

Waiting with the Wheat and the Weeds

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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July 22-23, 2023

Year A: Mt 13:24-30, 36-43

[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field;²⁵ but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷And 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?' ²⁸He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let 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.'"

³⁶Then 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." ³⁷He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴²and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"

In this parable about the end times, we are encouraged to wait upon God. God will be the final judge about good and evil in the world. Yet what we can do, is continue to help bring God's reign and rule more deeply into focus, now.

God's strength, courage and patience be with us as we wait. Amen

Summer is a good time to hear these parables in Matthew about seeds, soil and weeds! I'm guessing that you, like myself, have been heard to say, where did that darn dandelion come from! How did that thistle get there?! We go get the Ortho weed killer to be rid of the nastiness.

Even in our Glory Garden...there have been emails in past summers. "Attention gardeners! Our zucchini now have squash bugs! Beware!" How can a Glory Garden bring glory to God with pests like squash bugs? Truly!!

Remember in Matthew's time there is confusion and suspicion in the community. Is my neighbor trustworthy? Is he on my side? Remember as well, Matthew doesn't mince words. Good and evil. Thorns and rocks and good soil. Wheat and weeds.

This is a teaching of Jesus' about the end times. Judgment day. Yet there was plenty to glean from it for Matthew's community and for ours. We know that wealthy landowners controlled much of the rural land in ancient times. Farmers would feud with one another so much so, that there was a Roman law prohibiting sowing poisonous weeds into another farmer's field.

We also know that there was concern amongst Jews about ‘how Jewish is my neighbor?’ This is how the Essenes came to be. They were a Jewish sect who separated themselves from other Jewish communities. This separation afforded them, in their minds, a higher standard of purity.

Thus, for those three reasons, alone, Jesus’ hearers would have identified with this parable. We do too. And before we go any further, we must first acknowledge the two dichotomies that live within our spirits.

Wheat and weeds. Weeds and wheat. There is a certain type of ryegrass called darnel or tares. These tares looked very similar to wheat when it is young. Only after the ear had appeared on the tares, could one tell the difference. We can understand why the farmworkers were concerned when they discovered the unwanted plant within the crop.

Before we go any farther, I don’t think it’s fair to talk about the weeds we see in the world without also acknowledging the very same weeds that grow in ourselves.

St. Paul says it like this in Romans. “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate...I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.” We have within ourselves this very dualism. Sinner and saint. It seems the more we focus on trying to rid ourselves of the sin in our lives, the more we are drawn to doing it.

Steve Garnaas-Holmes wrote a poem. Listen.

God, I meant to be a good person;
I wanted to produce wisdom and justice.
How is it I am so compromised?

There is goodness and mercy in me,
and there is selfishness and fear,
privilege that serves only my fake desires.

I’ve been asleep! I missed it,
when my ego crept in
and sowed all this junk in me.

I want to march through the field of my life
and tear out all the weeds.
I want to be better. Now.

But, look how harsh I am, judging myself.
My hands are full not of the fruit of love
but shame and a scythe.

Some of me that I am disappointed in
hides your blessing, wheat among the weeds.
Only you know the true fruits I bear.

I set aside my weapons.
I let go of accusing myself.
I accept myself as I am, weeds and wheat.

I trust you to glean the grain from my field
and remove the rest—
gone, cleansed, burned forever!

May my peace and acceptance
be the seeds I sow
for the next harvest.

[www.unfoldinglight.net](https://unfoldinglight.net/2020/07/17/be8j6s4leyfpls8lzs53am23eymg4m/) <https://unfoldinglight.net/2020/07/17/be8j6s4leyfpls8lzs53am23eymg4m/>

What a beautiful prayer poem. God granting us the ability to notice and accept the weeds and wheat that grow within ourselves. What the author doesn't say, but implies is that of course, weeds and wheat grow inside others also.

