

Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When 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. ³⁰ 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.’ ”

Then 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.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and 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. ⁴¹ The 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. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear. (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 NIV2011)

Know Your Place

Something should be done. There has to be a better way. You can’t just let it happen, can you? The man had gone out and sowed good seed in his field. They were sure of it. But, evidently, while they were sleeping, someone proceeds to sow weeds among the good wheat and runs off. Then, as the wheat grew and bore grain, there it was staring them right in their faces, mocking the workers and their master. The master knew what had happened. His enemy hated him. He would do anything to try and ruin his good crop. So there it was: the weeds among the wheat. And like most people who see weeds growing among their good crop, the servants ask, “Do you want us to go and pull the weeds up?” It makes sense. Something should be done!

But what the master says does not. He says, “No, wait. You might pull up some of the wheat in your exuberance to get rid of the weeds. Let them grow together until the harvest. Then not you but the harvesters will separate the weeds from the wheat. They will tie up

the weeds and throw them into the fire where they will burn. They will bring the wheat into the barns.” In other words, something will be done. Just wait.

But shouldn't something be done now?

When Jesus puts this story before the crowd he wants to teach them a truth about the kingdom of heaven. So what does this mean? That's what the disciples want to know; we do too. An important thing to remember with parables is that not every point is meant to be interpreted or applied. If you go down that route, you will miss the point of comparison. So the point of this parable is not a lesson about laziness and needing to be watchful for the devil. While truthful, that's not the point here. It's not a lesson that some are destined to be believers—God's people of the kingdom, the good wheat in the world—and others are destined to be unbelievers—people of the evil one, the weeds of the world—and that's what you always will be. Nowhere does God teach this. Instead, Jesus' point is: unbelievers and believers are going to keep living right next to each other until the Last Day when Jesus returns. This is this the world that we live in and this is simply how it's going to be.

But shouldn't we do something about it? Can't we?

Like the servants we see the weeds growing amongst the wheat. Watch the news and the world we live in today and it's nearly impossible to miss. And like those servants, our knee-jerk reaction is and what seems to make the most sense is to get rid of those weeds. You see the problem; fix it! But God—whose desire is for all to be saved—knows what will happen. In our exuberance to get rid of those weeds some of the wheat will inevitably get pulled up along with it.

And we've seen it happen before. Someone isn't living according to our same life values or how we think a Christian should act. We want to make “better” people with less messy lives. In our eager zeal for the Lord we come down heavy with the Law to fix a problem or situation. But then we push a person to despair thinking God's Word, his love, and his house was not a place for them.

Or it was something they did in the past. They said something that really offended. They did something that really hurt. And so we “cancel” them because that's what they deserve. They need to pay for what their wrong. Instead of forgiving, we hold it over their head. We are sure they will do it again. We don't want it to happen to anyone else. But in our enthusiasm to right the scales, the wheat is torn up with the weeds.

We are trying to protect the wheat. We are protecting God's Word! So we think need more rules and different policies and that will get them to change! Forgiveness? Love? Too easy to take advantage of. Too much grey area. Results aren't seen quickly enough. Shame, guilt, and fear get the job done. And it might change the action. But what about the heart? The Law only kills. It does not change the heart. You maybe don't see the burden you are putting on their conscience because they can't live up to your standards. You maybe don't see how their heart is hardening because why would they want anything to do with a

people and a place that preaches love but fails to show it. And there goes the wheat with the weeds.

Understand this correctly. This does not mean there is no place for the Law. When God says, “Wait,” he’s not telling us to excuse sinful actions or condone sinful living. He does not call us to sit back and think, “It’s fine. He will get it all figured out and sorted away in the end.” No, God tells us to have a clear mind and to practice self-control. Jesus’ preaching is still our preaching, “Repent, the Kingdom of God is near.” Turn from sin back to the Lord. Where there is no Law there is no Gospel. How can you know that you need healing if you do not know if you are sick? The sinful nature needs to be killed with the Law so that you might be made alive with the Gospel.

