

Matthew 13: 24-30 & 36-43

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ 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.’”

³⁶ 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.

“Please join me in my prayer.” Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength, and our redeemer. Amen. (Ps. 19:14)

“Perceptive, Patient, Prepared”

Conflict! We don't need to look too hard these days to see that that we are living in a world full of conflict. There is conflict between nations. Conflict between our political parties. Conflict between towns and cities. Conflict between labor and management... between neighbors... between families... within our families... and of course ... conflict between spouses. Conflict in the church. Why should the church be any different?

Conflict in the world can be understood ... but conflict in the church is a completely different story. Aren't we all supposed to be worshiping the one and only son of God? Yet there is conflict between all the religious sects ... between church leaders, and even between the members of the congregation themselves. ... But why should there be conflict between God's children ... the brothers and sisters of Christ?

Well, Jesus tells us why in this Parable. He shows us that there is conflict in this earthly kingdom, and we are not to be fooled. One reason is obvious,

yet rarely acknowledged, and that is because there is an enemy called Satan. The direct enemy of God himself. Satan likes to get his digs in on Our Father. And what hurts a parent the most? To get at God he strikes at his children. And where can he find God's children? There is no better way and no better place to irritate God than by causing conflict in his church.

So how are we to deal with it? To start with, we must understand that any sort of conflict is always very costly for both parties: ... war in any form is such a waste ... but this passage suggests three ways to deal with that conflict. ...

The first way to deal with it is to be perceptive to the enemy. Verse 25, "but while everybody was asleep, an enemy, Jesus tells us in verse 39 that this enemy is the devil, came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away". Notice he went away, he was sly; he didn't hang around to watch, or say, "I did that". He did the deed and left, leaving everyone in confusion as to how the conflict arose. The offending seeds were sown while everyone was asleep.

So we must therefore be aware. We must be cognizant of what Satan is up to. We must be perceptive and alert. We cannot afford to fall asleep. That is why the scriptures are filled with warnings to be alert. Ephesians 6:18 says, "Be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." And 1 Peter 5:8 says, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour". Don't we all know someone or of someone like that? Ready to devour someone and leave destruction in their wake.

The devil easily embroils the church in conflict because we Christians aren't paying close enough attention to his actions. Nothing blinds our spiritual perception faster than tolerated sin so we must be aware of what is going on in the world around us.

Yet, it is not the place of the church to judge nor condemn and execute such sinners. As perhaps some sects of Christianity may believe. But it is our place to call sin what it is, and consequently call sinners to repentance by sharing and explaining the word of God.

We must be aware of what is going on in our churches, and to do that we need to be involved in the activities of the church and with those around us not just in our church but in our community. We must be aware of what is going on in your own lives. Never is our perception so confused as when we look at ourselves; true?

2. Be Patient

This takes us to our second strategy for facing up to conflict, patience. In the King James Version, the weeds are referred to Tares. Easton's Bible Dictionary describes "tares" as follows: "the bearded darnel, mentioned only in Matt. 13:25-30. It is the *Lolium tem-u-lent-um*, a species of rye-grass, the seeds of which are a strong soporific poison. It bears the closest resemblance to wheat till the ear appears, and only then the difference is discovered. It grows plentifully in Syria and Palestine." The similarity to wheat is why no one in the parable realized that anything was wrong at first. Not until "the wheat sprouted and formed heads", and then the

servants grasped that weeds had been sown. That is why they wanted to pull them out immediately.

But the owner knew that the weeds, the tares, and the wheat looked so very similar that not all of the servants could tell the difference. If they were to pull the weeds they would probably pull up much of the wheat also. It was much safer to wait till the final harvest to insure the identity and safety of the true wheat. By destroying the weeds you had every chance of destroying the wheat.

The servants were told by the owner to be patient. We must be patient too. We cannot immediately discern the difference between a true Christian and someone who merely professes to be one. Our human judgment has its faults, and so we must wait patiently for God to judge. God will deal with it in his way.

Think about it, how many times have you judged a person wrong? ... I know I have. I am very quick to judge. I know I will do it again. Human judgment is fallible. That is why we read in Romans 14:4, "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls". We are not to pass judgment on others because they are not our servants ... they are servants for God to judge, and him alone.

Romans 14:1 goes further and says, "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." Christian harmony should not depend on 100% agreement on all matters pertaining to the Christian life; instead our motto could be, "in essentials - unity, in non-essentials - liberty, but in all things - love".

1 Corinthians 13:13 simply says, “And now abide in faith, hope, and love; ... but the greatest of these is love”, and that is the wellbeing of others. ... In fact, we all know the saying, “Good things come to those who wait”, well we must wait patiently for the judgment of all things, which will take place exactly when God decides and not before.

Be Prepared. Our last strategy for facing up to conflict. Be prepared. The weeds, the Bearded Darnel, were only able to pretend to be wheat for so long. As the wheat came to head and formed grain, the true identity of the weeds were revealed; and so it is with those who are false. They can only conceal their true nature for so long, because, as written in Numbers 32:23, eventually “their sin will find them out”.

Jesus clearly teaches us that there will be a day of judgment in which the wheat will be clearly separated from the chaff the tares. The righteous will be separated from the wicked, and on that day, there will be weeping, and gnashing of teeth; emotional and physical pain. We must be prepared to stand before our God.

Matthew 24:42 says ... “Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come”. In other words, we are to be prepared at all times for Christ’s return, or our death if that comes first. We could be called to account at any time. Probably when we are least expecting it.

Conflict... Created by the Evil One. We face it everywhere. But we must be Perceptive. We must be Patient. We must be Prepared. Conflict can arise anywhere. Within yourself while sitting alone in your room reading. Sitting in a theater watching a movie. Standing at the sink, doing dishes.

Standing in a crowd, protesting. Walking in the woods. Walking down the sidewalk in front of Rigas'. Driving a car along 214 or in downtown Pittsburgh. Discussing politics with your best friend or on Facebook. Sharing the Good News. Trying to determine if someone is a stalk of wheat or a weed. Conflict can occur anywhere, sometimes expected, sometimes not. But three skills that will serve us well to deal with it.

Be Perceptive. Be Patient. Be Prepared.

Amen and Amen