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# The Wheat and the Weeds

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 19 July 2026

Romans 8:12-25 • Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

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May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

The disciples once asked Jesus why he speaks to them in parables.

He answered, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. ... The reason I speak to them in parables is that “seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.”’ (Matthew 13:11-13)

The disciples who follow Jesus are given to know the secrets. They are a privileged group and Jesus wants them to understand, although at the same time he doesn’t always make it easy. Jesus is very clear about who will know the secrets of the kingdom and who will not, but it is largely up to the individual. Jesus laments the fact that so many of his people have grown spiritually cold and have turned away from God. Their hearts are hardened and they can no longer respond to the love and the truth which Jesus offers them. His disciples are not like this: they have shown it by answering his call to them, when he first gathered them around him. They will be challenged by Jesus to think and

to internalise what he teaches them; but they are not like so many in the crowds who, because of their coldness of heart, cannot even begin to understand.

And the situation today is no different. Why do some people seek God and others do not? Why do some respond to the teachings of the Bible and others completely ignore them? I spoke last week about “people of peace,” those who responded to the disciples’ greeting when they were out among the towns and villages. Such people are specially chosen by God to be receptive to such as us, who are called to spread the Gospel. What of the others? Are we to assume that God does not want them in the kingdom of heaven? But God’s desire is that all his people come to him. So if some people’s hearts are hardened, and they do not respond to Jesus, it must be because they choose not to respond. God hardens the hearts of those who do not seek to know him.

Even to the disciples, Jesus does not always explain the meaning of his parables. But in today’s parable about the weeds, Jesus makes sure to explain its meaning very clearly. From this we see how important a lesson it is. When the disciples ask for the explanation, Jesus tells them: “The one who sows the seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world; the seed are the children of the kingdom, etc.”. He names every item and character and tells them exactly what each one represents. This story is a direct analogy, and Jesus considers this a very important teaching.

What do we learn from this parable? Let’s list a few points:

- There are good plants and there are evil weeds — according to Jesus, these are the children of the kingdom and the children of the devil, respectfully.
- The good and the bad will grow together, but they can’t be told apart until they have grown to maturity.
- At the end of time, the good children will “shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father”; the children of the devil will be thrown in the furnace.

This is serious stuff. From this we may make a few other observations:

- Since the good and the evil grow together, the good children can’t always tell who are the bad ones. Good children will know that *they* are good, because God puts his law into our hearts; but bad children may deceive the good.
- The evil children will not forever harm the good, for although the good may not identify the evil, God’s angels can, and will sort them out.

And of course, the biggest observation: you don’t want to be one of the bad weeds — it will not end well for you. This is the closest I get to a fire and brimstone sermon! You’re all good people, I’m sure, but any of us may fall by the wayside. If we fail to keep God first in our lives, if we fail to serve God and

our fellow humans, we may find ourselves on the wrong side of the harvest at the end of time. This is the clear message of the parable — God’s word to us.

What then saves us? The answer is Jesus Christ. His sacrifice saved us all from being among the weeds, by taking away our sins. The evil children lived according to the flesh, as Paul says, seeking the pleasures of this world only, and not seeking and serving God. This phrase, “living according to the flesh,” may be misleading to some. You don’t have to be a criminal, hanging out with prostitutes and abusing women and children to be living according to the flesh. The critical factor, the difference between living by the flesh and living by the Spirit, is contained in the two most important commandments: love God, and love your neighbour as yourself. If you follow these two commandments, you are living in the Spirit. You have accepted the gift Jesus gave us on the cross. You have accepted the Holy Spirit. That is living in the Spirit, not the flesh.

Good and evil will always live and grow together. We cannot help that; it is in God’s control. But we can choose the good. We can choose to follow Christ.

If we do follow Christ, the end of time, when the harvest is gathered in, should hold no fear for us. Death is not the end, ever since Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again. We live in hope, the hope of resurrection that Jesus promises us. We are waiting for Christ to come again, bringing the freedom of the glory of God, whom we shall meet, face to face. We cannot see that glory now, but we have the promise, and the promise is sure, if we continue to live in the Spirit which has been given us. We are the children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ and in Christ, and so we cry alleluia! Amen.