

Patience in the Field

Proper 11, Year A (Track II) • July 19, 2026

Isaiah 44:6-8 + Psalm 86:11-17 + Romans 8:12-25 + Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Holy Faith Episcopal Church, Port St. Lucie

Everybody's an expert on weeds.

Ask anybody with a yard in Florida...
they'll tell you exactly which plants
have no business being there.

Dollarweed... with the green shiny discs.

Doveweed... with the little blue flowers.

Mexican Clover... that's the one with the little *white* flowers.

And that vine... that's eating your fence.

Pull *that* stuff out... and *it stinks*...

That's why they call it *skunkweed*.

We *know* a weed when we see one. At least... we *think* we do?

And it's not just in yards, is it?

We're *experts* on weeds in other places too.

The weeds *in the neighborhood*.

The house with *the broken-down car* in the yard...

That empty lot... *piled high* with *who knows what*...

Don't forget the road *with all the pot holes*.

Man made weeds

And the weeds *in families*.

The dad who *refuses* to get a job.

The mom who *has no idea* what the kids are doing.

The son... the daughter... hanging out with a bad crowd.

The weeds in the church...

Lord, have *mercy*... on *the weeds in the church*.

We *see* all these weeds. And we *name* them.

Then something *rises up in us* and says...

Somebody... ought to do something... about that.

That's *exactly* where the farmhands are in today's parable.

They *come running* to the landowner... *breathless, indignant*...

Master? Didn't you sow good seed in your field?

Where did these weeds come from?

And then the question they're *really* asking...

with shovels *already in their hands*...

Do you want us to go and pull them up?

You can *hear it*, can't you?

The *energy*. The *urgency*. The *itch* to *fix* it.

Give us the word, boss.

We'll have this field cleaned up by sundown.

And the farmer says...

No.

No?

No.

Let them grow together until the harvest.

Do you hear... how ***strange*** his answer is?

*Everyone in the story... is **agitated**...*

Except... the one who owns the field.

And the farmer? The farmer is calm.

Not because he doesn't see the weeds. *He sees them fine.*

Not because he doesn't care about the harvest. It's **his** harvest.

He's calm... because he knows ***two things***
*that the farmhands **don't**.*

First... he knows *what pulling would cost.*

Jesus is talking *about a weed... one the people knew well...*

A plant that looks *just like wheat...* while it's growing.

You can't tell them apart... until... ***the heads form.***

And ***deep down in the ground... the roots are tangled together.***

Yank the weed... ***Out*** comes the wheat.

There's no way to purify that field... *without **destroying** it.*

And second... the farmer *knows* a *harvest is coming*.
He knows... how *the story ends*.
So... **he** can *afford to wait*.

The farmhands *only see the weeds*.
The farmer... *sees the harvest*.

That's the difference between *anxiety... and patience*.

Now... Some of you grew up where *patience* was *not advice*.
It was food *safety*. You grew up with... *ackee*.

And you know what *grandma* told you...
...way before *you could read*.

You do not pick the ackee. The ackee picks its own time.
That pod has to open... on the tree... by itself.
No knife. No thumbnail. No help from you.

Experienced folks will tell you... *The ackee smiles. It yawns.*
It *shows you*... when it's ready.
And when it does... *it will feed your whole family*.

Saturday morning. Ackee and saltfish.
They say... *there's nothing better on this earth*.

But pick it *early*... and that *same fruit*...
that was going to *feed you*... will **hurt you**.
Put you **in the hospital**.
It has actually **killed** people.

Same tree. Same fruit. Same hand reaching for it.
The only difference... *is the hour*.

Now hear me on this...
That is *not* a warning *about fruit*.
That is a *warning... about us*.

We think *impatience*... is a *small* sin.
A *personality* trait. Just *how I am*...
I *need* to *get things done*.

Years ago... I interviewed for a new job...
What's your greatest weakness? I answered shrewdly...
My impatience... fully realizing...
it was actually a strength for that company...

But *the ackee*... tells *the truth*.
Impatience doesn't just *slow the harvest*.
Impatience turns the blessing... **into poison**.

