

*May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.*

Have you ever tried to describe a difficult or abstract concept to someone, especially when you know that the person you are speaking to is someone who isn't familiar with what you are talking about? If you have, you know what Jesus is trying to do in these parables from Matthew's Gospel. Jesus is trying to describe the abstract concept of God's Kingdom in terms that His audience could understand.

What we have just heard in the Gospel, is a series of pictures that show what the Kingdom of God is like. The Kingdom is not easy to understand or explain, so Jesus has to use several different analogies to get His point across to different audiences. These parables are about transformation -specifically, how the Kingdom of God transforms believers.

In today's Gospel Jesus tells another parable, one of His many stories that has special meaning.

Today's parable says:

God's kingdom is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. That night, while his hired men were asleep, his enemy sowed tare all through the wheat and slipped away before dawn.

When the first green shoots appeared and the grain began to form, the tare showed up, too. The farmhands came to the farmer and said, 'Master, that was clean seed you planted, wasn't it? Where did these tare come from?'

He answered, 'Some enemy did this.' The farmhands asked, 'Should we weed out the tare?'

He said, 'No, if you weed out the weeds now, you'll pull up the wheat, too. Let them grow together until harvest time. Then I'll instruct the harvesters to pull up the weeds and tie them in bundles for the fire, and then gather the wheat and put it in the barn.'

Now, many farmers know the parable of the wheat and tares very well. Often the bags of wheat seed they bought to plant their wheat crop contained seeds from a type of rye grass, which when it sprouts looks exactly like wheat. In the days before weed killer that could target only weeds, workers were 'hired' to pull out the weeds in the wheat fields. Unfortunately, unless you waited until the plants were mature, you often also pulled up the wheat instead of the weeds, which, needless to say, did not make farmers very happy. This parable of Jesus' is also about letting things sprout and grow until they show their true nature before you decide what to keep and let grow, and what to remove.

The farmer in this parable planted good seed; that is certainly what he intended when he bought the seed and carefully prepared the field and planted it. But something went wrong. Weeds suddenly appeared among the wheat stalks – ruining the crop.

Jesus' disciples were troubled by the parable, and asked Jesus to explain it. Jesus told them that He, Himself, was the one who was planting the good seed, and that the field where the seed was being planted was the world — the whole world. The wheat is those of us who follow Jesus' teachings and try to live decent lives of love, services and justice.

Jesus told the disciples that an enemy of goodness –in reality – evil actions and thoughts that occur in our lives, separate us from God. These evil things always get mixed in with the good seed. Jesus advised his followers to wait until the harvest to pull the weeds. Then, God would separate the good from the bad – the wheat from weeds - and the good wheat would be saved for the Kingdom, the weeds will be burned.

Today you and I live in a world where good seed and bad seed co-exist. This world of ours is a great field, a field just waiting for good seed. But just as good seed is sown, so is bad. When we try to eliminate every weed, we forget that we have weeds within us. Not only do the weeds and the wheat grow together in the same field; they grow together in our own lives.

There are no purely good people or totally bad people. As much as we love the old-time westerns where there were good guys and bad guys, they were easy to tell apart by their black or white hats. The world just isn't that way. We often judge others and their shortcomings, but we do not seem to see our own weaknesses quite so clearly.

We often make judgments about our community and those around us: • this person is a liar; • this person is going to cause trouble; • that person is manipulative or bossy.

Sadly, it is human nature to judge and compare, but try to remember that the judgment of people should be left to God. This is what the parable is saying. Don't judge too hastily, don't harm others in your zeal to rip out the weeds; wait until the harvest.

How does this parable tell us to live now?

The parable says to let the weeds and the wheat grow together until the harvest. Let them grow; wait until they mature. With the weeds, if you let them grow long enough, they show themselves for what they are. The early sprouts of a weed can look like the beginning sprouts of a wheat plant. It's only with time that we are able to distinguish one from the other.

And the good part of that is that as children of God, the weeds can change their nature. It isn't easy, but it can be done. As they mature and age, the tare becomes evident. God is waiting in the weeds of our lives to bind up our wounds and mend the evil that separates us from ourselves, from one another and from all that is holy.

He will let both the wheat and tares grow together until the time of harvest. He will first direct the tares be gathered together, and bound in bundles.

The true wheat will be separated from the crop, gathered and brought into His barn. The evil will be tossed into the fires of hell.

The meaning in this parable is that many are offered a future with God the Father in heaven, but not all will accept God's invitation. Those people will lose the gift of Paradise with Jesus for all eternity.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

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