

## **“Weed, Weeds! What do We Do About These Weeds?”**

*“Master, did we not sow good seed in your field? Where then, did these weeds come from?” Matthew 13:27b.*

When our elder daughter was quite young, she never liked going to bed at night. She would try to think of any and everything to stay up a little longer. One time when she was going through her litany of persons and things to pray for, she prayed for the devil. I said to her, “Sweetheart, the devil does not need our prayers.” Bad things happen automatically, but we have to work hard and stay on our knees asking God’s help for good things to happen. The parable of the wheat and the tares is a story that illustrates that well.

### **I. Weeds in the Life of Jacob-Genesis 28:10-19**

Jacob, the son of Isaac, grandson of Abraham, brother of Esau and the person in the lineage of the covenant promise, had weeds in himself. In today’s lesson, he encountered God at a place named Bethel, the house of God. If there ever was a person of God who needed some of his rough edges shaved off and who needed guidance, it was Jacob the smooth operator. Jacob was sent off to the land of his maternal grandfather’s to find a wife. Jacob had stolen his brother birthright and tricked his father Isaac into giving him Esau’s blessing. When he will have arrived in Paddan-aram, he will have to work for his uncle Laban twenty years to secure his two wives and his share of the flocks. In the end, Jacob will out-fox his father-in-law Laban who himself was treacherous and unfair. He will escapes from the land of Paddan-aram with the best of Laban’s flocks and some of the household gods. Finally, he will cross paths with his brother Esau, fearing his brother’s rage. On the contrary, however, they met in peace and departed in peace to settle in different parts of the Middle East. At another time, Jacob will wrestle with an angel, grow a little more and earn the reputation of one who contended with God and men and prevailed.

In today’s episode, Jacob encountered God in a very sacred place, went to sleep there and dreamed of a ladder to heaven as he received confirmation that he was indeed the child of promise. The ladder to heaven dream was one of those experiences names by the Celtics as happening in a Thin Place. Thin Places are liminal times in which time stands still, the portals between heaven and earth are opened for a brief moment and one sees things differently from that time forward. When he awakened, he felt that surely God was in that place. Three more encounters with God in Thin Places will put Jacob on his destined track. And so, he memorialized that moment with a pillar made from the stone upon which he slept. Jacob was one who had weeds in himself all of his life. Nevertheless, God planted good seed within him and his soil brought forth thirty, sixty and a hundredfold.

### **II. The Wheat and the Tares-Matthew 13:13-24, 36-43**

Good planting will bring forth its harvest in due time. A farmer plowed his field, harrowed it, turned it up, threw out all of the undesirable plants and planted it with good seed. But then, he noticed that when the good seeds germinated, weeds grew up beside the good plants. Both kinds would bare their fruit in due season. A servant came to him wanting to know where the weeds came from. The farmer said that an enemy had planted

them. The servant then wanted to separate the bad plants for the good ones, but was told to do so would damage the good plants. At harvest time, the reapers will separate them, putting the grain from the good seeds into barns and gather and burn the weeds.

Jesus, then explained the meaning of the parable to his close circle. The Son of Man, is the sower of the good seeds. The field is the world. The good seeds are the children of the kingdom of God. The weeds are the children of the devil. The harvest time is at the end of this age and the reapers are the angels of God. At the time of the harvest, Christ will send his reaping angels to separate the wheat from the chaff. The fate of the children of the devil is that they will be thrown into the furnace of unquenchable fire where moaning, groaning and gnashing of teeth will take place eternally. But the children of God will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Jesus concluded this passage with an admonition, *“Let anyone with ears listen!”* Matthew 13:43.

The parable of the Wheat and the Tares has practical as well as spiritual applicability. I was told by my parents that an idle mind is the devil’s workshop and that is true. Good parents know and practice structuring their children’s time with constructive activities, especially during summers and other idle times. Some children are able at a very early age to self-structure their time and activities wisely. Most of our children will need lots of guidance. It is to parents’ peril not to provide proper guidance to their children. Many parents who have left their children unsupervised in front of computers, televisions and on street corners often find out too late that their children are subjected to the wiles of the evil forces, the devil’s planting, in other words, to predators and bad influences. So, what should we do about the weeds?

