

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, July 23, 2023. The parable of the wheat and the weeds from Matthew 13:24-43.

How are you feeling today? A bit Wheatie or Weedy?

Deep down, we know we are combination of wheat and weeds. Saints and sinners as Luther put it.

Debi Thomas in the blog Journey with Jesus says that We are, like the field in the parable, both mixed and messy.

One way to look at a parable is to look at the characters. We have a patient landowner, slaves, and an enemy who sewed bad seed. The Bible was written in a time when slavery was accepted, but we know it is wrong now. But when it's your job to tend the landowner's field, and you know you planted good seed, and you notice weeds growing in the field, what is your first instinct? To go and pull the weeds right? Can you relate to their zealotry of the servants? They want to yank those weeds out of there so they can please their owner. But when they asked the landowner what to do, the landowner surprised them with great wisdom, "Let both grow together until the harvest".

I find much grace in this parable for today from Matthew's Gospel about wheat and weeds... not so much about gardening, but about God's patience with God's children and those who don't claim belief in God. All we can do is keep witnessing to the love of Jesus and pray for the Holy Spirit to work faith through hearing the Good news of Jesus.

We could call this the parable of the "patient farmer". One commentator pointed out, "Perhaps Jesus used this parable to point out that human beings are not competent to make the kind of judgements implied in separating wheat from weeds; in plucking out what they think are weeds, they may very well be pulling up wheat. Only God can make such judgements, and in due course, this will be done."

The problem is that evil is real. It comes in the form of temptation, disease, and hate to name a few. Jesus states without flinching that evil is real, insidious, intentional, and dangerous. And that an enemy sowed the weeds among the wheat without warning.

This just wasn't any weed, it was apparently darnel, false wheat that resembles wheat as it grows up. The seeds of Darnel can be poisonous if eaten in large quantities. But if the servants pulled the weeds once they were recognizable, they could uproot the good plants and trample the grain.

If you haven't noticed, this is also a parable of judgement, but with a twist. We are not the ones to be the judge. Jesus is basically telling his disciples and the crowds, that evil exists in the world, but that in the meantime, we will have to live together until all the causes of sin and evil will be wiped out at the end times.

This is a parable of grace in that it's not our job to cast people aside or weed them out too soon. And in the process of being patient, what looks like weeds could even turn out to be beautiful wheat. People can change. As Christians, we are always in process of being pruned by God's Word.

This parable has great implications for the church and how we treat one another. How many find yourself casting someone aside who doesn't think like you or act the way you want them to? What do you watch or listen to that perpetuates constant judgement of others? You see it everywhere online. How can God's word and community of faith counter those negative voices?

Throughout history Christians (and others) have taken judgement into their own hands. Who wants to be a part of a group of people who declare themselves better than others? Jesus always welcomed public sinners and did invite them to change and follow him.

The fact is, we are all in the same boat. Judging is above our pay grade according to Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:1 "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged". Romans 3:23 says "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God we are now justified by grace." I certainly don't consider myself wheat and others weeds. However, I am a child of God and named and claimed by Jesus in my baptism. God's grace is sufficient for me and you.

But one argument I would have against this parable is that sometimes, some evil needs to be stamped out for justice reasons. Slavery was a

weed that needed to be pulled. Cancer needs to be battled. Dictators like Hitler needed to be taken out in order to preserve precious lives.

So how are we called to live out our faith in these in-between times in a world where evil exists? We are not called to separate from the world. Jesus himself was a real person who came into a real world. Jesus so loved the world and you and me as is. He calls us to be in the world but not of the world.

And finally, the Kingdom of Heaven will break in small ways and we can be a part of that reality on the ground. God's love can change people and seek justice. And when Jesus finally returns, all will be sorted out and evil will be defeated once and for all. Amen