My brothers and sisters in Christ, let us pray. Our Lord God of our hearts, minds, souls and spirits, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts always be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer, Amen.

I read the Boston Globe with my dog Grace and my morning coffee, and while Grace is never worried about what’s in the paper and has very little trepidation over future events, the Globe tries to instill a sense that we’re hovering on a threshold. It might be another article on gun violence and how many mass shootings there are, and how many more will it take before we try to at least try something more than collective shoulder shrugging. Or maybe the climate change crisis has reached another extreme and some scientists predict the new normal in ways that make me want to buy a larger air conditioner (which, incidentally, only contributes to the problem of weather extremes). Or maybe a worrisome tome on how there has not been an honest to goodness recession in a while and it’s coming. I look out my patio door and half expect to see Chicken Little pointing skyward, squawking away, “The sky is falling! The sky is falling!”

There are many things we read about or experience in our lives that make us anxious, waiting for the other shoe to drop. It often seems as if ours is the most anxious time in history, at least from our selfish perspective in a remarkably affluent and outwardly secure corner of God’s world. Americans have been shaken, not stirred, and it’s hard to get our bearings these days. We live with heightened awareness of the unease, this sense of foreboding that is part of the human condition.

We’re not alone in this, however. We see the weeds, but so does God. All creation, Jesus tells us, is poised: waiting for fulfillment, waiting with longing for something. The field is almost ready for the harvest, but it’s far from perfect. What should be a bountiful crop of wheat is going to be half weeds. But until that harvest, when there will be a drastic sorting out, weeds and wheat must be left to grow. If the wheat—a universal symbol of nourishment—flourishes, so too do the useless, choking weeds. We wait for the time of decision, the irrevocable sorting out.

Jesus reminds us that the Kingdom of God is here, but it’s just starting to unfold in ways we can’t see or know. Jesus reminds us that we aren’t there yet; we know we have sin and angst and things in the world that don’t let God’s gifts flourish, but destroy them, and folks who even revel in that witness. And yet we are told that we must let things grow and unfold. But it’s also a time of looking forward to some sort of resolution, but for now we live in the “not yet.” We are poised on the threshold.

So what else is new? To use the imagery employed by Jesus in his parable, we await the fullness of God’s kingdom. But rather than searching for the other shoe, Jesus’ words are heralding the fulfillment of all our hopes and prayers when we pray—alas, sometimes mindlessly—that God’s kingdom come on earth and God’s will be done on earth. And this means ALL the earth, in Washington, D.C., Ukraine, Nigeria, Columbia, Syria. We rarely include ourselves in the assessment of weeds, don’t we? Let’s not forget the affluent suburbs.

And yet, If we knew precisely how and when the waiting would end, then our life in Christ would be simply an exercise in pious persistence. It would be like waiting at the airport until our flight is announced, or standing in line at the supermarket checkout. Is there any tension whatsoever in this kind of waiting? Heck no. That kind of waiting is just tedious and boring.

Here in Greenland, we’re the smalltown lucky ones waiting for the inbreaking of the kingdom. It’s like no other kind of waiting. It is not the routine, humdrum marking of time in our daily lives, or the terror and dread of devastation. It is waiting in hope for something that is not seen, yet we know it’s real—Jesus says we cannot see the wind, yet we can see the wind is present. So it is with the Kingdom of God, a longing and waiting beyond words.

But what about those noxious weeds? What about the judgment Jesus makes so very clear in this parable? Do any of us remember the “Left Behind” series of books so popular and telling us that God suddenly pulls the switch on the end of the world and here’s what happens to the weeds of us? There’s some folks in this world who are happy to build their lives around being the blessed ones who are in God’s favor that get lifted up and out of any more troubles in our world and to heck with the rest of us. I know that one pretty well, and the problem is that assumes that we are wheat and not weeds ourselves.

I believe most of us are happy to muddle on for a bit, living into the promise of things hoped for but not seen. Just having the promise is enough for now. But I think we should think about the weeds a little more often, and wonder whether they have anything to do with us. Most of us persuade ourselves that Jesus is talking about someone else, someone unworthy of saving, all those people who surely have no place in God’s kingdom. Surely he’s talking about weedy people doing some unspeakable thing to folks we don’t know in a faraway country that we can put on the compost heap if not to the cleansing fire. It’s much more comforting to hope that we are pure wheat and that the weeds are quite disposable.

But that’s not what the parable says. I’ll leave you with these final thoughts.

For my two cents, the concept of weeds is more complicated. In our honest moments, we know that we are not pure wheat, but that we have some qualities of the weeds in us, qualities that we need to be free of before we can grow like the seeds in the good soil we talked about last week. Or maybe we fail to grow and thrive because—fine-quality durum wheat that we are—we let ourselves be choked and thwarted by the weeds around us.

I’m really in no hurry for some kind of final day—I never envisioned God as an eternal punisher eager to get revenge on his creation God’s they didn’t do this or that. I bounce back and forth between two images. In one, the people of God are filled with the yearning for God; in the other, they are part of God’s garden, active and growing toward the ultimate harvest. Both images remind us that we are living in a not-yet time, that we live in radical trust that God’s promise will be fulfilled. We wait. We labor. We hope for that which is not seen.

Oh, and that other shoe that’s supposed to drop? I missed the first shoe dropping, so I’m not sure that there’s a second one coming down after me. That, or the other shoe already has dropped and I just never heard or saw it.

God help my eyes and ears be focused on thee, and not me.

Thanks be to God, Amen.