

The Wheat and the Weeds

(Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

Trinity 7– 19th July 2026 (10:00am Holy Communion)

Jesus 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!

It turns out that it's not all that easy to define what we mean by the term *weed*. It should be easy though, after all you see them all the time, do you? The dictionary says a weed is '*a wild (not deliberately cultivated) plant growing where it is not wanted.*' This *our* means of judgement – we classify and then we decide what should be cherished and what should be destroyed.

I noticed a few days ago that a little Oaktree sapling has decided to grow in the best part of my Rectory lawn. There are just four little leaves at the moment, somehow managing to make it, in what is otherwise the parched brown grass. By definition it's a weed. I didn't plant it, but if wanted to I wouldn't have put it there. Is an oak tree not something much greater than a dandelion? Most of us would instinctively say it is. It can't be a weed. Unfortunately, when the lawnmower next comes out, it's going to get destroyed. Awful! I must dig it out and give it a better chance.

The existence of good and evil in the world takes much from our experience of gardens. Jesus's parable of wheat and the weeds is set for us today in St Matthew's gospel. Here Jesus is teaching his disciples using familiar and natural terms they can understand, **except the landscape is actually the much greater scene of the whole of life.** The picture is not of garden, more of an arable field.

Jesus 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.'

The first thing to notice is that it's *another* parable. Altogether there are 38 parables of varying length and depth. We often know them *individually* – the Good Samaritan, the Sower, the Lost Sheep.

They tend to be taught that way too, like today with the Wheat and the Weeds. But the parables overlay onto each other, to make a greater whole. One parable might help interpret or understand another. **There might even be some danger in applying Jesus's teaching in isolation from all else he has said.** A bit more on that later.

Before going any further, we need to realise that Jesus is going to compare a life of struggle, to the final perfection of Heaven. **We have limited control of what we can grow in this conflicting field of life, even with all effort and good intention, but in the heavenly time and place of God, He has full control.**

You can attempt to get rid of weeds in your garden in various ways. Maybe on you hands and knees with some tool, or by harsh chemicals. Both will work, if only for a little while – the weeds will soon reinvade like the perpetual enemy they are. **You may even decide it's not worth the effort.** [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."](#)

Jesus will later go on to describe the ['good seeds as the children of the kingdom; whilst the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil.'](#) **The good sower is the Son of Man, the Christ, our hope, the creator of life and the judge of us all.** The evil sower is some character who too easily comes in with their diabolical sack of weed seeds. Like our gardens, we see and know them too well.

What we should understand here is just like the unkept parts of our gardens (and our lives) – somehow the background of sin is always there to establish itself so obviously.

So, the workforce suggest that they should go to pull up the weeds. The slaves said, “Do you want us to go and gather them?” But the Master says no, they will all just be back again. ‘He replied, “No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the [good] wheat along with them.’ This is the reality we know if we correctly understand this parable as the cultivation of our lives lived in this imperfect world. Look around you, it’s all laced with sin bad seed. We can’t even keep our limited gardens free from the easily recognised but unwanted growth of evil weeds. **So, they keep growing beside for now, but not forever.**

We know we can do little about the existence of evil in the world, obvious though it is. God has not made you responsible for the sins of others, only those your own backyard (so to speak). Yet even then we know how hard it can be to present ourselves as a perfect lawn as if Eden were once our own back garden. A person with no faith can very likely conclude that there is no God, because there is perpetual sin in the world. It’s one of the supposed proof-points for the atheists. **Yet faith is the seed of hope in my garden**, even from such a small beginning. That little oak sapling in my lawn will, in the end, win over everything else that surrounds it. It will last beyond my lifetime, and probably even that of the house I live in.

The master says: '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.' **By faith, and under the care of God, in this sinful world, our lives can still grow to final maturity, even amongst a world of spreading evil.** It's ok to uproot the good wheat at harvest, because all will be judged – the faithful and the faithless. If we ourselves can recognise the weeds, then God will surely know His own harvest – those which shall be a good yield, and those that must be gathered and burned.

You know how it finishes: 'The enemy shall be thrown into the furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' The we have that humorous and slightly ironic call from Jesus: 'Let anyone with ears listen!'

I will finish with a warning about how such parables can be misused, when taken out of context and taken in isolation.

Christian theology draws all time into two stages: **The Now and the Not Yet.** All which has gone before us in history and to this point is the Now – the age of the world if you like, with all its wheat and weeds together. **But the Not Yet – *the time to come* - is related to the Now *in consequence*.** In God's Creation what we are and what we do in the present – individually and as society – will be drawn by God into a future point of reckoning, a divine harvest. We may observe the past and yet change nothing of ourselves – it's just an endlessness of the same old chance, until the universe goes cold – no God in that.

Many live that way, not judging themselves, but certainly judging those around them. **This where a parable like the Wheat and the Weeds can be misused.** Jesus explained to the disciples who all the characters were, but it's possible for anyone to bring in a whole new cast, not of some heavenly judgement, but of human judgement.

Such a parable is not intended for us to decide who are the weeds and who is the enemy. Sadly, many do. In faithless hands such a parable is justification enough for identifying those 'evil others'. In the current social political landscape, you will not find it difficult to hear that some groups, who claim the land, also like to identify those *who they think are the weeds*.

Those same voices will also claim a crisis point is approaching, unless something is done about them. In the atheist world there is no last judgement, only immediate revolution, when everything should be uprooted – even God. You can easily make a secular version of this parable to justify your human actions. **Parables should not be taken out of context, and they should never be applied in isolation.**

As a final thought, we may be able to identify the weeds obviously enough, but Jesus also teaches us that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. It isn't that easy to know what a weed is and what is not. So, leave that to God in his own good time.

Amen