This thing God grows... to *feed* you...
grabbed too soon... **will make you sick**.

And *every one of us*
 who *reached for something early*.
 Got an answer. A judgment. A verdict...
 on somebody *who wasn't finished growing yet*.

We *snatched* it off the tree... *before it smiled*.
 And it... made... us... sick...

My brothers and sisters...
Let the pod open... in its own time
 Please...
Let the pod open... when the time is right

So why do we do it? Why do we reach?

Here's the part I want you to take home,

We do not sort because we're righteous.
We sort because we are afraid.

If I can point at the weed... If I can name it...
 If I can say... *that one, right there, that's the problem...*

then I have proved something I desperately need to prove.
I have proved... I'm not it.

The shovel is not zeal.

*The shovel is fear... **holding a tool.***

That's why the farmer's calm is so **unsettling**

A person who **won't sort...** is a someone...

*Who **won't** tell you... where you stand.*

Now listen up... **we are terrible at sorting.**

We **pull up** the *amaryllis*... and **leave** the *kudzu*.

We **block the number...** of a person **God was still growing.**

We **write off as a weed...**

Someone **heaven...** has **already** marked down **as wheat.**

But take a closer look at the story.

Where did those weeds come from?

Jesus is very clear.

**An enemy came at night... while everybody was sleeping...
and sowed them.**

Now think about that seed.

That seed **did not** choose the *field*.

That seed **did not** choose the *night*.

That seed **did not** ask... *to be planted by an enemy.*

It just... **came up...** where **it was thrown.**

Remember our list?

The man *who refuses to find a job.*

The woman *with no idea what her kids are up to.*

The teenager *hanging out with a bad crowd.*

Did that man *choose* the field he came up in?

Did that *woman*?

Did that *child*?

Somebody *else* sowed that... *At night...*

While *decent* people *slept.*

We look at what came up... and we call it a weed.

Notice... what the farmer did?

He *knew* about the weeds in that field. He *said* so.

He was *not* confused.

Notice what he *did... for the rest of the season?*

He watered the field. All of it.

Every day... that sun comes up... over the good... and the bad...

Every day... rain falls on the wheat *and* the weed.

The *same generosity.*

Jesus said it himself...

*The Lord makes the sun rise... on the evil and on the good...
and drops rain... on the righteous and the unrighteous.*

Do you understand what that means?

God waters... *the weeds*.

Not by mistake. **Not** because... *he can't tell the difference*.

He *can* tell. He waters them *anyway*.

Same sun. Same rain. Same effort. All. Season. Long.

Why? Two reasons.

*Because you cannot water the wheat without watering the weed...
the roots are that tangled up together...*

and because as long as it's growing... it isn't over.

The farmer's *not yet... isn't a delay*.

The farmer's *not yet... is a door held open*.

Every drop of rain that falls on a weed is God saying...

I am not finished with that one.

Even the bad seeds... were made in the image of God.

Just lost. Just thrown.

Just planted by the wrong hand... on the wrong night.

And the Farmer says...

Let it grow. Let the rain fall on it. It's not time to harvest... yet.

[SPECIAL SLIDES BEGIN]

[SLIDE 1]

Take a look at this picture... Does anybody know what this is?
Take a good look. Anybody?
It's an abstract photograph... a stand of some very large trees

[SLIDE 2]

Now look inside that circle... something else is in there...
What is it? Can you see it? Let's get closer...

[SLIDE 3]

There's definitely something there...
but I can't quite make it out... it appears to be a person.
I can see a head... and a body...
I see a shadow... it looks like his right arm...

[SLIDE 4]

I imagine... a biblical figure...
Could it be Elijah?
The prophet who hid under a tree in the wilderness
when fleeing from Queen Jezebel... and praying for death...
Maybe...

[SLIDE 5]

Both of these images... Are actually...

pictures of sidewalks in my neighborhood.

Over the decades... long before the sidewalk was here...

Unknown things were spilled on this land.

Rain water forced long forgotten material to the surface...

And it left stains... Etched into the concrete.

Somebody ought to clean this up...

Attempts *have* been made.

Pressure washed many times...

