

**Lakewood Congregational Church  
July 19, 2020**

**Breathing in Creative Tension**

***Hold only love, only peace in your heart, knowing that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won.*** John Lewis (1940-2020)



24 He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup>but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. <sup>26</sup>So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. <sup>27</sup>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?" <sup>28</sup>He answered, "An enemy has done

this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" <sup>29</sup>But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. <sup>30</sup>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." '

36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.' <sup>37</sup>He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; <sup>38</sup>the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, <sup>39</sup>and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. <sup>40</sup>Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup>The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, <sup>42</sup>and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup>Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen! Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

In verse 30 Jesus says, "Let them both grow together until the harvest." We want the weeds pulled and evil removed. We want to be wheat, to be good, and to establish our roots in the good soil. We are frustrated with isolation caused by a virus, but we want to be isolated from evil. And, Jesus delivers a resounding "no." The wheat and the weeds share the good soil and coexist in a natural balance, a creative tension.

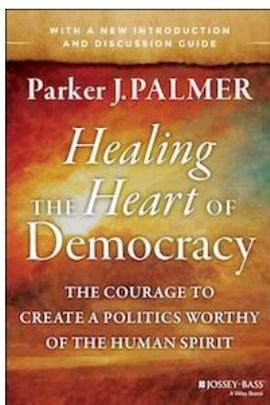
Our daily choices as disciples reflect whether we are choosing to be wheat or a weed. We silently witness demeaning behavior at work. We support gender equity. We inflate our children's achievements to impress a college recruiter. We help refugees learn English. We choose to not recycle. We vote for the Metroparks levy. We knowingly use partial

information to slander another person. We sponsor anti-bullying programs for youth. We take the Lord's name in vain. We worship weekly and pray daily. We are a messy combination of wheat and weeds.

These choices matter. They matter because they determine whether we are a part of the harvest. I am fully aware that mainline progressive Protestant churches shy away from Jesus' Second Coming and we dance around it during Advent. We can shy away and dance around it all we want, but the reality is that our discipleship choices have consequences. Yes, we are forgiven. Amen! Yes, there is abundant grace. Amen! We know that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won. Amen! But under no circumstances do we have the option of discipleship lite, just because Jesus has already done the heavy lifting. We are not allowed to take forgiveness, grace, and eternal life for granted or as an entitlement. Jesus repeatedly says, "Let anyone with ears listen!" He is imploring us, you, and me to be faithful, to be just and compassionate and loving, and to be as wheat-like as humanly possible because he loves us. He is imploring us to act as if we want to be gathered and offered a place in the barn.

- What do think Jesus wants us to learn in this parable?
- Do you believe that the battle of good to overcome evil is already won? Why or why not?
- How does good prevail? How does evil prevail?

***Choose confrontation wisely, but when it is your time don't be afraid to stand up, speak up, and speak out against injustice. And if you follow your truth down the road to peace and the affirmation of love, if you shine like a beacon for all to see, then the poetry of all the great dreamers and philosophers is yours to manifest in a nation, a world community, and a Beloved Community that is finally at peace with itself.*** John Lewis



Today is our fourth week exploring Parker J. Palmer's book, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*. If you missed the previous weeks, you may find the information on LCC's website under the blog tab, in the weekly reflections. Please consider purchasing this book or borrowing it from the library. This week, we are learning about the Third Habit of the Heart: A Capacity to Hold Tension Creatively.

*First Habit of the Heart: We're All in this Together*  
*Second Habit of the Heart: An Appreciation of Otherness*  
*Third Habit of the Heart: A Capacity to Hold Tension Creatively*

## **Videos**

*I think we understand creative tension-holding intellectually. It is difficult to practice, though. As people of faith, we are among the groups more inclined to practice this habit of the heart and to have experience practicing it. Creative tension-holding is a part of God's message and Jesus' ministry. The Spirit infuses creative tension-holding. Light and Dark, Good and Evil, Wheat and Weeds coexist in the same soil.*

*Creative Tension-Holding* (3:25 minutes)

<http://www.couragerenewal.org/democracyguide/v9/>

- Note some contradictions in your life, gaps between your convictions and your actions.
- In today's parable, the wheat and the weeds are in the same field. Where in your life do you experience conflicting ideas or opinions? At home? At work? In the community? How do you hold the differences?

*The Third Habit of the Heart: A Capacity to Hold Tension Creatively* (1:15 minutes)

<http://www.couragerenewal.org/democracyguide/v15>

- Palmer states that American democracy is at its best when it is like a restored prairie. "*The diversity that grows in a democracy delights the heart as well as the eye.*" Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- Biodiversity in a prairie fosters plant, soil and wildlife resilience and adaptability. List the kinds of diversity in American communities. How does diversity foster resilience and adaptability in American life? When has your understanding of a situation or an idea been enlarged by learning a different perspective?
- Where do you get your news? Do you listen or read from a variety of sources? This week obtain news from one different source each day. Learn a new viewpoint or review an American story through the lens of a different country. Hold any differences with the awareness that we are all children of God.

