

Weeds

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Good to see you. So we're going to read from Matthew chapter 13. So if you have a Bible, do turn to Matthew chapter 13.

If you would like a Bible, there are some at the back. If you wave your hand in the air, someone will deliver a Bible to you. So if you'd like one, but do turn to Matthew chapter 13, and we're going to read from God's Word just now.

So it's reading from Matthew 13, verse 24, first to 30, and then we'll jump a little bit to 36. So Jesus told them another parable.

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed ears, then the weeds also appeared.

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? An enemy did this, he replied. The servants asked him, Do you want us to go and pull them up?

[1 : 11] No, he answered, Because while you're pulling up the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 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. Jump down to verse 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.

He answered, The one who sowed the good seed is the son of man. 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 and the enemy who sows them is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the age and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, So it will be at the end of the age.

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. They will throw them into the blazing furnace Where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

[2 : 18] Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. Whoever has ears, let them hear. How do you feel about weeds?

They're a nuisance, aren't they? They sprout up without warning, seemingly overnight sometimes. Maybe you've gone away during the summer for a few days and you arrive back to your meadow rather than to your lawn.

Well, in our new house we have a lovely garden. We have some nice trees and bushes and grass and some gravel around the house and lots and lots of weeds everywhere.

All sorts of weeds. Can give you all kinds of weeds if you'd like them. And in the grass we think we even have some heather and gorse. You know the really prickly, spiky one in the grass?

Well, when we're trying to get rid of weeds we need to be careful that we don't kill the grass or pull up or damage a flower if it's beside it. We need patience getting rid of weeds.

[3 : 24] And in our parable today we come to a story about weeds. And in fact a story involving agricultural sabotage. So Jesus tells a story to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like.

You could say this is what it's like when God is at work in the world. This is what it's like. A man sowed some wheat in his field.

But while everybody was sleeping an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads well then the weeds also appeared.

The servants they came to the owner and said Did you not sow good seed? Where did all these weeds come from? An enemy did this, the owner said.

Well, do you want us to go and take all the weeds and pull them up straight away? No, he said. Because while you're pulling up the weeds you might uproot the wheat with them.

[4 : 27] Let the weeds and the wheat grow together until it's time for harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters first collect the weeds, tie them to be burned and gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.

This was a sneaky enemy. Sowing this weed among the wheat seed. And the weeds that are sown in this story are typically known as darnel.

Or even in some places they're nicknamed false wheat. It's a weedy rye grass with poisonous seeds. Which in its early stages of growth looks like wheat.

But can easily be distinguished at harvest time. Some of you might recognize this man or you might know who he is. He came to Amazing Grace a few times to speak.

His name is Jonathan Schuster. On a trip when we were in Israel years ago. We were walking past a field and he dove into a field. Because he saw some false wheat and some real wheat side by side.

[5 : 37] The two were almost indistinguishable. But he thought here's a good teaching opportunity. So I'll jump into the field and pull some out to teach them. Well, this parable is about the weeds and the wheat.

And this was something that apparently happened in Jesus' time. Because to sow darnel or false wheat as an act of revenge was punishable by Roman law.

So it's in their laws. If you did this sneaky thing, you'd be punished. It was sneaky. It was malicious. And the only way it could be rectified was at harvest time to separate the false wheat from the true wheat.

And the amazing thing about this parable is that Jesus gives us an explanation. Sometimes we don't have that. We need to dig a little bit deeper to understand what do you mean, Jesus?

But his disciples go to him. Thank you, disciples. And they say, Jesus, what does this all mean? Well, he explains it like this. The one who sowed the good seed, that's the son of man.

[6 : 45] The field is the world. The good seed or the wheat are the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one. The enemy is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the age. The harvesters are the angels. Just like we have a code to crack the parable. Now, Jesus doesn't interpret every element here.

But we can understand the true meaning of the story that Jesus tells. Maybe with Jesus' explanation, we could understand it like this. Jesus is placing his people throughout the world. But the devil is working to cultivate enemies of God at the same time. So God's people and God's enemies will live and work side by side.

Sometimes even being hard to distinguish. But a time is coming called the end of the age when God will remove all sin and all who do evil.

[7 : 52] And God's people will live forever in God's kingdom where they will shine like the sun. They'll finally be seen for what they are. So how does this teaching, how does this understanding of this parable apply for us today and how can it help us?

