

Weeds 12-26-04

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 (NIV)

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' ²⁸ "An enemy did this," he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' ²⁹ "No," he answered, "because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." ³⁷ He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰ "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ 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. ⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where 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.

The church, the bride of Christ, seems like it has always been plagued with excesses and extremes. From power hungry popes, to violent reformers, to present day abuse of power, there has always been trouble in the church. I use the term "church" loosely. The church in God's eyes is all who are called out of the world and the world's ways. (2 Corinthians 6:17-18) The church as an organization, the visible meeting of people is where we see all the problems in history and in the local church as well. Christians moving from church to church so easily find something wrong with each one. Where is the perfect church? (Hebrews 11:9-10) Why can't we find it? Can this church become perfect? In this parable of the weeds, Jesus explains what part of the problem is. I say "part" because there are other factors described in the letters to the churches in Revelation. (see Revelation 2-3) However, in the parable for today, we are taught a reality about the present day kingdom of heaven that should temper our expectations and challenge our hearts to endure. Let us let Jesus teach us from His word this morning.

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.

We are fortunate to have the explanation of the parable by Jesus, Himself, as we did with the parable of the farmer.

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Commented [notes1]: ¹⁷ "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." ¹⁸ "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."
2 Corinthians 6:17-18 (NIV)

Commented [notes2]: ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
Hebrews 11:9-10 (NIV)

sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ^{38a} The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom.

The Kingdom of heaven consists of the subjects of the King. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness there of. (Psalm 24:1) Everything belongs to the Lord because He is the Maker. But those who submit to the King make up the Kingdom. (Matthew 12:49-50) In the last parable, the seed was the Word. In this parable, Jesus tells us the seeds are sons of the kingdom and that the field is the world.

From Jesus' explanation we can learn several things. God has put His children in the world for a time. (Hebrews 9:27) We will leave predestination and choice for another message, but suffice it to say that we are not here by accident. There is a purpose for us being in the field. Why does any farmer sow seed? It is to produce fruit. (John 15:8) God is looking for fruit from our lives.

²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

Again, Jesus explains,

^{38b} The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil.

Here is where we can get carried away with the details of the parable and come to some false theology. We know from other Biblical passages that Jesus is not saying that the Devil created evil people. All life is from God, and all people are born evil because of the nature they inherited from Adam. (Psalm 51:5) Jesus' last parable explained the problem, hearts that refuse to receive and eyes that are intentionally closed. (Matthew 13:15) Those that choose to be this way are like weeds sown in a field.

The people of Jesus' day readily understood the picture presented. They were familiar with a weed called bearded darnel (*Lolium Temulentum*) otherwise known as bastard wheat. This is a very real scenario. Even today in India one of the greatest threats a man can make to his enemy is to sow weeds in his field. Roman law prohibited it, and a specified punishment was given. The reason for this is that the darnel looks just like the wheat as it is maturing. It is only when the grain forms that you can see the difference. Jesus has already told us that we can tell the nature of a person by their fruit. (Matthew 7:20) What does their life produce? You will not get good wheat from darnel. Remember, this is the reason for which we are here, to produce fruit unto God.

²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' ²⁸ "An enemy did this," he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' ²⁹ "No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them.

Didn't God create man to be in His image? (Genesis 1:26-27) Then what happened to mankind? ^{28a} "An enemy did this..." Rebellion in the world today, in the hearts of mankind is the work of the enemy of God with man's cooperation. The history of the church and of the world is filled with ugliness because of man's rebellion against God at Satan's instigation.

Commented [notes3]: ¹ The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; Psalms 24:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: ⁴⁹ Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. ⁵⁰ For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." Matthew 12:49-50 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: ²⁷ Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, Hebrews 9:27 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes7]: ⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Psalms 51:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: ¹⁵ For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.' Matthew 13:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Mathew 7:20 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)

There is an insidious attempt today in much of our educational systems to teach that man is good. Contrary to what is often implied, the evil in the world is not a result of Christianity, for true Christianity only has good fruit. However, the use of religion resulting in evil fruit and deception and lies in the name of religion are one in the same with the evil that permeates the world system. (James 4:4) You will never find a perfect nation, a perfect organization, or a perfect church because of this condition in the world that Jesus is teaching us about. While we are in the world, that is the field of God, we have a blend of wheat and darnel. Every church has darnel.

