

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

MATTHEW 13

24He presented another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25But while people were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. 26When the plants sprouted and produced heads of grain, the weeds also appeared. 27The servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where did the weeds come from?’ 28He said to them, ‘An enemy did this.’ The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and gather up the weeds?’ 29‘No,’ he answered, ‘because when you gather the weeds, you might pull the wheat along with them. 30Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “First, gather up the weeds, bind them in bundles, and burn them. Then, gather the wheat into my barn.””

36Then Jesus sent the people away 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 them, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38The field is the world. The good seeds are the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the Evil One. 39The enemy who sowed them is the Devil. The harvest is the end of the world. The reapers are angels. 40Therefore, just as the weeds are gathered up and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the world. 41The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will pull out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and those who continue to break the law. 42The angels will throw them into the fiery 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 to hear, let him hear.”



Weeds are bound to grow. Have you ever pulled a yard full of weeds? You’ve never felt better than when you’ve done this. I landscaped for a summer, and for a half hour one day, about six of us pulled a whole yard of weeds. Handful after handful, you couldn’t pull the wrong thing. The whole yard was asking for it.

But weeding isn’t always so easy. Weeds are bound to grow not only among weeds, but among wheat. In fact, weeds are, by definition, a plant out of place.

So it is no surprise when the good is mixed with the bad. You and I can understand that from our experience with plant life; Jesus uses gardens, yards, fields, and farms to teach us. This summer we have stopped off in different places in the book of Matthew, and with each gospel section Jesus grows us, His Church. He gives us great comfort, too, because He isn't unaware of the way things go on in and around the Church.

THE LORD KNOWS FALSE DOCTRINE GROWS

1. Grow as wheat

There were two seeds. Differing seeds meant there were good and bad in the same field. This means that Christians grow in a sinful world. After all, Jesus says that Christians are in the world, but not of it. We might be considered weak, simplistic, or fools, but we grow, because in the world we are pressed to our Savior's Word. That is the only true strength we have.

The devil sows seed, too. These seeds grow up as weeds. There were already enough problems if the seed were only truth. Add to that the wicked sower with bad seed. The Greek word for "weed" is actually a plant that looks very much like wheat. You cannot even tell until it buds that it doesn't belong. Likewise there are non-Christians who look, act, walk, and talk like Christians but do not truly believe.

Are you wheat or a weed? The rest of us wouldn't be able to tell! You have to answer this question for yourself. You know that God knows the answer. We judge what we see and hear. We know what people confess with the mouth, not what they believe in the heart. We see what is thoughtless and judge. We see what is sin and judge. We hear false teaching and judge. (This kind of judging is alright; in fact, we are commanded to judge or discern in this way.) We must at least be able to judge ourselves: Are you a wheat or a weed? Are you a believer or a hypocrite? Will you be praised or condemned on judgment day?

False doctrine takes in not the thorns, not the greedy, but men and women who seek the truth in great earnest. "*By smooth talk and flattery, [false teachers] seduce the hearts of the unsuspecting*" (Romans 16:18). The Galatians began in the Spirit before they were bewitched and deceived (Gal. 3:3). False doctrine takes in men and women who seek the truth in great earnest.

So how can we be sure we are wheat and not a weed? As it turns out, we ourselves might honestly not feel like wheat. We might have looked wheaty all week. We may have walked and talked like wheat. But in our hearts we know our feelings and thoughts. We knew our hate, our lies, our lust, and our doubt. Do we emphasize that feeling and so conclude we are weeds?

No, while the Lord Jesus does call us to check our sinful hearts; He also reinforces His love for us. He has planted the Word in us and deposited His Spirit in us. He has made promises to each of us. He has gone to the cross for us in sincere love for us. We might be considered weak, simplistic, or fools, but we grow, because in the world we are pressed to our Savior's Word. That is the only true strength we have. "*Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief*" (Mark 9:24).

2. Endure the weeds

And yet the weeds are bound to grow. Luther said repeatedly: "Where God builds a church, the devil builds a chapel (or a tavern)." Are we surprised?

It causes the servants of the parable to ask God, "*Do you want us to go gather the weeds*" (v28)? This would imply pulling them up in order to bundle them up and burn them. These servants draw the logical conclusion. Wouldn't we all be eager to pull all the weeds? Wouldn't we go hand-over-fist and just uproot every weed in sight?

I worked a couple summers filing in the office for my aunt and uncle's business, and they had me go out one day and clean up their landscaping. I was eager to show off my skills, and I got right to work on a tall patch of grass. I figured it had to be a weed. There were several similar tall patches of grass. After some time pulling up random tall patches of grass, I told my aunt. She said, "That was decorative grass." (I had pulled good plants, not weeds.) I felt so awful.

There is nothing wrong with the desire to torch the weeds. "*Do you want us to go gather the weeds*" (v28)? It's an understandable question. The servants were provoked to outrage at false teachings because they love the Word. It grieves all of us when the devil reigns in (what was supposed to be) the church.

But Jesus is a Master field owner and farmer. He understood that pulling the weeds prematurely meant pulling the wheat, pulling up the good fruits, before its time. If we do not want to endure any weeds, there won't be any Church either.

So Jesus replied to the servants, *“Let both grow together”* (v30). Endure them and be long-suffering. Do not wish you were without unbelievers in disguise and false teachers. You won’t be able to change this as long as the earth endures.

In saying, *“Let both grow together”* (v30), “LET” is not confirmation or approval of the evil men and women, but comfort for us.

- “LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER” reminds us that God is patient, not wanting any to suffer, but everyone to come to repentance.
- “LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER” reminds us that God wants us to be influencers and spread our wheaty Word to all the field.
- “LET” reminds us the struggle for faith is full of real testing and trials.
- “LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER” helps us define our time to stand wheaty and full in the Word and the sacraments.
- “LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER” grows in us a heart for God.
- “LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER” lends us a heart for the godless.

“Therefore, after preparing your minds for action by exercising self-control, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Pet. 1:13). For the last day is coming, when the wheat and the weeds will be gathered and sorted. The weeds will be bundled for the furnace. This is weeping. This is gnashing of teeth. This is more distressing that you and I will ever want to imagine. But it’s not without payoff for you and me, who believe. Everything evil and awful, everything flashy and false, everything deceptive and disgusting will be cast out forever. The unbelieving body and soul will burn, and they will never persecute the Son of God or His kingdom again.

But *“then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father”* (v43). The “LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER” will be over and done. All the holding off of judgment, all the holding on in perseverance, and all the hoping ahead for the glory of God’s kingdom will bear fruit and come to fulfillment.

Jesus lived and endured perfectly, unlike any of us. If there was one exception, a wheat cut down prematurely and torched like a weed, it was our Lord on the cross. May God give you confidence to grow as wheat and forbearance to endure the weeds. Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.