

Jesus' Greatest Hits

The Wheat and the Weeds

Part 14 - September 9, 2007

[VIDEO: WHEAT FIELD]

Every farmer understands the frustration of weeds. Even if you only tend a small garden or a flower bed, you'll spend a lot of time spraying 'em, pulling 'em, and cursing 'em. And does it surprise you when they come right back? Not so much. Did you know that God has His own gardening problems? In the parable of The Wheat and the Weeds, Jesus tells us that we shouldn't be surprised when evil sprouts up all around us.

Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" - *Matthew 13:24-30 NIV*

This is another "The kingdom of heaven is like ..." parable. Jesus is chipping away at this Jewish expectation that the Messiah would lead them to a military victory resulting in annihilation or slavery of all non-Jews. The weeds in their world were the Gentile nations. This parable seems simple; but, we're mostly gentiles who've accepted Jesus as Messiah, and we have the benefit of hindsight. This was a confusing parable to even Jesus' disciples. What is the field, and who is the farmer? What are the weeds, and who is the enemy? And so, even though He tells two more parables, the disciples can't get this one out of their heads. Thankfully, Jesus gives them and us a thorough explanation in Matthew 13:36-43.

"Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.' He answered ..."

Let's weave these parables together as we read the explanation.

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. (*Mat 13:24*)

"The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man"

This is Jesus' favorite title for Himself. It comes from a vision the Prophet Daniel had concerning the Messiah:

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man ... He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. - *Daniel 7:13-14 NIV*

“The field is the world”

What the Lord originally intended has been corrupted, but it will ultimately be restored.

“And the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom”

Who are the children of the kingdom? Those who freely submit to the King. To be a “son” of someone or something meant to be a person who reflects the characteristics of that particular person or thing. Sons of the kingdom reflect character of the Son of Man.

But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. (*Mat 13:25*)

Sleeping doesn't have a spiritual implication; that's why Jesus doesn't define it. It merely signifies the inevitability of sin.

“The weeds are the sons of the evil one”



We're all God's children in the sense of creation; but we're not all His children in the sense of redemption. Sons of the evil one reflect the character of Satan. And this side of Heaven, wheat and weeds can look a lot alike. The weeds in this parable are most likely darnel. It looks so much like wheat that it's called: False Wheat. And it's poisonous. In Jesus' day, Darnel was often sown as a tactic in warfare, and a dirty trick for revenge. It was actually forbidden by Roman law.

When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. (*Mat 13:26*)



Do you know why it was easy to spot when it matured? False Wheat won't bow its head. How *perfect* is it that true wheat bows its head when it matures, and false wheat won't? It might be *too* perfect, a little *too* convenient. Jesus was a master at weaving everyday objects into Kingdom analogies ... but then, when He *created* the objects He knew the message He would have to convey.

Was He in Heaven going: “Okay, I'll need four types of soil to depict receiving truth; hmm, hard, shallow, rich, and thorny!” I don't think He wrote His parables around everyday life. I think He wrote everyday life around His parables!



The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' (Mat 13:27)

It's easy to look at all the injustice, and question God. What's going on? I thought You were God! Don't expect perfection this side of Heaven. Even Jesus had His Judas! Talk about a weed among the wheat! Yet, Jesus didn't "pull him out". He loved on him, and left him up to God.

Groucho Marx and Jack Benny were playing a charity baseball game, and Groucho was made manager. Benny led off and Groucho said, "Get up there and hit a home run!" But, Benny struck out. Groucho turned to the press and said, "I can't manage a team that won't follow instructions!"



We have to be careful not to treat the people we love this way. Demanding faultless perfection and groaning when they fail us. One of the secrets of happiness is learning to live with the faults and flaws of those we love. Many divorces are based on the fantasy of a weed-free mate! So, where did these weeds come from?

'An enemy did this,' he replied. (Mat 13:28a)

"And the enemy who sows them is the devil"

Jesus portrays the devil as a cunning and sneaky enemy who knows how to make the bad appear good, and the right appear wrong. He's out to rob God's glory and our purpose. There was a weed in the wheat at the Boat Float last Sunday; they broke my car window and stole my stereo! You break a leg, or lose a job, and think, "God, why didn't you protect me from the enemy?" Turns out God was bringing you spiritual growth and maturity. And the enemy's only involvement was the accusation he whispered against God! Our perspective is so limited.

The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. (Mat 13:28b-29)

We just can't know which weeds will turn out to be wheat! Every analogy has its limitations, and the limitation here is that wheat is always wheat and a weed is always a weed. But, our farmer has the power to transform weeds into wheat.



This is a word of *caution* to over-zealous believers who want to yank out the weeds all around them with words of bitterness, condemnation, and disgust. We must not use the enemy's weapons.

Let both grow together until the harvest. (Mat 13:30a)

We live in a twisted world swirled with sin. It hasn't "gone to the devil" it's at God's command! We must stand tall as wheat, and share the One we bow to, and confront

and deal with the enemy's tactics, but always with an attitude of compassion and a motivation for salvation. Our God wants to redeem those weeds before it's too late.

“The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels”

This is when Jesus comes again.

At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned ... (Mat 13:30b)

“As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil”

This statement makes me a little nervous. I can't judge what's in the heart of another, but I sure know my own. And truth is: *I'm* a mixture of wheat and weeds!

“They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”

This signifies both emotional as well as physical anguish for those who reflect the character of the evil one. I sure wish my garden only grew the fruit of God's spirit; but several sections are untamed, undisciplined, and shameful. Some weeds were planted while I was sleeping. Some were planted by an enemy I allowed to get in. And some I have willfully planted all by myself!



But here's the thing: I am ashamed. I'm a beggar at the foot of the cross; I am helpless to save myself; and my only righteousness comes from Christ. And *that* makes me a son of the kingdom! I'm a true believer, not a make-believer. And the farmer is my Father!

Then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn. (Mat 13:30c)

I can't wait for the day when my life and this world are part of a weed-free kingdom!

“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father”

If you reflect His character here, you'll radiate it there!

Let's see how well you've been listening; answer *true* or *false* when I ask the questions. In this passage, we've learned that:

1. Bad things happen because God is punishing sinners.
2. If it looks like wheat, it could be a weed.
3. If it looks like a weed, it could be wheat.
4. The devil's out to rob God's purpose and your glory.