

**Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43**  
**Pentecost 9; August 6 & 7, 2017**

Have you ever gone through a time when it seems like that the bad guys are winning, or the jerks of the world are getting all the breaks? How do you deal with that? Have you ever found yourself asking the question: *How come some of the most evil people in the world, can have so much success?* It doesn't seem fair sometimes, doesn't it? Now we know that we as Christians will not always succeed. We know that we will have failures in life. We understand that. But have you ever been pushed to the brink where you ask God: *I do not understand why you are letting these things happen in my life?* We can understand the thinking – that if God is in control of everything in the universe and God loves me, then why don't you stop letting these things happen in my life? After all, we are better than the evil people around us, right?

But how does it feel when you can't seem to get ahead? How does it feel when you see a person in your office advance further and faster and you know that they are a real jerk, but they have succeeded in keeping that part of their life hidden? As a student, how did it feel when you had to study as hard as you could for hours and hours for that exam? Then there was that student who never had to study because learning came so easy to them. How did that make you feel? How do you feel when the sinful world comes crashing into our world, and we can't seem to stop it? How do you feel when you get that email, that message or hear that rumor that just makes you so mad, that you wish you could really tell them what you think, but then you don't because you know it would serve no good purpose. Have you ever had those feelings: *aren't we supposed to be on the winning side?*

If we have ever had those feelings, then maybe we have experienced what it feels like to have the weeds living around the wheat. We probably have all felt like the servants who came to the farmer and said: **'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'** But the farmer says: **"No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.'** Perhaps, it wasn't the answer that the servants were looking for. But is the answer that Jesus gives when he says to us: **"Whoever has ears, let them hear."**

Weeds – I hate weeds. It probably is the number one reason that I don't do much gardening. I don't like having to pull the weeds. It isn't just the weed pulling that sometimes is difficult. Sometimes, it is hard to be able to determine if a green plant is a weed or not. Then you have to decide – is it better to pull the weed out or not? Will pulling the weed cause more damage than good? Usually, by this time of the year, it is much easier to see the weeds in our lawns. The weeds are green and the grass is brown. But it is much more difficult to see the weeds when the grass is green and the weeds are green.

That is Jesus' point in the parable. The name of the weed that Jesus is speaking about is called a *"darnel weed."* This weed is so close to wheat it is even called *"false wheat."* It isn't until the plant gets fully grown that you can easily tell the difference. At harvest time you can. The wheat will appear brown when ripe, whereas the darnel is black. It is only at harvest that you can separate the two plants safely without damaging the wheat. Then they can be pulled out and separated safely. The wheat to be used for grain, the darnel is gathered and burned.

The servants cared about the wheat. They cared about the farmer. They knew that an enemy had come to hurt the farmer by sowing the bad seed on the field that the farmer had placed his good seed. Yet, the farmer needed to remind his servants that he had a much bigger plan. You see – Jesus didn't come just to make my one life better than your life. He had come to undo it all. He came to fix the *weed* problem once and for all.

You see the enemy who had sown the bad seed is the devil. The devil is good at what he does. He's had thousands of years of practice. He doesn't come along and say to us: *Come follow me to hell.* He goes out and does his dirty work undercover. He puts temptations before our eyes that really look pretty good. Some of those unbelievers don't look all that bad. In fact, it might be impossible for us to tell the difference. We live in a world where this battle between the farmer and the enemy will go on every day.

What makes Satan's tactics so tricky is that there are times you can tell when he is working on other people, but it seems there's not much you can do about it. That's frustrating. So, how do we fix the *weed* problem of this world? The simple answer is: *we can't.* But we know someone who can and will fix it. Sin was not part of his original plan for this world. He

didn't create the problem. But he promised that he would fix it. While we wait for Jesus to fix this *weed problem*, it is hard to be patient. Why are we not winning?

That's why these words of Jesus are such a comfort to us. We don't have to figure out who are the wheat and the weeds. Jesus says that he will take care of that. **"The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. "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. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."** He will solve the weed problem. It isn't our job to decide who is the good seed or the bad seed. That's Jesus' job. Our job is to keep planting the good seed as best as we can. God just wants us to keep living as wheat.

When we look at this parable, it is easy for us to focus on the weeds. The reality is this parable is more about the good seed that was sown than the seed planted by the enemy. Jesus planted good seed in you. This farmer didn't give up on his field. Jesus will not give up on you. He took care of that field. He shed his blood for that field. He has rescued that field. That is what Jesus has done for you. He has changed your heart. He has brought you to trust in him. He has washed you clean through the waters of baptism. He wants his kingdom to be great again. (That's not just a catching phrase.) He once again wants his kingdom to be rid of the sin that has contaminated it. He has planted good seed. Someday, he will harvest a great harvest from good seed.

The point of Jesus' parable is simple. Yes, there may seem times that the bad guys are winning and that all the jerks of the world are getting the breaks. Take heart. God is still in charge. He will not let Satan rob you of eternal joy. Take comfort in the words of Jesus: **"Whoever has ears, let them hear."** Amen.