

Sermon Title: Let the Wheat and the Tares Grow Together

Introduction

Today, we delve into the profound and instructive Parable of the Weeds, or as some translations say, the Parable of the Tares. This parable, recorded in Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, offers us valuable lessons about the kingdom of God, the reality of evil in the world, and the ultimate divine judgment.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Matthew 13:24 (KJV) 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 13:36 (KJV) 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. "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field..."

The Parable Explained

Jesus tells a story of a farmer who sows good seed in his field. But under the cover of night, an enemy comes and sows weeds among the wheat. As the wheat sprouts and forms heads, the

weeds also appear. The servants are bewildered and ask if they should pull out the weeds. The farmer, knowing that uprooting the weeds could also damage the wheat, tells them to let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, he will instruct the harvesters to first collect the weeds, tie them in bundles for burning, and then gather the wheat into his barn.

1. The Reality of Good and Evil

- Coexistence of Wheat and Weeds: Like the wheat and weeds, good and evil exist side by side in this world. This parable teaches us that it is God who will eventually separate the righteous from the wicked at the end of the age. Our world is a mixed field where good and evil grow together, intertwined in complex ways.

The Nature of the Tare:

In the context of the Parable of the Weeds (or Tares) from the Bible, a "tare" specifically refers to a type of weed, most commonly identified as the darnel (*Lolium temulentum*), which closely resembles wheat during the early stages of its growth. The similarity between darnel and wheat makes it difficult to distinguish between the two until the plants mature and the ears develop.

Characteristics of Darnel (Tares):

- Similarity to Wheat: Darnel is often nearly indistinguishable from wheat until the final stages of its growth cycle. This resemblance can cause significant problems in wheat fields.
- Toxicity: Darnel is considered a noxious weed because it can be toxic to humans and animals if ingested, due to its contamination with a fungal endophyte that produces toxic alkaloids.
- Impact on Harvest: The presence of darnel among wheat can reduce the quality of the crop, making the wheat less valuable and potentially dangerous if the darnel seeds are mixed with wheat grains during milling.

2. Patience in Judgment

- Divine Patience: The farmer's decision to let both grow until the harvest reflects God's patience. God allows time for growth, for repentance, and for the true nature of each to be revealed. He delays judgment, not wanting anyone to perish but all to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

3. The Certainty of Judgment

- Separation at the Harvest: The end of the age will bring a separation, a sifting. The weeds, which represent all causes of sin and law-breakers, will be thrown into the blazing furnace. The righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. This is a promise of justice, a warning of judgment, and an encouragement to the faithful.

Application to Our Lives

- Recognize the Mixed Field: Understand that we live in a world where good and evil are often entangled. Our call is not to judge prematurely but to grow in righteousness, trusting God's ultimate judgment.
- Respond with Godly Character: In a world filled with weeds, be wheat. Strive for purity, righteousness, and godly living in the midst of a morally complex world.
- Be Patient and Hopeful: Do not be discouraged by the presence of evil. God's plan includes sorting everything in His perfect timing. Hold onto the hope of the righteous harvest.

Controlling Darnell (Tares) in the Natural World

Controlling darnel (*Lolium temulentum*) in wheat fields is crucial because of its negative impacts on crop yield and the potential toxicity of its seeds. Farmers historically faced significant challenges with darnel due to its close resemblance to wheat during the early growth stages. Modern agriculture, however, utilizes several methods to manage and reduce the presence of darnel in fields:

1. Preventative Measures

- Crop Rotation: Rotating crops can help prevent the establishment of darnel, as different crops may not provide the ideal conditions for its growth.
- Seed Cleaning: Using certified clean and treated seed ensures that the seeds planted are free from darnel contamination. Seed cleaning technology has advanced to effectively separate darnel from wheat due to slight differences in size, shape, or color.
- Guarding the Heart: Just as using clean seed ensures a pure crop, filling our minds and hearts with positive, wholesome, and spiritual content can prevent negative influences from taking root. Regular engagement with scripture, prayer, and positive interactions helps maintain spiritual health.

Proverbs 4:23 (KJV): "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

- Community Influence: Surrounding oneself with a supportive and morally upright community can also act as a preventive measure against spiritual downfalls, much like crop rotation introduces a healthier environment.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (KJV): "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

2. Cultural Control

- Optimal Sowing Time: Planting wheat when conditions are less favorable for darnel can reduce its emergence. For example, altering the sowing depth and timing can give wheat a competitive advantage.

