

PARABLES | The Wheat and the Weeds

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Introduction

Hairy bitter grass, green fox tail, sticky bobs, sneezeworts, goose tongue, shaggy soldiers, lamb's quarters, horse-tails, butcher's broom, and that bothersome little creeping Charlie — are all different types of what?

Weeds

Personal: Soon after I turned 18, I lived on an apple orchard in Northeast Washington State in a little town called Northport, that had a booming population of 90 people. The orchard overlooked the Columbia River, with beautiful mountains in view. Often early in the morning, you could look off of the edge of the property and see the clouds below the orchard hovering over the Columbia as the sun was rising — it was a breathtakingly beautiful place.

On the orchard we grew all kinds of fruit and vegetables — strawberries, zucchini, cucumbers, squash, potatoes, snow peas, sugar plums, tomatoes, a dozen varieties of apples. But working on this orchard was no joke. Because *we were always at war with weeds*.

And no matter what we used — weed rippers, weed pullers, weed rakes, weed choppers, every type of weed killer — and no matter how much we fought — no matter how diligent we were — no matter how many hours we spent — the weeds just kept creeping back up.

Jesus has something to say about weeds in Matthew 13 — recognizing their problem in our world and He addresses it.

And just as the parable of the two foundations isn't about construction, the parable of the wheat and the weeds, which we're looking at **today**, isn't about agriculture or farming. As always, contained within this parable is maybe one of the, if not THE most sobering, and clarifying Kingdom realities we've look at yet.

The wheat and the weeds

Matthew 13:24-30

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷ And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ ²⁸ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ”

What you have in this parable is a farmer and his servants and the good seed that is being sown. There is an enemy of the farmer who is on a mission to sabotage and ruin the farmer's crops with bad seed; and there is a season of *sowing*, a season of *waiting*, and a season of *reaping*.

Then Jesus talks about the mustard seed, about leaven and flour... parable after parable. In fact, Matthew tells us (verses 34-35) that Jesus didn't teach the crowds anything without using a parable, and in so doing, fulfilled prophecy written by Asaph in Psalm 78.

Matthew 13:36

Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field."

Jesus explains the parable

Jesus doesn't berate them, He doesn't get fed up with them, He doesn't lose his patience with them — He answers them. He explains the parable.

SIDENOTE: Here at Grace Chapel, if you have questions about something that isn't clear or doesn't make sense to you — if you're just wondering about something — on our staff we have what we call our "**Rules of Engagement.**" I want you to see them, because this is how our staff functions with one another, and this is an invitation we want to extend to you as well.

- We're going to **assume the best** about one another.
- There's freedom to **ask anything**, any question without fear of retribution.
- We're going to **listen well** to one another, really well, because we want to understand one another and learn from each other.
- There is freedom to **disagree freely** with one another, and that doesn't mean we're mortal enemies — which is the antithesis of what the world propagates.
- At the end of the day, we're going to **love regardless**, we're going to love one another as Jesus has commanded.

*Maybe you've been wondering about something, and you've been hesitant to ask... please ask!
That's an open door.*

The disciples knew they could bring their questions to Jesus, and they did.

Matthew 13:36-43

36 ...His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." **37** He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. **38** The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, **39** and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. **40** Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. **41** The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, **42** and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **43** Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Is Jesus talking about hell?

Rob, is Jesus talking about hell? Absolutely.
Rob, do you believe in a literal hell? Absolutely.
Well, how could a good God send people to hell?

God isn't sending anyone to hell, we are all on our way there because of our own sin and rebellion against God. That good God we just referenced provided all of humanity, not one person excluded, with the way of escape through His Son Jesus Christ.

We're going to talk in much more detail about the topic of hell in the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in a few weeks.

- What you have in this parable is the Farmer, who is the Son of Man – Jesus.
- The field is the world. The cosmos – the universe – God's good creation.
- The Good Seed – people of the Kingdom. Those that belong to Jesus. The good grain is to grow, and multiply. But there's a problem...
- The weeds – are the those who belong to the evil one, anything or anyone that opposes, or is actively working against the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God being the values, the will, the ways of the King....
- The enemy – the devil, who is sabotaging, undermining, fighting against the good seed – the people of the Kingdom of God and the King Himself.