And so, what God is teaching us, is know your place. You aren’t called to get rid of the weeds from the wheat. That’s the place of the angels on the Last Day. They will do the separating. Your extraordinarily ordinary place is to wait, forgive, and trust God will do his work.

But there’s that sneaky devil, enemy of God and sower of weeds in this world. He works so hard to try and get us to forget place. He knows that if he can get us to focus on the weeds—everyone else—your self-righteousness will run rampant expecting others to be more like you so that the Law pushes out the Gospel. He knows how quickly your pride will get in the way thinking that you are responsible for other people’s actions. He wants to inflate your ego to think that it’s your place to fix people and to fix their lives! He wants you to focus on the weeds and not trust the power of the Gospel. But what we may also forget is that by nature we are the weeds, people of the evil one. By nature we are God’s enemies, hostile towards him and against his will. Your destiny was the fiery furnace of hell where the fires do not go out and the loud weeping and grinding of teeth does not stop. That was the place I deserved.

But God is patient. And in his patience he waited for the time to fully come before he sends His Son to live among the weeds of this world—sinners and God’s enemies. While here Jesus knows his place. It’s to live under God’s Law perfectly for you according to his Father’s will. His place is underneath the weight of a cross that he carries to Calvary for you. It’s hanging from the cross in the place between God’s burning wrath and you. He endures the punishment so you that you might have a place of peace with God. On that cross Jesus endures the tormenting fires of hell so that you would not. And from that place he sheds his blood to wash you clean and pay the price so your sins are forgiven. He knows his place is not to remain dead in that tomb but on Easter morning he rises again so that you might have a place living eternally with him. The Son of Man knows his place. So he works so that you are made the good seed, people of God and co-heirs of his kingdom. That’s what you became in the waters of Baptism. That’s what he sends his Spirit to work through Word and Sacrament to keep you as in the one true faith. And Jesus promises that on the Last Day He will send his angels to gather you up into his kingdom to take your place by his side. Today the church and God’s people don’t always shine the brightest and

best in this dark world of sin. At times it looks and feels like we are being choked out by the weeds. But on that Last Day, the righteous will shine the like the sun in the kingdom of our Father. The suffering and struggle among the weeds in this world will end. The wait will all be worth it in your bright future ahead of you.

Until that day comes, think of how Jesus has been patient with you. When you struggle with sin, when you fall into that sin again later on today, he doesn't tie you up and throw you into the fire. Instead he picks you and says, "I forgive you." He's not condoning or excusing sin. He is slow-to-anger and abounding in patient love. Know your place in his forgiving love and be quick to show the same. God does not call us to get rid of the weeds. He doesn't call you to fix the problems in society or other people. No, we do not ignore, excuse, or condone it. We continue to resist and fight against! But know your place. Unlike in the real farming world where weeds stay weeds, in God's Kingdom weeds can become wheat. And Jesus puts on your hands to do the work. He speaks through your mouth to speak His Word that makes more wheat. Know Jesus' place who works, changes, and fixes with His Word. Know that's not yours. We aren't the sanctification police who are in charge of making sure people live this way or that. You are called to share the Good News, live in service to your neighbor and the glory of God's name. Preach the Law. Preach the Gospel. And then leave it to God who will send his angels to do the separating.

Until that time comes, know your place. Whether it's called to be a mom or dad, a child, a farmer or rancher, truck driver, nurse, shut-in, whatever place God has given to you, remember who you are. You are wheat in this world. Be of clear mind and practice self-control as you stay in your lane. Be patient—not complacent with sin but understand that until Jesus returns we aren't going to get rid of it. Be patient trusting God's Word works and his promises will be fulfilled. Look ahead to the Harvest at the end of time to when God's angels will come and bring you to your place with your Father in his kingdom. Amen.