- Improved Field Hygiene: Managing field boundaries and fallow lands to reduce the seed bank of darnel can help prevent its spread into crop fields.

- Spiritual Disciplines: Implementing regular practices such as prayer, fasting, Bible study, and meditation can strengthen one's spiritual foundation, making it less hospitable to negative influences, similar to adjusting sowing depth and timing in farming.

1 Timothy 4:7-8 (KJV): "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

- Personal Integrity: Maintaining high ethical standards in all aspects of life can prevent the 'seeds' of unethical behavior from germinating and taking hold.

Psalms 25:21 (KJV): "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee."

3. Mechanical Control

- Hand Weeding: In smaller or more manageable fields, hand weeding, though labor-intensive, can be effective, especially if done early in the season before the darnel seeds mature.

- Tillage: Plowing or tilling can help control darnel by burying its seeds too deep to germinate effectively. However, this needs to be balanced with soil conservation practices.

- Repentance and Correction: Analogous to hand weeding, this involves the conscious effort to remove sins or faults as soon as they are noticed. This could mean seeking forgiveness, making amends, or correcting a misstep.

Acts 3:19 (KJV): "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

- Discipline: Just as tillage can prevent weeds from becoming established, spiritual disciplines can disrupt the patterns of sin before they become entrenched.

Hebrews 12:11 (KJV): "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

4. Chemical Control

- Herbicides: The use of selective herbicides that target grass weeds but spare the cereal crops can be effective. The choice of herbicide and the timing of application are critical to maximize efficacy and minimize crop damage.

- Pre-emergent Herbicides: Applying herbicides that act on seeds or young seedlings before the darnel emerges can reduce its establishment.

- Post-emergent Herbicides: These are applied after the crop and weed have emerged. Careful selection and timing are necessary to ensure the herbicide targets the dandelion without harming the wheat.

- Sacraments and Rites: In a spiritual context, this could relate to participating in sacraments or religious rites that cleanse and renew, such as baptism or confession. These practices can act like herbicides that target specific spiritual deficiencies.

John 3:5 (KJV): "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Spiritual guidance from a trusted religious leader or counselor can help address and mitigate specific spiritual struggles or temptations, providing targeted 'treatment'.

Proverbs 11:14 (KJV): "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

5. Biological Control

- Although not commonly used for dandelion, exploring biological control options such as natural predators, parasites, or diseases that specifically target dandelion could be a future avenue for managing this weed.

- Fruit of the Spirit: Cultivating the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control as listed in Galatians 5:22-23) can naturally suppress the growth of negative traits, similar to how certain plants can inhibit the growth of weeds through natural mechanisms.

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV): "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

6. Monitoring and Surveillance

- Regular scouting and monitoring of fields to detect early signs of dandelion infestation can help farmers take timely action before the weed becomes too established.

- Self-Examination: Regular self-reflection and spiritual examination, such as through meditation or spiritual retreats, can help identify areas of weakness before they develop into larger issues. This is akin to monitoring a field for the first signs of weed growth.

2 Corinthians 13:5 (KJV): "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Heb 13:17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Drawing a parallel between managing physical weeds like dandelion in a wheat field and addressing spiritual or moral challenges in one's life offers rich metaphorical insights. Here's how the

Just as a farmer vigilantly manages his fields to ensure the best harvest, so must individuals and communities be diligent in spiritual cultivation. Preventing the 'weeds' of sin and negative influence involves a proactive and integrated approach, blending preventative measures with active intervention and constant vigilance. The goal is to foster a spiritually healthy life, fruitful in the characteristics that reflect one's faith and values.

Conclusion

The Parable of the Weeds challenges us to discernment and faithfulness, to live as wheat among the weeds. It calls us to trust in the wisdom of God's timing for judgment and to focus on our own growth and fruitfulness. Let us then be diligent, patient, and hopeful, looking forward to the harvest when righteousness is fully realized, and evil is finally and completely eradicated.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, grant us the wisdom to see Your hand at work in this world. Help us to live faithfully among the weeds, growing as wheat that bears fruit for Your Kingdom. Give us patience and keep our hope alive as we await Your righteous judgment. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This sermon on the Parable of the Weeds provides an overview of its meaning and implications for personal and communal Christian life, urging believers to persevere in faith and righteousness amidst a world where good and evil coexist until the final divine judgment.