Some of us need to be reminded that you have an enemy that desperately desires to sabotage the work of King Jesus in the world, and the work of Jesus in your life.

- He doesn't want you sanctified. He doesn't want you holy.
- He doesn't want you to Follow Jesus, be changed by Him, or live on mission with Him.
- He doesn't want you to implement the spiritual practices.
- He will do anything He can to keep you from coming to Jesus or growing in intimacy with Jesus.
- He will stop at nothing to rob you of the goodness and glory that God wants to build in you and through you.
- That enemy is waging war against God, and if you belong to Jesus, the devil is at war with you and everything you, as a follower of Jesus, represent. He will use any means necessary.

A poisonous weed

INTERESTING: The weed that Jesus references in this parable is a very specific type of weed. Your translation might say tares instead of weeds, but a tare very specific type of weed. It's a poisonous weed called "Zizania."

And *tares* look exactly like *wheat*. They are identical. You cannot tell them apart as they are growing. For months they look identical. UNTIL, they are fully mature. Until they ripen.

*When a Zizania ripens, the head of the plant, the actual grain, instead of the golden **wheat** color, it turns death **black**.*

- The good seed, and bad seed look very similar... until they both fully ripen and mature. Only then can you tell the difference.
- The ones Jesus spent the most time rebuking during his earthly ministry were not the lost, the outcasts, the broken, the discouraged – but the self-righteous religious people that everyone else thought were so holy.

Rob, are you saying that some religious people are weeds?

- That's exactly what I'm saying. There's a reason why people will come to him and say, "Lord, Lord, did we not work miracles and wonders in your name?" He'll say, "Depart from me, I never knew you. You don't belong to me."
- **How can you tell?** What is the basis by which self-righteous religious people think they are saved? Their own righteousness. But by what basis are you actually saved? Not our righteousness, but Christ's. And that's the difference.

Good and evil are in the world together

The other thing this passage tells us is that good and evil in the world are growing together. These kingdoms are increasing together. You don't have to look very far to see it.

Two weeks ago, an artist performing at the Grammy's, dressed up as the devil and was worshiped by dancers dressed as demons surrounding him. Before he went on stage, CBS... the news station tweeted, "We're ready to worship."

And yet there is spiritual awakening going on all around us.

What Satan is sowing

Satan loves to sow DIVISION among God's people. He LOVES it.

- If he can get us distracted and caught up in assuming the worst about one another and petty infighting... He wins.
- Just to be clear... there are some things that are worth fighting for:
 - The infallibility and authority of word of God for human life.
 - The deity of Jesus – fully God, fully man.
 - The unity of His Church – not my church, not man's church, God's church. There is only one HEAD of the Church, and His name is **Jesus**.
 - The redemptive, transformative work of the gospel in the human heart.
 - The filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit for the life and calling of every single believer.
 - Obedience to the Greatest Commandment
 - The fulfilment of the Great Commission

Every single one of these issues is an issue worth fighting for *and dying for if necessary*.

This family, this church, this house stands with Jesus, for Jesus, submitted to Jesus, doing everything in our power to bring glory and honor to the name of Jesus.

Satan loves to sow DISCOURAGEMENT

Jesus said, in John 16:33, *In this world you will have what? TROUBLE!*

Some of us are discouraged right now because we're believing lies that the devil is feeding us.

Some of us are discouraged because someone else is believing lies about us. Others of us are discouraged because we expected life to be smooth sailing and we've completely forgotten that we signed up to follow Jesus and signed up for WAR! We are in a battle. Which is why we need one another — when you are discouraged, one of the most powerful things you can do is surround yourself with friends, real friends that will tell you the truth. That will remind you of who you are and whose you are. That will help you set your sights on the prize, and continue to run the race with perseverance, even when everything in you wants to call it quits.

Satan loves to sow DUPLICITY

Titus 1:16

They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works.

There are those who claim to follow God... but when you evaluate the fruit of their life... are they a genuinely loving person, are they Joyful? Peaceful? Patient? Kind? Is Goodness flowing out of their life? Are they gentle? Are they faithful? Are they self-controlled?

