



Matthew 13:24-30, 36-40

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

²⁴He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵but while everybody was asleep an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. ²⁶So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ ²⁸He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹But he replied, ‘No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰Let both of them grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”

³⁶Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.” ³⁷He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

Grace and Peace to you from the mystery in whom we live, move and have our being

Finding God in the Weeds

What a bunch of Jerks! People are trying to grow wheat for baking tasty bread for dinners and ceremonies and some guys just want to ruin it for everyone!

I remember growing up in Phoenix there was a soft water business that had a fountain with a waterfall in front of their building. We would pass it every Sunday morning on the way to church. We knew that over the weekend someone would sneak some detergent into the water, and we would see mountains of suds flowing down the street.

Jesus is talking about finding God even in the places where we have trouble keeping things the way we want them. Clear and free from saboteurs and evil doers. Whether intentional or not we live in a world where the kingdom of heaven will surface like wheat if we are patient enough. If we don't attempt to take things into our own hands.

Forget the external world, I have enough trouble living with my own internal siblings called good and bad! My shadow self always manages to put detergent in my clean water fountain.

Encounters with the shadow selves of others and the world around us is not an easy thing. To make our life easier it would be much more peaceful if we could just bundle all the negative energy and burn it up along with the one who planted it.

If we could just all be the same, think the same and believe the same, life would be so much easier. But in this parable Jesus teaches something extremely uncomfortable for anyone who thinks the answer to all our problems is sameness.

By desiring sameness, we attempt to separate the "good" from the "bad." The only way to accomplish this would be to judge what is good and what is bad and root out all we've judged as evil. Like the world around us, the good and the bad reside inside all of us. Any attempt to judge the self so harshly would be to destroy my whole being. Within us the kingdom of heaven will emerge in patient residence.

In our world's history, some of the darkest periods have emerged from attempts to create purely "good" societies. We know how horrific the outcomes have been each and every time, yet we are tempted to try again. Human nature must learn to accept the tension of good and bad residing together. We live in the kingdom of the world, but the kingdom of heaven makes its home within us—if we allow it.

In reality, we do not know the heart or motivations of someone who appears deserving of our judgment. It is difficult not to judge the behavior of the knuckleheads around us—in traffic, in the stores, on social media, and even in the pews. As the old Mac Davis song says, "Oh Lord, it's hard to be humble when I'm perfect in every way!"

Just recently I had an incident where I found myself acting as my own saboteur. In the moment no amount of self-compassion could console my feelings of remorse. Like a weed I wished I could just pull it out from the root.

I was in line with my sister Lynda ordering breakfast at a local restaurant. The line was a bit long and cozy so there was not much space between those in front or behind us.

The couple in front were exhibiting a great deal of PDA if you catch my drift. Nothing sexual just the embracing and gazing that would at some level make anyone, as close as we were, uncomfortable

It was tolerable until the morality cop in me—whom I thought I'd fired long ago—showed up for work

again. My mouth opened, and I heard the words, “Please, get a room,” leave my lips.

The woman closest to me appeared unfazed by my judgement. To my surprise nothing changed. Not an acknowledgement, an argument or an end to the space saving affection. Then it dawned on me. One of the women was the other woman’s caregiver. All that mattered was that the one who she was caregiving for felt safe and loved.

I immediately wanted to apologize so I put my hand on her back and whispered I’m so very sorry. She turned and smiled at me as if she were caring for me as well. Once those words of judgment came out of me, I could not take them back.

What made it worse was I had just finished writing a message to be delivered the next day titled, “Would you dance with me”, when Jesus invites us to live like children dancing in the marketplace.

In the parable of the wheat and the weeds I was the one who wanted to separate the wheat and the weeds. I was the one pouring detergent in someone else’s water.

My sister and I were sitting at our table, and there was nervous laughter every time I exclaimed I can’t believe I just did that. With an occasional hand on my head moment, I looked up and saw them leaving the restroom and passing by.

Lynda later told me the caregiver made eye contact with her and mouthed the words, “Tell him it’s okay.” I had not chosen to reserve judgment, but she had.

Whenever I think I’ve been deputized as God Jr. I behave more like Barney Fife.

To think we are able to separate good and evil in the world and within our shadow selves we fall into the same trap the ancient writer wrote about with Adam lusting after the tree of good and evil. That one act of plucking the fruit from the rest of the tree represented the birth of self determination and the lapse of intimacy with God-consciousness.

The best we can do in some fruit snatching, shadow revealing moments, is gnash our teeth.

Whenever we strive for sameness in and around us, we are really attempting to avoid holding the tension that comes from accepting both good and bad together. We want to avoid conflict so we demand sameness. This is why many today hate the word diversity or anything different for that matter. Avoiding the tension of “different” is what stands between us and the thing we want more than anything else, intimacy. Intimacy with ourselves, others and God. This is the quality of the kingdom of heaven.

As long as we make it our job to judge the world to satisfy our need for sameness, we will not truly live free in an imperfect world. We will not see the kingdom of heaven residing within the weeds.

I suppose you could try to create a utopian society that resembles good Christian sameness, but we’ve seen what those personality, power-driven societies resemble. Scorched land where wheat and weeds once resided together.

Life is messy and so is spirituality. In his book *Messy Spirituality*, Mike Yaconelli concludes, “Accepting the reality of our broken, flawed lives is the beginning of spirituality not because the spiritual life will remove our flaws but because we let go of seeking perfection and, instead, seek God, the one who is present in the tangledness of our lives.”

So, I guess you could say God is with us in our brokenness, in our messiness, in our flesh and in our spirit. God is in the weeds with us and so is the kingdom of heaven.

It’s ok to leave judging the weeds and the seeds to the God of grace and to allow the harvest on God’s time and way.