*A Government that Functions Like a Loom* (5:00 minutes)

<http://www.couragerenewal.org/democracyguide/v24/>

- View this short video of a weaving demonstration on the 200-year-old loom at Mt. Vernon, George Washington's home.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnbUF0wgIfw> Notice the warp, the long vertical threads attached to the loom, and the weft, the shorter horizontal threads that slide between the warps. The warp and weft intersect to form the fabric. There are a variety of patterns, but the tension between the threads and the balance of that tension creates and then holds the fabric together. Palmer uses these weaving concepts when he compares a healthy democracy to a loom.
- In the fabric of your life, what forms your foundational warps? Which wefts have you added to create the pattern? Reflect on the beauty of your life and the tensions that hold your pattern together.
- In American democracy, what are our foundational warps? Which wefts have impacted our pattern? Note the times when the tension is in and out of balance. Create an image of the American fabric.

*Carrie Newcomer's Song: The Beautiful Not Yet*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aceVe58mU0M>

Artist's notes: *We live in an ever accelerating goal-oriented world. It is easy to become distracted and restless. We are not who we were, and yet we are not who we will become. I went for a walk in early spring when the snow was gone but leaves had not yet budded. The light was clear and clean, falling totally unencumbered through the*

trees. Yes, summer was coming, lush and unsubtle, but in that moment, I found myself grateful and in love with the quickening. Life is always lived between then and soon, right here and now, in the beautiful not yet.

- Where do you see creative tensions in nature?
- Which of those tensions do you excitedly anticipate? Which natural tensions are more solemn?
- What can nature teach us about balancing tensions in our life and in our world?

If you missed Newcomer's song, "If Not Now, Tell me When," from our first week, then please listen now. The title comes from comments President Obama made when he awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Representative John Lewis. Mr. Lewis, a civil rights activist and moral touchstone, died on Friday, July 17.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bY585-fzSs>

*An opportunity:* Last week we learned about Habit #2, "An Appreciation of Otherness" through sharing stories. National Public Radio's Ideastream and StoryCorps are seeking participants for the "One Small Step Project," which fosters deep listening and sharing stories to create common ground. Learn more and, if interested, submit an application at: <https://www.ideastream.org/take-one-small-step-with-ideastream-and-storycorps>

♥ Origami is a Japanese artform in which designs are created by folding paper. No glue is used. Practice creative tension-holding. The video link provides folding information and it can be paused at any point. If you are not a fan of butterflies, then please find a different pattern online.

Needed: Two square pieces of copier paper, any color. An 8-1/2" x 8-1/2" square is a good beginner size. (My first square became a practice square. I recommend two squares.)

<https://thekidshouldseethis.com/post/easy-origami-butterfly>



- Did you pause the video or need to begin again? If so, why? Why not?
- Did you become frustrated? If so, why? Why not?
- Now, think about our parable. Where in your life do you need to pause, slow down or start over so you can be like wheat?
- Reflect on the butterfly as a symbol of resurrection. Wheat, weeds, judgment, good soil, coexistence, creative tension, resurrection – how does all of this move us forward as a Beloved Community?



♥ Last week, Pastor Joanna mentioned this hymn during her sermon. It was new for me and it has a catchy tune. This tune was, originally, written for a children's choir.

*Lord, Let My Heart be Good Soil:* Doug Moorehead and Linden Gray-Reneberg at St. Francis Episcopal Church in Fortuna, California:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RezBJBQsEBs&list=RDRRezBJBQsEBs&start\\_radio=1&t=32](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RezBJBQsEBs&list=RDRRezBJBQsEBs&start_radio=1&t=32)

Lord, let my heart be good soil, open to the seed of your word.  
Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is understood.

If my heart is hard, break the stone away. If my heart is cold, warm it with the day.  
If my heart gets lost, lead it to your way. Lord, let my heart; Lord, let my heart. Lord, let my heart be good soil.

Lord, let my heart be good soil, open to the seed of your word.  
Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is understood.

If my way is dark, help me understand. Should I start to faint, refresh me with your command. If the thorns surround, lift me to higher ground. Lord, let my heart; Lord, let my heart. Lord, let my heart be good soil.

- How is your heart hard, cold or lost?
- How is your way dark, faint or struggling?
- How do you act when your heart is good soil?

#### References and Images

**John Lewis** quotes are from [Across that Bridge: Life Lessons & A Vision for Change](#). Originally published in 2012 by Hyperion Books. A longer version was published by Hachette Books in 2017.

**Wheat:** [https://odnmedia.s3.amazonaws.com/image/ant-rozetsky--c0PJUAtpSo-unsplash\\_20200707125507121332\\_20200715203706898483.jpg](https://odnmedia.s3.amazonaws.com/image/ant-rozetsky--c0PJUAtpSo-unsplash_20200707125507121332_20200715203706898483.jpg)

**Parker J. Palmer:** [www.courageandrenewal.org](http://www.courageandrenewal.org)

**Origami:** <https://thekidshouldseethis.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/three-minute-butterfly-origami.jpg>

**Soil:**

[https://www.almanac.com/sites/default/files/styles/primary\\_image\\_in\\_article/public/image\\_node\\_s/man-with-soil-sonercdem-gettyimages.jpg?itok=Cs7LmfUA](https://www.almanac.com/sites/default/files/styles/primary_image_in_article/public/image_node_s/man-with-soil-sonercdem-gettyimages.jpg?itok=Cs7LmfUA)

**Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil, 1985.** Music & Verse 1: Handt Hanson. Verse 2: Jeff Jeffries.