The bearded darnel is slightly poisonous. In addition to its bitter taste, its narcotic effect makes one dizzy and sick. The weeds may appear quite righteous, in fact Jeremiah said, "You (God) are always on their lips but far from their hearts." Jeremiah 12:2b (NIV) The fact is that evil in the heart of man is the poison that permeates the whole planet. (Jeremiah 17:9) Every government and institution of man is the same. The best ones are best because they recognize this fact and put in checks and safeguards against the evil within man's heart. That is why communism was bound to fail. Its basic premise is that man is good. It ignored the fact that there is darnel in the field. Democracy is successful because of its many checks and balances against the inevitable corruption of the evil seed.

There is darnel in our church. (Galatians 2:4) I do not say that because I have identified it, I say that because Jesus said it. Unless we have the Bible's instruction as to what to do about the darnel, we could make some very damaging mistakes. In the 7th chapter of this book Jesus told us we are not to judge. (Matthew 7:1) Even though He told us how to discern (by the fruit), man has a very difficult time discerning between darnel and wheat. A stumble in the growth of a genuine Christian can be perceived as bad fruit. Besides that, our roots are intertwined. How many churches have experienced irreparable damage because they ignored the rules of church discipline and forced someone from fellowship? Then those who were close to them were rooted up as well, just as Jesus predicted. As a church, we have never and will never ask anyone to leave other than for the serious reasons outlined by the Apostle Paul. (1 Corinthians 5:3-7) We will confront discord, (Romans 16:17) murmuring and factions with a desire for resolution and mutual growth, but never to cause one to leave. (Romans 14:19)

It is so important for us to recognize that having darnel among us is normal and yet that we are not to try to determine who it is. I can think of a number of people, without giving it much thought, that have left this fellowship to not attend anywhere, because they were offended by something someone did or said. They were looking for a perfect church, and at first, they thought we were it, until... The scenario does not matter. Jesus told us that it is impossible to avoid being offended. (Matthew 18:7) You will be offended. It will be by an immature Christian, your own immaturity, (Hebrews 12:15) or by darnel. You can use it as an excuse to be a sheep without a flock, a body part without a body, a block without a building, or you can grow in Christ and increase in grace.

Never forget that all things work together for good to those who love God. (Romans 8:28) Offenses from the seed of the enemy give you a chance to increase in patience, grace, and mercy. (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15) It can reveal how gracious God has been to you. Moreover, because it is a choice to be darnel or wheat as we saw in the last parable, you

Commented [notes11]: ⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. James 4:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: ⁹The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: ⁴ [This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. Galatians 2:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes14]: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. Matthew 7:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: ³ Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present: ⁵ hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. ⁶ Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? ⁷ Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 1 Corinthians 5:3-7 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: ¹⁷ I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. Romans 16:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: ¹⁹ Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Romans 14:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: ⁷ "Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! Matthew 18:7 (NKJV)

Commented [notes19]: ¹⁵ See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: ²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28 (NKJV)

Commented [notes21]: ¹⁴ And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. ¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15 (NIV)

never know when your love and patience may result in that darnel becoming wheat. In the plant world that never happens, but it happens in the Kingdom of God. It is the miracle of re-birth, when a person becomes a new creation in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17) It is submitting your life to the King of the kingdom of heaven.

³⁰ *Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."*

Jesus explained,

^{30b} *The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.* ⁴⁰ *"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.* ⁴¹ *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.* ⁴² *They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Do you get the idea that Jesus believes in a Judgment Day? Not too popular in today's pulpits, but Jesus did not flinch from speaking the truth. Yes, it is the goodness of God that leads sinners to repentance (Romans 2:4) but that does not change the fact that judgment is a future reality. There will come a day when there will be a separation. (Matthew 25:32) In other passages it is described as a separation of sheep from goats, of edible and non-edible fish in this same chapter, and of the righteous and sinners. (Psalm 1:5) It runs throughout Scripture. It fills the final book of the Bible, Revelation. Jesus speaks of it as separation and torment. Judgment is coming because God is just. The darnel will be bound and thrown into the fire. It is the justice of God upon those who, after a life hardening their heart toward the love and grace of God, want nothing to do with submission to Him and His goodness. (Romans 1:28)

In these verses we see that it is only the angels that can do the separating. It is not up to man. In Palestine, there are women who are trained in the art of separating the darnel from the wheat. After it is threshed they can spot the coloration of the darnel seed. Because even a small amount can leave a bitter unpleasant taste, it must be separated. *Levison describes the process: "Women have to be hired to pick the darnel grain out of the seed which is to be milled.... As a rule the separation of the darnel from the wheat is done after the threshing. By spreading the grain out on a large tray which is set before the women, they are able to pick out the darnel, which is a seed similar in shape and size to wheat, but slate-gray in color."*—Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT) In the world, it will one day be the angels who do the separating. They will look at the fruit of your life and be able to tell what kind of plant you are. They will not go by what you say, but by what your life has produced as a result of your relationship with Jesus Christ.

