

Is It A Weed Or What?

Have you seen blooming dandelions yet? We look forward to spring flowers, but how many of us include the dandelions? Some folks do because they like to eat them (the whole plant is eatable). They see not weeds but salad! For others dandelions are persistent pests. When people who want a weed-free lawn see them, they start their yearly summer ritual of trying to keep them at bay. For the environmentally concerned, pulling them, digging them up, or keeping them mowed off so the seeds do not mature (always a losing proposition) may be preferred. Others apply weed killers themselves, or have a lawn service regularly 'treat' the lawn in an effort to turn lawns into a mono-culture where only the 'right kind of grass' can grow.

When I was in seminary, all the professors lived in a row of houses on the edge of the campus. One summer day I noticed that not all of them agreed on what to do about these persistent plants. All the yards were green – some very green – but one. That one, was almost as yellow as the others were green! Anyone who has worked on the 'dandelion problem' knows what that means. Before long, all the yards were speckled with at least some yellow. The closer you were to the 'yellow yard', the more yellow you had - especially the yards on the down-wind side!

What can we learn from these persistent little plants? They are simply not deterred by what life throws at them. They send their tap-root deep into the earth for the nutrients they need and, even trying to pull them up, leaves a bit of root behind so that in no time, a new plant will appear. Their tap roots also bring up and share nutrients from down deep that their shallow rooted neighbor plants need. Even weed killers do not always kill those deep roots. Then there are the seeds! One plant produces thousands in a season, the wind carries them far and wide, and the seeds can stay dormant until growing conditions are just right. One plant does not stay one plant for long! Dandelions also have several claims to fame. They are one of the first flowers in the spring and their nectar draws pollinators needed by other plants, though dandelions do not require pollinators themselves. They feed birds, bees, butterflies, and other animals. People use them as food, medicine, and to produce yellow dye for cloth, etc. Since they also secrete latex, scientists are even experimenting with making dandelion rubber for tires from them. Not all their attributes are laudable however. When they 'invade' crop fields or garden plots, they can be very destructive with their uncompromising behavior and dominating nature.

Next time you see this persistent little plant think of the lessons it can teach. We need to learn their persistence when we try to share the gospel or right a wrong. We can learn the importance of having deep roots in your source of nutrients, which for us is the Word and teachings of Jesus as we strive to be good disciples. We can also understand the importance of unselfishly helping others as dandelions do by sharing sustenance and drawing pollinators, they do not need for other plants that do. We must not forget the damage that they do when they are too zealous and try to take over and claim everything for themselves. We share with dandelions that we are capable of both goodness and destruction, but unlike the dandelion, we have a choice. Lord, help us choose wisely.

This week, remember in prayer:

- **The victims of gun violence.** Needless carnage continues. There have been 12 mass shootings this month already – 3 were on Easter Sunday. 12 people died & 55 people were injured in these April incidents.
- **People dealing with COVID-19.** About 75% of those 65 & older have received at least 1 dose of the vaccine, but the number of cases is growing and has been for 4 weeks. It appears another surge is building. In this round, young people are the most effected. The major factors: more contagious variants are spreading; youth sporting events are returning as are other large gatherings. Experts say Americans appear to be 'done' with COVID (are tired of dealing with it), but COVID is not done with Americans (meaning the pandemic is not over). The need for safety measures and vigilance is not over. A new large study shows that 1 in 3 people who have had COVID have neurological issues after 6 months.
- **Refugees and those displaced by violence** – especially during this pandemic, & especially the children. Remember that people do not flee their homes unless forced or because conditions where they live, are far worse than those, they know they will face when fleeing.



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