

A Journey with Christ the Messiah

The Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat

Matthew 13:24-30

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing a series that I have entitled *A Journey with Christ the Messiah*. In the last several weeks we have embarked on a journey through both the Old and the New Testaments with the purpose of discovering **Christ the Messiah** that is written there. We have looked at Old Testament prophecies and saw Jesus fulfilling all of the Messianic prophecies concerning Him. We have looked at His birth, His miracles, and His seven "I AM" proclamations. We have examined His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead and the significance of those events.

We are now examining Jesus' teachings through the parables. Our goal is to understand them and try to apply them to our lives. This morning we are going to look at the **Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat**. This parable is found only in Matthew.

We are in the middle of Spring. Spring brings so much warmth and color and new life. April showers have brought May flowers, if they did not drown them out. The trees have new leaves. The grass is green again. The skies are blue and rainbows fill the air. For some of you a new garden is growing. You have experienced the feeling of fresh warm air hitting your face and the dirt between your fingers. You have hope for your tomato plantings turning into five-foot tall tomato plants. You love to watch God as He causes the rows of sweet corn and vegetables to grow into delicious food for the dinner table.

If gardening is your thing, this is a great time of year to experience and enjoy God's creation. To me, gardening just sounds like a lot of time that I do not have. Hoeing, tilling, planting, fending off the bugs and worms that think you planted just for them, and of course the endless weeding that goes along with it. Gardening requires a lot of time and attention. I, personally, would rather earn my living doing something I enjoy and pay someone else to attend the gardens and grow the food.

I don't know if Jesus ever had a garden, but a lot of his parables have to do with seeds and soil. Apparently he wasn't very fond of weeds either, as evidenced by the parable of the wheat and the weeds. He tells this story in our scripture reading this morning.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Matthew 13:24-30 (NASB)

²⁴ Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷ The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then

does it have tares?’²⁸ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ The slaves *said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’²⁹ But he *said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them.³⁰ Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

As we prepare to continue this journey, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

Let's continue the journey!

After telling this parable Jesus goes on to explain that He, Himself, is the farmer in this story. His workers are heaven's angels, and the enemy that infiltrates his field is the “evil one” or the devil. The wheat represents believers who have been born again into God's Kingdom. But it's the weeds that I want to focus on today. The weeds represent everyone else—people you work with, , your next-door neighbor, immoral people, anyone who hasn't been born again into God's Kingdom.

Like the weeds in the parable, unsaved souls tend to share certain characteristics. So I'd like to **highlight three truths** concerning the weeds in this parable.

BODY:

I. WEEDS ARE DECEPTIVE.

First, the weeds are deceptive because they can be easily confused for wheat. It's hard to tell the difference. In fact, most scholars believe that Jesus was describing a specific type of weed known as Bearded Darnel. Darnel typically flourishes in the same fields as wheat and the similarity between these two plants is so great that in some regions darnel is referred to as “false wheat.” The wheat and the weed are almost indistinguishable until the ear appears. The fruit of the darnel is smaller than the fruit produced by true wheat. They say the difference is very distinguishable and obvious, and the difference in the sizes of the seeds makes separating them an easy task.

Jesus explained the meaning of the parable later to His disciples:

Matthew 13:37-43 (NASB)

³⁷ And He said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,³⁸ and the field is the world; and *as for* the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil *one*;³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.⁴⁰ So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.⁴¹ The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁴³ Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

The similarity between the wheat and weeds is reminder that we can't always tell the difference. The world is filled with believers and unbelievers—people who are saved and people who are lost. But you and I aren't always in a position to tell which is which.

A few chapters earlier, Jesus said

Matthew 7:21-23 (NASB)

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ²² Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’

On the surface, these folks look and act like Christians. They're doing the Lord's work. They not only show up for church on Sunday morning, but they serve communion and teach Sunday School. They're small-group leaders. They speak **Chrisitanese**. They listen to Christian radio and wear Christian t-shirts. They have little Jesus-fish on the bumpers of their cars. They talk the talk and walk the walk. But Jesus will turn them away, saying, “I never knew you.”

Listen: Don't assume that you are the wheat!

These folks in Matthew 7 seemed genuinely surprised that they weren't accepted into heaven. They talked a lot about all the stuff they did for Jesus. But, do you know what they didn't talk about? They didn't say, “I made a mess of my life and I realized how desperately I need a savior. That's when I put all of my faith and hope in you, Jesus.” The difference between a **believer** and a “**make-believer**” isn't always something you can see. It's something that happens in the heart. People look at the outward appearance, but Jesus looks at the heart. The heart reveals what you're really made of.

First, weeds are deceiving. Furthermore, weeds are damaging.

II. WEEDS ARE DAMAGING.

In the parable, when the workers asked the farmer if they should pull up the weeds, he replies,

Matthew 13:29-30 (NASB)

²⁹ But he *said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.””

The farmer didn't want his workers pulling up the weeds because they looked too similar to the wheat and he didn't want any of the wheat to be damaged in the process. It may also be that the roots from the weeds entangled themselves in the wheat roots and so even if you pulled the right plants, the wheat might still be pulled with the weeds or damaged.

