

A Storytelling Commentary on Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

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He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away.

So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well.

And 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?'

He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?'

But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let 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.'"

Then 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."

He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age.

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Once again in this parable and its interpretation, we have the same dynamics as last week. This parable and its interpretation are a little bit louder and more dynamic. The setting is a larger crowd, therefore, louder and then it is intimate and quieter when it comes to Jesus' discussion with the disciples. Therefore, tell the first part loud as if you were

talking to several hundred people and in the second part huddle up with the twelve and quietly explain the parable to your listeners.

The parable addresses the situation of farmers who would plant good seeds and weeds would come up and they would wonder where all of the weeds came from. This was a primary problem in agricultural society in the ancient world and there really wasn't much to do about it. If you tried to pull up the weeds, since they didn't plant in rows or anything, you'd step on and pull up a lot of the plants that had just been established and you would do more damage than if you just let them grow. This is a description of the experience of farming in the ancient world where weeds were a major problem and they did not have insecticide or weed killer that would eliminate them. So, they would just let weeds grow and then when the harvest came, they would separate out the weeds from the wheat so that the weed seeds wouldn't get into the grain. This is an actual description of what happened in the fields of Jesus' day.

Jesus used it as a metaphor for the kingdom of God and for sorting the good from the bad. It is also about the frustration of people who believe that the kingdom of God is coming and that God has control over things who then witness evil things that wipe out lots of people. The forces of evil attack many positive things in the world. Innocent people are lost and so the question is, do you do battle against those things, do you make war on them, do you try to destroy the people who are evil in the world, or do you let them grow and trust that God will sort this out at the end. Our task is both to resist the powers of evil but also to be patient and not take up arms against them and try to destroy them. This parable is then addressed to the problem of evil and the frustration of people who want to do something about the problem of evil in the world and do so violently. Quick, violent action against “the enemy” was the prevalent strategy for dealing with evil in the ancient world as it is today.

You have permission to really enjoy telling this parable because it is a great story and you can present the characters of the landowner and the farmer who is responsible for the fields vividly. The wisdom of the householder's response needs to be emphasized, that in gathering the weeds, you would also tear up the wheat. So just leave it, endure it, and it will be sorted out in the end.