

***"The Parable of the Weeds in the Wheat"*** (Matthew 13: 24-30,36-43)

by Rev. [James T. Batchelor](#)

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church  
Hoopeston, IL

The parable in today's Gospel is commonly called "The Parable of the Weeds in the Wheat" or "The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares." The earthly side of this parable is based on a really nasty way to attack or take revenge on an enemy. It was a technique that was reserved for only the most hated enemy.

There is a plant that looks like wheat, it grows like wheat, it competes with wheat for resources, but it is not wheat. Various translations of the Bible refer to this "fake wheat" as tares, darnel, weeds, or even thistles. Here in the United States, some people refer to this plant as darnel rye. The point is that most people can't tell the difference between this plant and real wheat - that is, until the seeds begin to ripen.

You can see that sowing this plant in an enemy's wheat field would be devastating. This false-wheat would compete with the wheat for moisture, soil nutrition, sunlight, everything. Yet the enemy would not discover the damage until it was too late. By the time that the seeds were mature enough to tell the difference, the wheat yield would be reduced considerably.

To make matters worse, darnel roots intertwine themselves around the roots of the neighboring plants. Thus this false-wheat would so integrate itself with the wheat that by the time anyone discovered the difference, you could not remove these weeds without uprooting real wheat. The only choice left was to allow the plants to mature side by side and then separate them at harvest time. I guess you could say that this was an early form of biological warfare.

The earthly side of this parable deals with a landowner's response to just such an attack.

Jesus began His explanation of the spiritual meaning of this parable by comparing the wheat field to His church. He said, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the children of the kingdom." Jesus often talked about Himself as the Son of Man. So, Jesus is talking about Himself as the one who sowed the good seed. He said the field is the entire world. Therefore, whatever Jesus is doing in this parable crosses all borders and transcends all cultures. The Children of the Kingdom are those who believe that Jesus is their savior which is another way of saying The Holy Christian Church. With these words, Jesus states that He will establish His church throughout the entire world. As you have often heard me say before, "The salvation that Jesus earned for us with His suffering and death on the cross is for all people in all places at all times."

This has all been pretty good news so far, but nothing in this sinful world remains untouched by sin. Jesus continued, "The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil." Here Jesus tells us that the devil sends his agents to infiltrate the earthly institutions of the church. Just as darnel rye looks, acts, and grows like wheat, so these unbelievers look like Christians and act like Christians, but they are not Christians. They are hypocrites. In this parable, Jesus tells us that every church has hypocrites who are sons of the devil.

Even when Jesus Himself was the visible pastor of a congregation, there were hypocrites. Think about it. When Jesus sent the disciples out to do mission work among the lost sheep of Israel, Judas Iscariot was one of those disciples. He cast out demons. He preached the Word of the Kingdom of God. He even held the office of treasurer. That is how much the other disciples trusted him. They did not realize that he was a weed in the wheat field until after he betrayed Jesus in Gethsemane.

The early church had its weeds. The Apostle Paul wanted to take the Gospel to the Gentiles and a group of weeds followed him everywhere he went. They infiltrated the congregations that the Holy Spirit established through Paul and tried to teach that a person must fulfill the ceremonial law of the Jews before they could become a Christian. When I read and study The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, I must come to a conclusion that I don't like very much. I must come to a conclusion that makes me sad indeed. I wish there was some other conclusion that I could reach. Never the less, this is Jesus' book and these are Jesus' words and they are true.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares tells us that there will be hypocrites in every congregation. The sad and grievous conclusion that I must come to is that some of the people sitting here in this room, right now, hearing my voice, are not Christians.

I imagine many of you are reacting the same way the disciples did when Jesus said one of them was a betrayer. In Matthew 26 we read: [Matthew 26:20-22] When it was evening, [Jesus] reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?"

Many of you are thinking to yourself, "Does he mean me?" We all, like the disciples, know that we have been hypocrites. As someone once said, "Saying that the church is full of hypocrites is like saying that the hospital is full of sick people." So, it is normal - it is natural - for the true wheat to ask Jesus, "Lord, are You talking about me?" The Good News is that Jesus died for all sinners. That includes hypocrites. He invites all hypocrites to come to Him for healing. Where else can hypocrites go to receive healing? Where else can hypocrites go to get rid of their hypocrisy? This is the comfort we receive in God's Word. There we learn that Jesus suffered and died on the cross for ALL sins. While He was on the cross, He suffered such grievous punishment for our sins that He cried out, [Matthew 27:46] "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" The Bible says, [2 Corinthians 5:15] "He died for all." [1John 1:7] "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." [1John 2:2] "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." There is no question that Jesus paid the penalty for every sin with His suffering and death on the cross. There is no question that God the Father accepted that sacrifice as payment in full, for Jesus did not remain in the grave, but He rose from the dead. Jesus offers forgiveness, life, and salvation to all people through the Holy Spirit's gift of faith. By creating faith in us, the Holy Spirit quietly goes about the miracle of converting fake wheat into the real thing - He converts the sons of the devil into the Sons of God.

Jesus ended His parable with the end of all things. When the wheat matured, it was time for the harvest. Jesus said, "The harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For most of us, this Day of Judgment will come at our earthly death, but there will be some who live until the end of the world. In either case, those who refuse God's gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation will be gathered up and thrown into the eternal fires of hell. In that place, they will cry and clench their teeth in pain.

Jesus also said, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." On that Day of Judgment, those who have the gift of faith that the Holy Spirit created in their heart will have the righteousness that Jesus earned for them on the cross. They will share in His glory - a glory that shines like the sun. Jesus will share all things with them. His kingdom will be their kingdom and even His Father will be their Father.

There is an old saying: "Where God builds the Church, the devil builds a chapel." Very often, the greatest damage to the Church has been done by those who are members of the earthly institutions of the church, but who are not members of the Holy Christian Church of all believers. The Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition are extreme examples of what can happen when the fake wheat gains control.

Never the less, this parable also teaches us that there will be a day when Jesus will send His angels to remove the fake wheat and take the true wheat out of this sinful world to Himself in Heaven. There the true wheat, that is all those who truly believe in Jesus as savior, will live in joy forever.

Amen