Of course, we don't need a parable to tell us that weeds are bad. If you tend a garden, your first instinct upon seeing a weed is probably the same as the workers in the

parable—pull it out. Weeds have very invasive root systems that quickly take over the surrounding earth, stealing vital nutrients and water from the other plants.

The same thing happens in our spiritual lives if we're always surrounded with weedy people. The apostle Paul put it this way:

1 Corinthians 15:33 (NASB)

³³ Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."

It's just like your mom used to tell you: "one rotten apple can spoil the whole bunch!" That principle holds true for our spiritual lives as well. The world is filled with both believers and unbelievers, Christians and non-Christian. We live next door to each other. We work in the same offices. In some cases, we may even live under the same roof. As Christians we need to exercise discernment in those relationships.

Now, don't misunderstand. I'm not saying we shouldn't have any association with people who are not Christians. Just the opposite is true. It's important that we have authentic, loving relationships with unbelievers so that we can share God's love with them and hopefully lead them to Christ. At the same time, however, we need to be cautious. The people you surround yourself with, whether Christians or non-Christians, have the potential to influence your life in a positive, loving and godly way or in a negative, immoral and ungodly way.

Anybody—whether they call themselves a Christian or not—who influences you to live or act contrary to your faith and principles is a weed. And they can damage your relationship with God and your testimony in the world.

ILLUSTRATION:

At some point in our life, all of us have been driving down the road and ran out of gas. We glance at the gas gauge and think "Oh, there is plenty of gas left." Then you get distracted and forget about it. It is pretty embarrassing to have to call a friend or find a ride with a total stranger to a gas station.

Running out of gas is one of the easiest things in the world to do. You know why? Because all you have to do is *stop thinking about it*. That's it. Just stop thinking about it.

If you stop thinking about it, the only way you cannot run out of gas is to never go anywhere! But if you want to go places, and you never think about your gas, sooner or later, you run out.

This reminds me of...

Romans 12:2 (NASB)

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Spiritually, it is very easy for us to run out of gas also. All it requires is that we *stop thinking about it!* Paul says that we should be "renewing our minds". That's the same idea as keeping your gas tank full of gas. How do we renew our minds? Our minds are renewed as we spend time in the company of other believers, who prod us on to love and

good works. Our minds are renewed as we spend time reading and meditating on God's word.

If we want to go anywhere spiritually, we must keep our gas tank full. And the moment we stop thinking about it, the moment we stop *renewing*, we begin an emptying process, and we're headed for trouble.

If you keep bad company the majority of your time with negative, unbelieving, or immoral people—even the ones who call themselves Christians—your faith and spiritual life will be damaged. They can cause you gradually start conforming to this world again and to **stop thinking** about your spiritual life.

So weeds are deceptive, weeds are damaging, and eventually weeds are destroyed.

III. THE WEEDS ARE DESTROYED.

The parable ends with weeds being bundled and burned while the wheat is carried gleefully into the farmer's barn—a happy ending, unless you're a weed. Jesus explains this part of the parable.

Matthew 13:40-42 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁴⁰ So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴² and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

These verses escort us to the most somber spiritual reality: hell.

Jesus spoke of hell, or at least final judgment, often. Two-thirds of his parables relate to the resurrection and judgment. Jesus wasn't cruel in His words, but he was blunt.

He said things like:

Matthew 10:28 (NASB)

²⁸ Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

In a pint-sized parable about paths, Jesus said...

Matthew 7:13-15 (NASB)

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. ¹⁴ For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

¹⁵ "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Even the most famous verse in the Bible contains a one-word picture of hell: "**perish**".

Jesus said...

John 3:16 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not **perish**, but have eternal life.

Hell is a horrible reality, but a **reality** nonetheless and one we ought to avoid it at all costs.

CONCLUSION:

The bad news is weeds are deceptive, damaging, and ultimately destroyed. It is sometimes hard for us to recognize the true wheat from the bearded darnel. But Christ knows! This I know for sure. The One who planted the good seed which bears fruit will come back to harvest His wheat, and not one grain of bearded darnel will be found in the barn.

The good news is weeds don't have to remain weeds. In the agricultural world, weeds never transform into wheat. That sort of magical metamorphosis is unheard of in horticulture. It would require a true miracle for that to occur. Our salvation is the same. There is nothing that we can do to change our sinfulness to righteousness. It requires a miracle, a free gift, from Christ. He is able to free us from our sin and give us a new spiritual life that is acceptable to God and enter us into the kingdom of God. He can change us from being a sinful weed to being productive wheat!

In the spiritual world, this happens every day. The Bible says that God doesn't want anyone to be destroyed, but for everyone to come to repentance. In other words, God longs for every weed to miraculously become wheat. If you will trust Jesus and accept God's invitation, believe, repent, be baptized, and live a new life in Him, He will make you a permanent part of his eternal garden.

This morning I want to invite you to examine your own heart to see whether you're a weed or wheat. Take inventory of your non-Christian friends whose eternal destinies end not in heaven's barn, but in hell's furnace. Consider sharing Jesus with them, or just inviting them to church. Then we can all sing together, "When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there."

He is Lord!