



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

I must confess, I have struggled with my own understanding of the parable of the “weeds of the field,” as the disciples call the parable in the interpretation in verses 16-43. If I go only by the interpretation, it is an allegory about the kingdom, what God (and the evil one) are doing now, as well as God’s triumphant judgment of good over evil, with the righteous shining like the sun and evildoers gnashing their teeth in the fiery furnace. Sounds pretty much like the makings of a good hellfire and brimstone sermon to me, doesn’t it? Hmmm.

But, and here’s my confession...other things in the parable strike me as, well, very interesting, and I think deliberately so. The fact that the weeds were allowed to grow along with the wheat fascinates me to no end. Yes, they will eventually be collected and burned, but for now, they are left to grow. The question put to Jesus also fascinates me (to no end). “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” The master says no, for fear that they will pull up wheat along with the weeds. That is certainly true in many ways. One fine day, I’m going to sit down with Jesus and ask him a lot of questions, including some about this parable.

For now, I’m comfortable with the parable, and its interpretation, growing alongside each other as they have for two millennia, for fear that if I were to dismiss the interpretation as Matthew’s own words, I might miss something very important, and valid, and sacred, and good. Nor is it my place to slice and dice the gospel. There is a judgment coming down the road. Of that I have no doubt. Until then, we people of God’s world, which includes our church, live beside good and evil, out there and in here, as we struggle to be the children of God we were meant to be. Thank God, there’s plenty of grace to make it possible. As a matter of fact, if the parable of the mustard seed is any indication, there is to be an explosion of growth in God’s kingdom. I want to be a part of that. How about you?

Van Dickens, Retired Clergy-in-Residence

A Family Affair

If you are in worship, or Sunday school today, you will hear part of Dr. Seuss’s book, *Oh, the Places You’ll Go* read aloud. I encourage you to read, or listen to, the entire book together this week. It is a wonderful book to read as you start a new school year.

Dr. Seuss describes many scenarios about places to go and paths to take. Now read Psalm 23 together. The writer of this Psalm describes God as his shepherd, or guide through life. Even when we are faced with challenging paths or decisions, God leads us. Psalm 119:105 also fits quite well with this Dr. Seuss book. “*Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*” Spending time reading the Bible, God’s word, can help us determine which path to take as we travel through life.

In the new school year, you will have options to choose from many paths. What new activities will you participate in this year? As a family, discuss how you can remain close to God and his word, no matter which path you choose. Will you commit to learn about God’s word, and direction, by attending Sunday School and worship as a family? Perhaps a commitment to this path can be your opportunity to explore Biblical stories and discuss their meaning for your life.

Dear God, Thank you for your love and for walking with us each day. No matter which places we go, or mountains we climb, help us not to leave You and your word behind. Guide us through this new school year and remind us to always keep You near. Amen.

— Jennifer Hall, Director of Children’s Ministry

Consider the Source Matthew 13:24-32

Monday: Matthew 13:24-25

To paraphrase the poet, even the best laid plans often go awry. The farmer sowed good seed. Someone else had other plans. We teach our children to “do as I say,” but are dismayed when they do what we do. It is the plight of us all, good and bad, both growing among us, and in us.

- Have you ever dared to count your faults, those tendencies you regret?
- Do you think people can change for the better? That you can do likewise? How?

Tuesday: Matthew 13:26

At one point, what is sown is manifested in deeds, good and bad. Side by side, there may have been little distinction at first, only later to see true colors coming forth.

- When you see someone doing something bad, what opinions do you form? How do you respond? What would you say if it was something you saw on TV? In the church? In your home? In yourself?
- A Peanuts cartoon depicts Lucy saying, “I love humanity. It’s people I hate.” Imagine the love Jesus has for “poor, on’y people like you and me.” Can you love like that? Can you try?

Wednesday: Matthew 13:27-29

Questions arise. Whence came the weeds? Should we uproot them? It has been tried before. The Inquisition, Salem witch hunts, the Holocaust—the many ways our species has brought about great evil, in the name of purging the world of so-called evil, is ample reason not to take matters into our own hands, and to leave the harvest time to God.

- How do you address bad things people do, without “uprooting” the ones doing it?
- How does grace inform your approach to those who do not live up to your understanding of goodness?

Thursday: Matthew 13:30

At the harvest, wheat is gathered, weeds are burned. Are there really eternal consequences for the life we live? Perhaps the parable got it wrong. Perhaps we simply drift into oblivion, sort of a non-existence. Perhaps we reincarnate into a toad, a worm, or some other animal. Perhaps there is no heaven or hell, no judgement. Perhaps we can do anything we please and not worry about it. Perhaps, but if it’s all the same, I think I’ll live as if the words of Jesus are true.

- In what ways are you growing, in the life God has given you?
- What do Jesus’ words about the harvest mean to you?

Friday: Matthew 13:31-32

The mustard seed, so small, becomes a large shrub. Wait, now it’s a tree! How’d that happen? Peter preaches his first sermon, and three thousand people are baptized. How’d that happen?

- In what ways have you been amazed by what the spirit of God can do?
- Looking back, how have you grown in grace? What surprised you? In what ways is God continuing to do great things in your life? In our church? Is it a foretaste of greater things?