As a gardener and an agricultural observer, I found that there are two kinds of crops. There are crops like soy beans, wheat, oats, and rice that are like the farming in today’s story in which it is true that you wait until the harvest to separate the bad from the good plants; the wheat from the darnel. But, there are other crops that you have to weed, insecticide, prune and nurture all the way until the harvest. These are crops like tomatoes, and other garden vegetable and flowers.

Spiritually, the parable of the wheat and the darnel applies as well. It has often been said that the family that prays together is a family that stays together. I would say further, that it is also a healthy family spiritually. Most children hate to be dragged out of bed on Sunday and carried to church. Many adults, especially men have set too poor of an example themselves. Nevertheless, it is our responsibility as parents and guardians to set the best examples for our families we can. Weeds happen, my friends! The devil is very busy and many times we are relegated to the horrible option of waiting too late. So what are we called to do? One answer is very simple but not easy to live by. You protect the innocent and vulnerable. But Christ calls us to do one more thing. We are to love the sinner while hating the sin. What do you do with a child predator, an embezzler, a liar and a cheat? Do you wait until the harvest for her/him? Do you drive them out of our community? Do we include them within the community with certain restriction and safe guards because they are children of God too? What do you do and what would Jesus have us do?

### **III. Romans 8:12-25**

We have reviewed a man's life who had both wheat and tares within himself. We have looked at the parable of the wheat and the tares. Now let us look deep within ourselves to try to understand what God would have each of us to do about the wheat and tares in our lives. Paul said that we Christians are debtors not of the dying lower parts of ourselves but of the indwelling Spirit of God which puts to death the deeds of the lower nature and starts us on the path of holiness. We should never allow ourselves to fall back into slavery to the flesh because we are now adopted sons and daughters of God through his indwelling Spirit. God paid for us completely by the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. No longer do we have any indebtedness to the lower parts of our nature.

We are now joining with Christ, but not completely. Paul indicated that the Christian life is a journey not a completed destination. The Holy Spirit now enables us to call God our Father and makes us joint heirs with Jesus Christ in his suffering with a hope for our glorification to come. Although we are plagued with weeds in our lives, there is no comparison with the glorified life we shall one day live with God.

And, because we have a special place in creation, even all of creation is waiting for our full glorification. Paul said that the creation fell because of us and that its rectification will depend upon us as well. Creation still groans and we too groan in our bodies, waiting for full adoption and redemption. As to our salvation and the salvation of the world, it depends upon hope—a hope that is not yet seen. This hope, however, is one in which we can wait with patience because it is a hope upon which we can depend.

In summary, we live in a world where there exist both bad and good; wheat and tares. Like Paul, two Sunday's ago, we do not even have control over our own desires. Like the parable of the different kinds of soil, we have both good and bad soil within each of us. And, even when we make "perfect" plans and limit the possibility of error, Murphy's law is operative. In Jacob's case (a mixed bag by any accounting) when God knocked a few rough edges off him, his story still ends with a divided household between wives and enmity among his sons. That brings us to Paul's estimation of our status before God, as we wait with hope in the final outcome. The Christian, therefore, is one who having her/his feet planted firmly in clay; has been adopted by God; redeemed and justified through Christ; awoken, inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit and one who is looking for the age to come as he/she awaits complete adoption, redemption and glorification. So, what do we do about those weeds? It depends upon the crop. Some as with today's lesson, must be left to the harvest. But there are others that must be managed carefully. You have to know your crops and your weeds.

Let us pray. O God of the planting time and of the harvest time: You have set us as caretakers of your garden. Teach us to know the difference between the wheat and the tares as we go about our work. Help us to discern the difference between the weeds we should prune and the harvest that should be left for your angels. Strengthen us to protect the innocent and vulnerable while punishing the sin and loving the sinner. Then Lord, may we always give you the praise and honor while serving with humility and in truth. We pray this in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.