God is severe! He is not a judge who allows injustice to slide. (Psalm 89:14) He measures out a harsh penalty for rebelling against what is good. It is to those who would be poisonous to the world by cooperating with evil, who bring His reputation into ill repute by saying they are His but acting in utter selfishness that He gives this warning. (James 3:16) This should cause us to examine our hearts. How can I tell if I am just mouthing the words? How can I tell if I am really being transformed? Let me give you some assurance or reason to get serious with God.

Commented [notes22]: ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: ⁴ Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?
Romans 2:4 (KJV)

Commented [notes24]: ³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
Matthew 25:32 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: ⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
Psalms 1:5 (NIV)

Commented [notes26]: ¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,
Romans 1:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: ¹⁴ Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.
Psalms 89:14 (KJV)

Commented [notes28]: ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.
James 3:16 (NIV)

Those who are only mouthing the words, usually do not mouth the words when they are around those of a different persuasion. If you are one way on Sunday and completely different during the week, you have not yet experienced the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I am not saying you must be perfect, but I am pointing to a double standard as a normal thing. If your words and actions and heart attitude in church, matches that which you have outside of church, something has happened in your heart. If your main focus is yourself and your desires, the heart of Christ is not beating in you. But if you long to see your friends know Jesus like you do, (Acts 26:29) if you love His correction and guidance, and seek His will, you can be assured that it His presence in your spirit that has brought that about. Hear His promise to you.

⁴³ *Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

If you are truly wheat, you are righteous in Christ Jesus. You will shine like the sun! Did you notice in the last verse that along with removing the darnel, the angels would remove everything that causes sin? That rejoices the heart of the wheat, because every time you fall into sin, you are grieved. (Psalm 32:3-4) Darnel looks forward to sin. Wheat shudders at the thought of falling short of the glory of God. They want to please Him with their every breath.

If the grace of God has revealed to you that you are a weed, the promises to the wheat can be yours. A transformation awaits you when you turn from your rebellion and embrace your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who died for you. Selfishness will turn to selflessness, murmuring to gratitude, if you will only give up your destructive path and turn to Him. It will not be without difficulty and hardships (2 Corinthians 6:4), but it will be an adventure of joy and peace.

Finally, wheat, you know who you are! You know because God has graciously transformed your heart and you are beginning to marvel as He produces fruit in your life. You expected darnel seed, and are amazed to see wheat forming. (Proverbs 11:30) You knew He could do anything, but you are amazed that He chose you. YOU WILL SHINE LIKE THE SUN! Imagine that! What will that look like? It is too much to fathom. God will finish the work He has begun in you, and you will reflect His glory. All that causes sin will be removed, and you will be utterly pleasing to the Father at all times. He has given you a heart to desire that, and He will bring it to pass. (Psalm 37:4)

I would like you to take with you a couple of eternal truths. There will be those in every church that act like Christians but are poisonous. We cannot get away from that wherever we go. We are not to decide who that is, but we are not to be surprised when we are wounded. We are to deal with it in the same manner that Jesus forgives and has mercy on us in the hope of our mutual growth. We cannot escape it by leaving the church because the field is the world. However, we have these promises from Jesus' own mouth, we will shine like the sun. He will gather us to Himself. (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17) All that causes sin will be removed. It is His word. It cannot fail. He cannot lie. What a future is ours! Do you have ears that can hear these truths?

Commented [notes29]: ²⁹ Paul replied, "Short time or long--I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." Acts 26:29 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: ³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah Psalms 32:3-4 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: ⁴ Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; 2 Corinthians 6:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: ³⁰ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise. Proverbs 11:30 (NIV)

Commented [notes33]: ⁴ Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalms 37:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes34]: ¹⁴ We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 (NIV)