mercy. Welcome and hospitality and safety and inclusion, healing hope and joy.

Not perfectly, never perfectly.

But surely, with our hearts and our intention, we can grow loveliness and goodness. The world needs to see growth of love and joy; the world is desperate to receive hope. There is much darkness to disperse with light.

As children of the generous Farmer, let us sow good seed with the gift of our lives. And wait in hope and anticipation for the coming glory (vs. 18)!

Alleluia!