Well, as God's people placed in this world, we need to be patient while we live in a world full of evil. We need to be patient while we live in a world full of evil. The reality that this parable highlights is that evil has not been eradicated with the coming of God's kingdom.

Many at the time of Jesus were expecting a sudden and absolute overthrow of Roman occupation and for the promised kingdom of God to be in full flow immediately.

But God's kingdom has small and what appears to be insignificant beginnings, only to grow and to rise into something much larger.

[9 : 00] The way God is working is like this landowner who has planted the wheat. He's placing his people throughout the world, but the people of the devil, those who are God's enemies, they're still present and they're even thriving right now.

And God has chosen not to immediately remove evil from the world. And he's also chosen not to remove his people immediately from the world.

So we live in a world that has a mixed nature, those who live for God and those who are God's enemies. And what we realize is that we're not the ones who can distinguish who is who.

We're living side by side. Only God knows people's hearts. And only at the end of the age will we truly see who are his people and who are not. Now, we can certainly have a good idea now. As we seek to live for him, we say we follow the Lord Jesus and we trust in him. We can have confidence together that we're in fellowship with other believers. Our lives have been changed and transformed.

[10:15] There is evidence. But it's at the end of the age when it will be finally seen who are God's people and who are his enemies. So we must be patient.

God has worked things out so that we do live in a world that is full of evil. He hasn't taken it all away. He hasn't taken up those weeds. And that can be confusing at times. It can be full of sadness that we just don't understand. But we need to be patient as we seek to live faithfully for him in the midst of evil around us.

Sometimes we have to wait for something better, don't we? Waiting means something better is coming. Well, what about small things? You could have a coffee in 60 seconds.

If you use instant, boil the kettle, pour it in, coffee's done. Or you could buy some ground coffee in Super Value, scoop it into the cafeteria and wait three minutes.

[11:17] Even better. Or you could buy some whole beans. You could weigh them out, grind them, put them in your machine, steam the milk. Maybe that'll take you 10 minutes.

But it's worth waiting for something better. That's what we're seeing with God's kingdom, is that we need to be patient during this time where evil still is here. Because something better is coming. It's worth the wait. And gardening is certainly something you have to be patient at and persistent at. Growing flowers, removing weeds, instant changes just don't work, do they?

As much as the garden center will want to tell you this will work in three days and you'll have a perfectly green lawn, there's no instant fix. You have to be patient. And with this world that we live in, we need to be patient.

While we wait for the plan that God has put in place to unfold, we need to be patient. Patient while we struggle with illness. Patient while life feels dull and repetitive.

[12:28] Patient while others around us succeed by the world's standards. Patient as we reach out to friends and family with the good news of Jesus.

Patient as we build or repair relationships. Patient while we work. Patient while we do life here. We need to be patient while we live in a world full of evil.

It will be worth it. Don't give up now and try to seek instant satisfaction. This just leads to disappointment and regret. God's ways are mostly not instant ways.

But they are the most rewarding. So be patient. But we also need to be careful. A separation of good and evil is coming.

So we're patient with an end in sight. We're not patient as we live with no hope or no future on the horizon. We're patient because we know the end of the age is coming.

[13:36] So we need to be careful because a separation of good and evil is coming. In the parable that Jesus tells, it's the harvest. When the harvesters are sent out into the field to first collect the weeds, tie them up to be burned, and then the wheat is gathered and put into the owner's barn.

And Jesus gives us more explanation in the later verses, verse 40 to 43. He says, Whoever has ears, let them hear.

So this time is coming when what is evil will be removed, and what is good will be left to live forever in God's eternal kingdom.

You see, this world isn't going to keep going on forever just like it is now. The end of the age is coming. When Jesus will bring the curtain down on this part of history and bring in a new age.

And at that time, everything that causes sin and all who do evil will be removed. Removed from God's presence.

[15:11] So we need to be careful as this separation is coming. Maybe you sometimes ask the question in desperation, will this ever end?

Maybe it's that terrible film that you're watching. You've been forced to go to the cinema. You can't escape. You can't walk out. You're stuck there for two hours. Will this ever end?

Maybe it's that long journey where you're stuck in terrible traffic. You realized, Why am I trying to drive through the tunnel at half past four on a Friday afternoon in Cork City?

Will this ever end? Maybe it's school or college, and you feel like, Not another week of homework. Will this ever end?

