

The Weeds Among the Wheat

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Matthew 13:24-30 (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 uproot 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.’”

? Any initial observations from the passage?

? Agriculturally speaking, what do weeds do?

Possible Answers: They steal water & nutrients from desirable plants. They ‘choke’ the life from healthy plants. They stunt the growth of healthy plants. Weeds can produce thousands of seeds in order to take life from healthy plants.

? Who is the true villain of the parable, the weeds or the enemy who sowed the weeds?

Possible Answers: The enemy is the true enemy because he directed the weeds. The weeds just did what they were supposed to do, while the enemy was the one who instigated their work.

? Why isn’t the farmer more concerned about what the weeds are doing to his crops?

Possible Answers: Because he cares for the wheat. He doesn’t want to give in to the enemy’s schemes to uproot the wheat & lose the harvest.

Matthew 13:36-43 (NIV)

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 people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people 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 blazing 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. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

? Knowing the interpretation of the parable, how might this be encouraging to disciples?

Possible Answers: If the farmer (God) is not concerned about the weeds choking out the harvest, then the disciples (and us) can rest assured that God has this under control and one day the harvest will be brought into his barn.

? God is ultimately the one who determines the weeds from the wheat. How does that knowledge free us from worrying about things like assurance of salvation or who’s saved and not saved?

Possible Answers: If God has declared someone to be a part of his kingdom (wheat) then we can rest in that fact.

? Sometimes Christians (“wheat”) can make shallow judgements of people they believe to be “weeds” based on their initial appearance (tattoos, swearing, etc.) and seek to remove them. How could this be harmful?

Possible Answers: We don’t know what God may be doing in someone’s life and we can hurt their growth/faith by deciding they are a weed.

The specifics of this story would have made a lot more sense to Jesus's original audience (who would have been very familiar with agriculture). When one farmer wanted to sabotage another, it wasn't unheard of for them to sow bearded darnel into their wheat.

Bearded darnel is a noxious weed that mimics many of the characteristics of wheat—for a while. Before they mature, the two plants are almost identical, but as they grow, the differences become apparent in the fruit. Unfortunately, darnel is poisonous and in big enough doses will kill a person. So it's not something a farmer wants mixed up in their harvest.

The concerned servants want to remove the darnel, but the farmer is afraid they'll mistakenly throw out perfectly good wheat. He instructs them to leave the separation to the harvesters whose job it is to remove the darnel.

—Jesus¹ (Dir. Peter Sykes and John Krish. Warner Bros., 1979. Film.)

¹ A Cru ministry that translates a feature-length film about Jesus into different languages as a means of gospel presentation.

? God is faithful to gather his harvest safely into his barn. The weeds will not ultimately kill the crop.

How can this truth help us persevere through opposition?

Possible Answers: Even in the midst of suffering, we can be confident that we will make it through ultimately. Even though those who persecute us seem to get away with it now, they won't forever.

For Discussion and Accountability

? In what ways do you focus on the “weeds” and forget about the enemy who sowed the weeds?

? What kind of things (or even people) are choking your growth in Christ?