

**Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey**  
**Weekly Witness | July 20, 2017**

Again this week Matthew tells us a parable of seeds growing in the land. We hear Jesus describe farmland where weeds and wheat are growing together. This parable suggests the reality farmers already know: It is impossible to separate a field of growing plants into good and bad and keep all of the crop healthy. Attempting to remove one will harm the other, making it impossible to grow only a field of wheat. Rather, one must wait until harvest time to divide the crop into produce and weeds. Through such an illustration, Jesus emphasizes that it will be at the harvest, or resurrection, that God's will is revealed. In the meantime, we, as people of faith, should resist dividing the world into our own simple categories in a sinful attempt to organize the world into good and bad.

But it is much easier to divide the world into categories, separating ourselves from others, what we think is right from what we think is wrong. [Lajos Brons](#), a Japanese philosophy professor from Nihon University, has written about what he has called "dialectic illiteracy" in culture. This can be understood as our inexperience in having conversations that embrace seeming contradiction. As a result, situations and issues can easily lose the rich diversity and deep complexity that God has created. Our dialectic illiteracy leads us to engage the world in simple terms like good and bad, and link "bad" with "things and people different than me and mine." "Othering" (as Brons and others label it) creates a field where everything has withered, not a beautiful--though sometimes thorny and difficult--land of growth and plenty.

As Lutherans and Episcopalians, we identify that contradiction exists within us; we live simultaneously as sinner and saint. Lutheran pastor [Nadia Bolz-Weber](#) describes the confession of such complexity as a "cranky, beautiful faith." Such a faith is a belief that God sprinkles us with the water of life and abounding grace knowing fully well that within each of us is a garden of wheat and weeds.

And we confess and acknowledge that our world is filled with complexities that aren't always easy to navigate. Many of the issues that LEAMNJ addresses reveal seeming contradictions. Public policy that encourages a healthy business climate while at the same time providing workers with family leave, a living wage, and earned sick days is such a dialectic. Similarly, communities are safer when law enforcement agencies work together with neighbors to build trust and respectful relationships. New Jersey will thrive together when we do not divide our conversations and decisions into either/or, but advocate for policies that build up our communities. By embracing these complexities, we grow into a deeper experience of the Kingdom of God cultivated in New Jersey.

For more information on issues facing New Jersey voters this fall, see our [NJ Voter Issue Guide](#) on our [website](#) under the "Resources" drop down. If you need help with engaging in conversations that move beyond Red/Blue go to our website, to find a [Communication Guide](#), also under "Resources." Moving from dialectical illiteracy to relationships that embrace the complexity of saint and sinner takes practice. Be patient with yourself and with others. Ground your faith practice this week in the garden of wheat and weeds.