

Wheat, Weeds And Weeders

Today's parable of the wheat and weeds is told by Jesus immediately after giving the disciples His explanation of the 'Parable of the Sower' which we heard last week. Most times, these two parables are treated separately, as two distinct parables, giving the hearer a different perspective about the Kingdom of God. However, I don't think that it would be too much reading into the parables to think of these parables as being connected. We could almost consider that this parable could be an answer to the unasked question of why there are different yields for the good soil in the last parable. To give a short recap of the 'Parable of the Sower,' Jesus showed us how indiscriminately God sows His Word, grace and other blessings. God recklessly spreads these seeds everywhere. We also saw that our life's journey goes over the different kinds of soil mentioned in the parable at different times in our lives and that the good soil are the times when things were going well and God's blessings are multiplied. We could almost call this parable of the wheat and weeds as the "rest of the story."

In today's parable, Jesus warns us that when our lives are on good soil, it doesn't mean that we're "home free," that there will be no more worries. There will be forces that are going to try to choke out the wheat, trying to take our focus off of God's blessings. While this warning can be understood in a rather straight forward manner, the rest of the parable is quite perplexing. Why does God leave the weeds to grow among the wheat? We should note here that the weeds referred to in this parable resemble the wheat plant until the seed head grows and is even considered a degenerate form of wheat. Any farmer worth their salt knows that you have to eradicate the weeds early in the growing season if you want to maximize your harvest. Today, farmers use Roundup or some other

herbicide that kills the weeds yet leaves the crop unharmed, as long as the seed is resistant to that herbicide. Cultivation upsets the root system of the weeds while leaving the plants' roots intact. So why doesn't God do any of these things? Why would God wait until the harvest, the judgment day? There has to be some reason why God would wait.

Maybe the answer lies with the duality of human nature, the duality of being both good and bad; or as Martin Luther put it - saint and sinner at the same time. Perhaps it has something to do with our having a choice of doing good or doing bad. This duality of human nature, of being good and bad, can be observed in many ways. Just sit and watch children play at a playground and you'll see how some children can display both behaviors. Watch adults and see how they treat one group of people one way and another group of people another way despite being instructed by Jesus and God to treat everyone the way we want to be treated. This duality of good and bad is explored in movies as well. The noir genre of movies shows us that the good guy may not really be all good, that there may be a dark side to this hero in the white hat; and maybe the bad guy isn't all bad either, that maybe the bad guy, the antagonist has some redeeming qualities that the hero does not have. An example of this type of movie is the Batman movie "The Dark Knight." Even the title hints at this duality with the combination of the notion of the knight in shining armor and the darkness that hides things.

You listen to the news and hear of all the crimes that are committed and wonder about the criminals. Didn't their parents think they were a cute baby and have dreams for them; or did their parents know that they were going to be bad and commit terrible crimes? Can we tell which kids are going to grow up being a contributor to society and which ones will lead a life of crime? When seeds first

push through the ground, do we know which will be weeds and which will be wheat if we didn't do the planting?

Consider this: the pastor tells you ahead of time that there will be two visitors at church on Sunday, one who caused trouble in other congregations and was caught stealing and one who was an excellent Sunday School teacher and served on her previous church's council. That Sunday, the only visitors were two women. One wore a business suit and was neat in appearance, her hair styled nicely and she wore just enough makeup to highlight her features. The other woman wore a miniskirt, platform shoes, had tattoos everywhere you could see to go along with body piercings. Her hair was dyed an unnatural black and looked as if she combed it with her fingers. You could see the wad of gum that she was chewing and her makeup looked as if she just found a sale at a dollar store and had to use it before it expired. Who would you think was the Sunday School teacher and who would be the troublemaker? The thing is even though we can make an 'educated guess' on who is who, we really can't tell. We have to wait and find out. Sometimes, when we rush to conclusions and act on them, we wind up doing the wrong thing.

Jesus' warning to us that the devil will continue to tempt us even though we are in "fertile soil" and our faith grows is captured in C.S. Lewis' book "The Screwtape Letters." In this book, Lewis writes from the perspective of an official in Satan's bureaucracy to a nephew who had been assigned to keep a person from turning to God. As the person discovers faith and it begins to grow, the nephew is encouraged to increase his efforts at temptation. In the end, even though the nephew was unsuccessful, the official felt that they could stop people from turning to God, that it was never too late to make a person stop believing and trusting in God and Jesus. This shows that Satan tries harder to turn the

faithful against God than those who have little or no faith, in other words, secretly sowing weeds among the wheat.

When we consider this parable of the 'Weeds among the Wheat' as a continuation of the Parable of the Sower, we get a little different perspective of it. We see a glimpse of a God who not only sows His seeds of blessing everywhere but allows the evil one to sow their seeds as well. We also see that those who sow the good seeds are not responsible for weeding the fields nor for the harvest. We are given the assurance that at the right time, God will judge and have all causes of sin and evil permanently separated from the good. Until that time, we are called to do the job which God wants us to do at that time and not to worry about the rest of it. This parable assures us, that despite how things may look, God knows what is going on in God's creation and is in control of the whole situation and will deal with it on God's time, the proper time. May we be willing to let God be the good judge of God's creation.

YouTube links:

Gospel and Sermon: <https://youtu.be/tGct2nsixBq>

Service: <https://youtu.be/kv9ak3K-4-0>