Jesus is very clear in the parable that the wheat and the weeds be allowed to grow together. God in the end, as the harvester, would be the judge of people's hearts. The story restrains the workers from pulling out the imposter wheat too early, lest the whole crop be ruined. They had to wait. Sounds like a good plan. Besides then at harvest the weeds could be used for fuel. Everything works!

Except it doesn't. You and me, we don't want to wait. Waiting is challenging business. There's not much profit to be had. At least not on the surface. If we're honest we've all wondered why God could allow innocent people to suffer from the ills of wars they never asked for. How can it be that a few people with power (like those planting the weeds) can get away with causing the pain of so many others?

We need only to look at Russia and Ukraine. The Rohingya genocide in Myanmar. Two Generals in Sudan who were once allies. The list goes on and on. Just google world conflicts in 2023 and the evidence is there. It's discouraging and disheartening. For we who are faithful, we get on our knees and ask God, 'Why! Why must you wait so long in doing anything?'

It is a characteristic of God to be patient and delay in acting. Over and over in scripture, God waits. God allowed the ancient Israelites to wander forty years. Jesus delayed going to Lazarus' tomb. As we grow in faith, we learn to be more content with the divine mystery of delay. It's not easy, but we get more comfortable not understanding all the ways of God.

One reason God delays, is so more and more people can come to Him. More people can realize the Lord's saving power and come under Jesus' Lordship. Only God knows people's hearts. We do not. It's tempting to judge and soothes our egos to think we know. But God alone distinguishes the light and darkness within souls.

On the other hand, we can also notice the individuals who choose to be wheat and grow 'wheat' with what they have. Angelina Jolie has worked with UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, and Doctors without Borders. Google the world's best philanthropists and you'll read amazing stories!

Our world, particularly right now, is filled with people and organizations who simply cannot get along together. Likewise, our world, particularly right now, is filled with people and

organizations who work tirelessly to foster relationships, advocate for justice and allow God's light to shine.

As we might get frustrated waiting for God to do something, we must remember that God has already acted and is still acting. From Good Friday to Easter, we saw God conquer sin and death. That is a truth we cling to. And... in these now but not yet times, we await the second coming of Christ to fulfill and make new all of creation in His Lordship. We don't know when that final harvest will take place. We do trust it will happen! This sinful and broken world will one day be changed, one day be transformed.

Likewise, God is still at work. God has not abandoned God's people...any of them. Google 'charity organizations' in any country you want and there is the evidence of God at work. In places like Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan, God's people are busy helping feed, clothe, and shelter the least and lost. Wheat and weeds.

While the profit hungry hospital CEO is upstairs with the board approving policies that are fiscally beneficial only for a few, faithful nurses downstairs are treating patients with an extra measure of care and tenderness.

While the gang member sells drugs on the corner in the dark of night, the mother who lost her own son to addiction, shares his story with students at any school she can in the light of day.

While you and your spouse or friend have a fight one morning, after silent prayers and contrite hearts, you make up that evening. God is at work, church! The wheat and weeds must grow together. Can we explain exactly why? No. God has God's reasons. Can we trust God and trust that God is at work? Absolutely!

In the meantime, with God's help, you and I can become the strongest wheat we can be. We can let our lights shine so that others may see God. We can continue to pray in full faithfulness, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done.' God is able to make us stronger than any weed out there. God knows how to preserve our faith. God can help us hold our tongues. God will give us patience to persevere and overcome all those pesky weeds in our lives. It's not easy, but God helps us not only survive but thrive. We wait. We wait upon the Lord.

Finally, one part of God's work through us is to notice and name the weeds, just like the farm workers did. Our silence, our inaction, our acquiescing and remaining neutral in the face of evil and injustice only serves the weeds with power. Oppressors love it when God's people refuse to act.

Taking action to call out the weeds might sound like it's in direct tension with waiting. The difference is our attitude in calling them out. Knowing our own sinfulness and being willing to allow God to be God is a fine yet honorable line to walk.

Let us wait. Let us trust. Let's allow God to be God. Amen!