

The Weeds Among the Wheat

I was so hurt," said Destiny. "She's a leader in the church and pastor's sister."

"I'm scared of her," replied Kaylen.

Destiny had exhaled about being attacked by Sister Wyetta at the church's picnic outreach.

Sister Wyetta was awarding the gift card prizes. Destiny had been instructed to get three gift cards from a retail store, and the church would reimburse her. However, Destiny purchased five, with the intent of only submitting invoices for three. Gift cards were also supposed to be purchased from grocery stores, fast food restaurants and gas stations.

Later, Destiny found out that not all of the desired gift cards had been purchased. The older woman had taken her frustration out on Destiny and had been unrepentantly severe about it. It had not been the first time that the pastor's sister had shown unloving characteristics.

"I'm so sorry that happened to you," Sister Loretta had said to Destiny later that day. The elderly woman had given a short rebuke to Wyetta for speaking to Destiny harshly.

"I don't think she likes me," Destiny had said. "I don't understand it. It's like she's not a Christian at all."

"We all have our flesh we war against," said Sister Loretta, "but we should be warring against it. Then sometimes people like to blend in with the church. Only God knows who's truly His. He'll sort it out in the end."

1. Why do good wheat and weeds grow side by side in the same field?

2. Why do we have a tendency to judge others as "weeds"?

3. How can you tell good plants from weeds?

Jesus Tells the Parable

Matthew 13:24-30, KJV

24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Matthew 13:24-30, NIV

²⁴Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field.

²⁵But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away.

²⁶When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

²⁸'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

²⁹'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.

³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' "

Jesus began His next parable about the kingdom of

heaven. After explaining the parable of the sower, Jesus told a parable about another sower who, we are told from the very start, “sowed good seed in his field” (vs. 24). This time, the problem came from neither the seed nor the soil. Rather, it came from an enemy from outside, who, “while everyone was sleeping . . . came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away” (vs. 25). This enemy did his work when no one was paying attention, went away, then waited for the wheat to be ruined.

Time passed, and, “When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared” (vs. 26). The owner’s servants went to the owner and expressed their confusion: “Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?” (vs. 27). The owner realized that this had been the work of an enemy. The servants, wanting to fix the problem, suggested, “Do you want us to go and pull them up?” (vs. 28)

The owner rejected this idea for the sake of the wheat: “No . . . because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them” (vs. 29). The owner refused to have the wheat damaged despite the weeds. Instead, he suggested a solution that would require patience on his servants’ part: “Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn” (vs. 30). The owner refused to sacrifice the wheat, because in time the weeds would reveal themselves for what they were. At that time, the harvesters would know how to separate the two—and once they were done sorting them out, gather in the wheat and burn the useless weeds.

4. *What problem did the sower in this parable have?*

5. *How did the owner’s servants respond? What did they suggest?*

6. *How did the owner respond? What was his solution to the problem?*

Jesus Explains the Parable

Matthew 13:36-43, KJV

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.

37 He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

38 The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

39 The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

40 As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.

41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Matthew 13:36-43, NIV

³⁶Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

³⁷He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰"As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

⁴²They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear."

After telling this parable, Jesus told two more (not in

this lesson text), comparing the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed (vss. 31-32), and to yeast that works its way through the dough (vs. 33); in short, the kingdom would reach everywhere. Afterward, Jesus got off the boat, “Then he left the crowd and went into the house” (vs. 36) that He had departed from in verse 1—we are not told whose house. In this more intimate setting, Jesus’ disciples asked Him to explain the parable of the wheat and the weeds.

Jesus’ explanation was clear: “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man”—Jesus Himself (vs. 37). Meanwhile, “The field is the world, and the good seed”—even while it was still seed—“stands for the people of the kingdom” (vs. 38), who would in time grow up to be fine stalks of wheat. On the other hand, “The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil . . . and the harvesters are angels” (vss. 38-39).

Having identified the characters, Jesus described the setting of this scene and when it would take place: “The harvest is the end of the age As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age” (vss. 39-40). He then described how this would be accomplished: He would send out His angels—His harvesters—who “will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil” (vs. 41). These “weeds” will suffer a horrible fate; the angels “will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (vs. 42). Those remaining—the wheat—“will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (vs. 43). Jesus concluded, “Whoever has ears, let them hear.” The meaning of the parable was now apparent; it was now up to Jesus’ listeners to believe and act upon that truth.

7. *What did Jesus do immediately after He told the parable of the wheat and the weeds?*

8. *According to Jesus, who did the characters in His parable represent?*

9. *What else did Jesus describe about this parable?*

Take Heart!

In the parable, the owner of the field advised his servants to allow the wheat and weeds to grow up together. Often, we have the same tendency as the servants—to judge others and try to determine which people are wheat and which are weeds. If we are too hasty and pull up “weeds” now, we may damage tender stalks of wheat who are new or immature believers. Jesus assured us that the harvesters will take care of the weeds in due time.

Meanwhile, we should be the best “wheat” we can be. We do that in part by maintaining a focus on Jesus as the sower or author (Heb. 12:2) of our faith, rather than judging “weeds.” We know the sower, Jesus, knew exactly what He was doing and that there would be weeds among the wheat. It is nothing He has done that places weeds among us, but the work of an enemy. This enemy is from without and sowed weeds when no one was paying attention. We would do well to guard the fields of our hearts from seeds of bitterness, judgment, confusion, or insensitivity.

Keeping our eyes on Jesus and His work on the Cross enables us to take heart that He has it all in control. We know the end of the story—evil will be destroyed at the end of the age. Those who remain faithful in righteousness will shine like the sun. We can take heart by remaining rooted in Christ during times of testing and suffering. These things produce perseverance, which leads to greater maturity and fulfillment in Christ (Jas. 1:2-4).

10. *Why is it important to understand what will happen to the weeds at the end of the age?*

11. *What is significant about the fact that Jesus Himself is the sower?*

12. *What might you say to a fellow believer who struggles with judging others and wants to “pull weeds” now?*

Stand Strong

Jesus encouraged His disciples to wait patiently for the harvesters to remove the weeds from among the wheat. In the meantime, His followers should follow the sower's example and not damage the wheat by pulling the weeds prematurely. By implication, we are to take heart and find courage in the knowledge that God's kingdom will be sorted out in the end.

► *In what ways can we stand strong as we wait for the final coming of God's kingdom?*

KEY VERSE

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

—Matthew 13:30, KJV

"Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn."

—Matthew 13:30, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of July 24 through July 30

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Proverbs 8:1-12—Wisdom Is Better than Jewels.
- Tues.** Job 28:1-2, 12-19—Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?
- Wed.** Luke 5:1-11—A Miraculous Catch of Fish.
- Thurs.** Psalm 148—Praise the Lord from the Heavens.
- Fri.** Matthew 6:19-33—Store Up Treasures in Heaven.
- Sat.** Psalm 119:161-176—God's Word Is Great Treasure.
- Sun.** Matthew 13:44-52—Heaven's Hidden Treasures.