

The Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat

Matthew 13: 24 - 30, 36 - 43

24 He put before them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 27 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?" 28 He answered, "An enemy has done this." The slaves said to him, "Then do you want us to go and gather them?" 29 But he replied, "No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. 30 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.'"

36 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.' 37 He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; 38 the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40 Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, 42 and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!



"Wheat Field with Cypresses" (1889) Vincent Van Gogh

Some questions for reflection:

- ❖ After reading through this week's Gospel, what word or phrase stood out for you and why?
- ❖ Which aspect of God's personality do you feel shines through in this Parable?
- ❖ How does Jesus' explanation for the presence of evil people and actions in the world make you feel?
- ❖ As Christians, do you think the parable releases us from the present need to reflect on our own lives and how we can work to change the world for the better? Can we sit back and wait?

Once you have taken time to reflect on some or all of the above, below are some extracts from Tom Wright's commentary on Matthew to help with any further thoughts.

“At the heart of the parable of the weeds and the wheat is the note of patience - not just the patience of the servants who have to wait and watch, but the patience of God himself. God didn't and doesn't enjoy the sight of a cornfield with weeds all over the place. But nor does he relish the thought of declaring harvest-time too soon, and destroying wheat along with weeds.

Many Jews of Jesus' time recognised this, and spoke of God's compassion, delaying his judgement so that more people could be saved at the end. Jesus, followed by Paul and other early Christian writers, took the same view. Somehow Jesus wanted his followers to live with the tension of believing that the Kingdom was indeed arriving in and through his own work, and that this Kingdom would come, would fully arrive, not all in a bang but through a process like the slow growth of a plant or the steady leavening of a loaf.”

“It's all too easy to read about evildoers being thrown into a burning fiery furnace and to conjure up medieval images of hellfire and damnation....

There certainly are caricatures of God and his judgement which we should avoid like the plague. God is not a sadistic monster who would happily consign most of his beloved, image-bearing creatures to eternal fire. But there are equal and opposite caricatures we should also beware of. God is not an indulgent grandparent determined to spoil the youngsters rotten by letting them do whatever they like and still giving them sweets at the end of the day. We must refuse the second just as firmly as the first.”

Other readings for July 19th:

Isaiah 44: 6 - 8

Psalms 86: 11 - End

Romans 8: 12 - 25

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