Well, it will. These things are not forever. You got out of the cinema. You got through the tunnel. And even school and college eventually come to an end. And this is a warning to us, if you're listening today, that an end is coming to this era of history.

[16:21] Good and evil will be separated. Those who follow Jesus and trust Him, and those who reject Jesus, will be separated. The wheat and the weeds will be separated.

And the warning is stark. As Jesus teaches about the destiny of those who do evil, they'll be thrown into, what he says, the blazing furnace, where there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

This is a horrible, horrible place. A place where God's goodness, and care, and protection, and love have been withdrawn.

And all that remains is sorrow, and anger, and pain. You have to be careful, because that time of separation is coming.

As Jesus says at the end of this story, whoever has ears, let them hear. Take heed of this warning.

[17:26] Don't ignore it. Don't continue to just look at those who trust Jesus from the outside, but come to Him yourself. Come to Him with your heart, and be welcomed, and accepted by Him.

So then you have nothing to fear when this time of separation comes. All those who are in Jesus are kept safe, and all those who are rejecting Jesus will be removed.

So ask yourself, are you listening? Are your ears hearing? In this story, the weeds looked like the wheat, all the way up to the harvest.

It's quite easy to blend in as a Christian, to talk like a Christian, to come and to sing on a Sunday. But only God knows our hearts, and only time will tell.

Please don't just go along with Christian things, and blend in and look the part. Come to Jesus with your whole heart. Trust in Him, and be kept safe by Him.

[18:35] So be careful. The separation is coming. So lastly, be hopeful. There is a bright future for God's people.

As we patiently wait, and as we're warned, we can be hopeful. We can be hopeful because there's a very bright future for God's people. In the parable, the owner of the wheat field sowed wheat, and it grew.

Even though it was contaminated by weeds, it was harvested. It was put into barns for the owner to use. And Jesus promises this time to come when evil and evil things will be removed, and the kingdom of God will be here fully and ultimately.

And he uses this phrase that the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. This time will come when God's people will no longer be hidden.

We will no longer struggle with sin and sickness and death. No more days of darkness. But instead, we will shine like the sun in the kingdom of our father.

[19:49] We can be who God truly made us to be. Finally able to enjoy being God's people in a perfect and full way. It will be unhindered and never-ending.

It's an image that's used to describe the ultimate glory of those who are in Jesus. We sometimes use the phrase, don't we, mostly of women, you're looking radiant.

Don't think someone's said I'm looking radiant. Sure, you can share that with me later. But there's something about this person who is glowing. They're beaming. And we don't mean that there is light coming out of them, but they're full of life or happiness or joy or health.

Well, when we will shine like the sun, we will perfectly be able to be who we were created to be, full of life and joy and happiness and fun and praise and worship to God where sin will no longer have any grip but will have been finally dealt with once and for all and will shine like the sun in the kingdom of our Father in a world that He will restore for us to live in and enjoy and reach the fullness of human potential.

We think we've done amazing things here. Well, just wait for the new creation. No more sickness. No more suffering or pain. A place where we can explore and create and serve God perfectly forever.

[21:29] I thought, what does this mean tangibly? What does that actually mean? Well, I would love to make my own guitar one day. I'd love to get some beautiful wood and cut it and shape it and sand it and put it all together.

I don't know if I'll manage it here on this earth in this time. I might, but if not, I'll make a guitar in the new creation. It's going to be a physical, beautiful place where we can create and explore God's perfect world forever.

The new creation will be a perfect physical place where we can live and fulfill every good desire in the presence of God. So be hopeful there is a bright future for God's people.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word and how you speak to us so clearly. And we thank you for this parable where you teach us what it's like when you're working in this world.

and we thank you that you even explain this parable so clearly, what it means in each part. Father, we pray for patience that as we live our lives for you in a world full of evil, we pray for patience to do that.

[22 : 56] Lord, we need your spirit to be patient when we are tested, when things are hard. Lord, we pray you'd give that to us. We pray that we would take that warning that this life will end, that a time is coming when there will be this separation.

And Lord, as we live, give us hope as we look to your kingdom, the kingdom of heaven that is coming and has come. We can't wait, Lord, for that fullness of your kingdom.

Lord, give us that hope for that future ahead. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to sing one song as we close our time together, thinking about God's faithfulness and his goodness to us.

So, let's stand as we sing our closing song. in Jesus' name here, and whatv have you and whatv may be that Amen.