That's how you get rid of stains. You purge them

But on *this* sidewalk... The stains remain.

[SLIDE 6]

Once I adjusted, the light and the color...

Dozens of stunning images were revealed... in those sidewalks

They had always been there. The sidewalk didn't change.

What changed... was *how I looked at them*

With a camera...not a pressure washer.

[SLIDE 7]

Now if that's true about stained sidewalks...

What about people?

How many... have we *walked over*...

that God already framed... and hung on the wall of heaven...

We saw a stain...

But ***their picture*** is already there.

We just need to be patient enough...

to look down... and see what God did there.

[SLIDE 8]

Now look again at that man in the sidewalk.

The one everybody walked over.

If that's Elijah under the tree...

That's a picture of a prophet...

who was certain the weeds had won.

He ran into the wilderness and said...

It is enough, Lord. Take my life. I am the only one left.

And God did not scold him. God did not pull him up.

God let him sleep. God fed him.

And then God told him... what he could not see from under that tree...

seven thousand in Israel... who never bent the knee.

The harvest was already there.

[BACK TO THE MAIN TITLE SLIDE]

Elijah just couldn't see it.

My brothers and sisters...

The prophet couldn't see the harvest.

The farmhands couldn't see the harvest.

We can't see the harvest.

Only the Farmer sees the harvest.

And that's the voice we hear in Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord...

I am the first and I am the last.

Besides me there is no god.

Do not fear, or be afraid.

There is no rock. I know not one.

There is no rock but God.

Not the enemy who sowed at night.

Not the weeds.

Not the fear that wakes you at three in the morning.

Not the diagnosis.

Not the empty chair at the table.

The field ***belongs to God.***

The harvest ***belongs to God.***

And the sorting, friends... the sorting ***belongs to God too.***

Aren't you glad?

Aren't you glad?

That on the days you looked an awful lot like a weed...

and I've had those days...

The Farmer said...

Not yet.

Let it grow.

I know what I planted.

Now hear me...

Patience in the field

does not mean doing nothing.

The farmer doesn't ***abandon*** the field.

He ***tends*** it. He ***waters*** it. He ***watches over*** it.

He ***just refuses*** to destroy it... in order to save it.

St. Paul says the whole creation is groaning in labor pains.

Not the groan of something dying.

The groan of something being born.

Labor is pain with a promise attached.

So we wait for it with patience.

Patience like a grandmother...

watching the ackee... not touching it...

until it smiles.

One week ago, in this very sanctuary,
we gave thanks for a man who knew this in his bones.

Father Nelson Pinder spent his ministry
in a field full of weeds.

Weeds of *hatred.*

Weeds of *segregation.*

Weeds *sown by an enemy...* while *decent people slept.*

And there were voices... telling him to burn it all down...
and voices telling him... to leave the field.

He did neither.

He stayed in the field.

He grew where he was planted.

He bore fruit... patiently, publicly, year after year...
trusting the harvest belonged to God.

And some of what got planted
in that hard Florida ground
in those hard years...

is bearing fruit... in this very room... this July morning.

That's what patience in the field looks like.

Not weakness. Not surrender. Faith... with its sleeves rolled up.

So here's the word for Holy Faith.

You live in a weedy field.

So do I.

The weeds are real...

in the world,

in the church,

and let's tell the truth...

a few sprouting in our own hearts.

You will feel the urge to purge.

You'll want to grab the shovel and appoint yourself
chief weed inspector of the field.

When that urge rises... *it isn't righteousness.*

It's fear... holding a tool.

Remember the ackee.

Don't pick it early. It will hurt you.

Remember the sidewalk.

Look down.

Remember that the rain falls on the weeds too...

and as long as it's raining... it isn't over.

Until then... **grow!**

Sink your roots down deep.

Drink the water of the Word.

Turn your face to the Son.

Bear the fruit God planted you to bear...

right where you are.

Weeds and all.

Groan when you have to.

Laugh at your groaning when you can.

It's the sound of something being born.

Because the day is coming...

Jesus promises it...

when the righteous will shine like the sun

in the kingdom of their Father.

Until that day...

patience in the field, beloved.

Patience in the field.

Amen.