That's what the Spirit of God grows in those that belong to Him.

Look what Paul says, about it...

Titus 1:16

They profess to know God, but they deny Him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

The solution to Duplicity is Integrity. To be integrated. Meaning that you are the same person in public that you are in private. You don't present yourself one way to one group, and a different way to a different group. You are the same person.

- And an integrated person can admit and own mistakes.
- An integrated person can handle someone giving them hard truths about themselves.
- An integrated person is honest with themselves, with God, with others.
- An integrated person doesn't retaliate or run when things don't go the way they want them to.
- They don't isolate and hide from others.
- They move toward people in honesty, transparency, and vulnerability... a duplicitous person can't do this. They are incapable.

Satan loves to sow DISTRACTION

Do you realize what the farmer doesn't do?

The farmer does not tell the wheat to hunt down and find wherever tares are growing up and yell at them. Or rail on them. Or live in fear that they exist in the same field that they do.

Some of us are so fearful and so worried about the tares in the world. We're so consumed with tares, or so angry about the fact that evil exists, and that there actually is an anti-Jesus agenda in the world and in the church. (*Jesus gave us all a heads up 2,000 years ago, while are we surprised?*) The tares existence has

consumed nearly all of our time, energy, and attention — and we've made ourselves utterly useless to the Farmer!

What is the job of the wheat!? **GROWING UP!** Quit throwing temper tantrums about the tares, “*Look what the tares are doing, the tares are taking over.*”

The fact that a bunch of Christians are shocked and outraged and worked up about this garbage — is the very thing they were trying to accomplish. And the devil is winning because He's got our eyes off the ball.

- The job of the WHEAT is not to freak out about the tares.
- **The job of the wheat is to — MATURE & MULTIPLY!**
- To grow up and make disciples.

There is a reason why the farmer doesn't tell the wheat to go pull the weeds.

Maybe Jesus knew what He was doing when He started with a few, and then 12, and then sent out the 72 — slow and steady with a small number over a long period of time — and it changed the world...

There is a reason why the great commission is to go and do what? Make disciples. This parable is telling us, not just go — but grow, and make disciples.

What if, instead of spending so much energy trying to stamp out the evil in the world, what if we took that time, energy, attention and laser focused it on maturing in our faith and multiplying that faith in others.

Matthew 13:40-43

Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴²and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Don't live in fear over the weeds

Here's what this means. Don't live in fear over the weeds, because — in the end, the Farmer is going to sort it all out. The weeds will be exposed and dealt with — and the wheat will be brought into the Farmers barn.

One day the farmer is going to take care of the tares. We don't have to be consumed with the evil in the world, and we shouldn't be surprised by it either — Jesus told us to expect it!

What is our job as the good seed?

To Mature and Multiply... and to trust the farmer knows what He's doing.

It's easy to be consumed by the weeds... there are a lot of weeds out there.

What if we actually trusted that the Farmer knows what He's doing and He's going to sort it all out in the end?

What do you think would change in your soul?

What might change if you became far less concerned about the tares, and far more consumed with growing to maturity and multiplying your faith in others?

What if you trusted the Farmer to take care of the weeds — ***and we just scattered seeds?***

Jesus tells us, *“Yes friends, there are weeds in the world... but I have a solution. There are people of my kingdom, that are wholly surrendered to me, and I’ve scattered them all across the globe, and they understand that they are a kernel of wheat, and as they fall into the ground and die to themselves, over time, they mature and multiply and more good seed is scattered. And in time, there will be a harvest, and don’t worry — because I’ll sort it all out in the end. You can trust Me.”*

Church, we have a mission to fill that world out there, with as much good seed of the Kingdom of God as we can, with the little time that we’ve been given.

Let’s not waste it worrying about what Jesus promised us — He would sort out in the end.

Discussion Questions

1. Summarize what Jesus is teaching in the parable of the wheat and the tares.
2. What is Jesus saying about what will happen to the tares — is He talking about a literal hell?
3. In what way(s) is the devil sowing tares into your life?
4. How do you **not** live in fear about the tares in the world?
5. What is the job of the wheat? Are you fulfilling your job as a wheat?

NOTES