

Weeds

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[0 : 00] how many of you have some of these in your yard right now? It's the tireless battle. Unless, of course, you're my daughters.

In which case, this is a beautiful bouquet and a gift. And please don't throw it in the garbage, Daddy. As my grade 6 teacher used to say, a weed is just a flower in a place that it's not wanted. Well, this morning we're going to be looking at another parable of Jesus, a parable about the kingdom of heaven, in which he uses weeds as an analogy to make a point, to tell us something important that we need to know.

Verse 24, let's listen in. 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 heads, then the weeds also appeared.

[1 : 24] 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, Well, do you want us to go and pull them up? No, he answered.

Because while you are pulling 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. I want you to put yourself there, as Jesus tells this parable.

There you are in the crowd listening in, and Jesus opens his mouth and says those first few words, The kingdom of heaven is like...

[2 : 29] And already he's got our attention. He's about to say something about the kingdom of God. As we talked about last week, kingdom of heaven is really just a figure of speech that essentially means the kingdom of God.

Matthew is the only one who uses or records Jesus as saying that expression. The other two gospel writers, they kind of translated the kingdom of God.

It's not so much a reference as to where the rule and reign and kingdom of God is, like the heavenly realm, but as to whose kingdom it is.

It's the kingdom of heaven, of the God of heaven. Jesus says, The kingdom of heaven is like... And then he tells this story.

He gives this parable. And it's quite an intriguing story. You can imagine sitting there listening. Oh, who would do such a thing?

[3 : 30] Charles, you're a landowner. How would you feel if you found out this morning that while you were sleeping last night, some guy was dragging his cedar through your field, seeding weeds?

It explains a lot. Like the audacity in my land. Who would do such a thing? For the rest of us, maybe you have a garden bed or a flower bed.

How would you feel if you found out that last night while you were sleeping, some guy came along with a pound of Canada thistle seeds and spread it all throughout your flower beds and your garden bed and mixed it in real good.

Like the audacity. Who would do such a thing? Someone who hates you. An enemy. But what makes this even worse is that there's a specific kind of weed that Jesus is referring to here.

And we don't really see this in our English translations. Most of them just say weeds. But actually, the word that he uses is zizanium. Or in modern day lingo, I don't know if we have it here in Canada or not, but darnel.

[4 : 58] In some regions, it's actually called false wheat. And apparently, this plant is so similar to wheat that you actually can't tell the difference until the heads begin to form.

And the darnel is worthless. Oftentimes, it's poisonous. It plays host to this fungus which just wreaks havoc.

And you kind of see the intrigue in this story. What's happened here? This is not just some farmer wakes up a few days after he seeded his field and, oh, there's some little broadleaf weeds kind of in my field.

No, look at what he says in verse 26. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, this is already months after the seed's gone in the ground.

The crop is growing and only once the heads start to form do they look out and realize, oh boy, the field is full of zanzanium, of darnel.

[6 : 11] where did all this come from? The servants are baffled. They go to the owner. Didn't you sow good seed in your field?

Did somebody sell you a bad batch of seed? Where'd you get that stuff from anyway? No. I know, I sowed good seed in my field. Well, where did they come from then?

Well, it leaves only one explanation. An enemy did this. Says the landowner. Well, what should we do about it?

What do you want us to do? Do you want us to go pull them all out? No. Because by now the roots of the darnel and the wheat are all intertwined in the ground and if you pull out the darnel you might uproot some of the wheat.

And I don't want to lose any of the wheat. Let them both grow together until the harvest time. And at harvest time I'll tell the harvesters to first pull the weeds, deal with them and then bring in the grain.

[7 : 21] It's an intriguing story and here you are sitting listening to Jesus tell this story and I imagine that the people are wondering where is he going with this? What is this story about?

What does it mean? you've got this enemy why would he do such a thing? Is he trying to get back at this farmer, this landowner for something?

Why did he do that? And as Jesus tells the story we're probably all wondering is he going to find out who did it?

Is he going to get justice? Is he going to get revenge? Is this a story about forgiveness? About loving our enemy?

What's your point Jesus? Where are you going with this? And the disciples, they too didn't get it. They came to Jesus later after he had finished teaching some of the parables in verse 36.

[8 : 31] It says 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. We don't get it.

You said at the beginning the kingdom of heaven is like and then you told this story. Well, how is it like that? We don't get it.

And so Jesus explains. He makes clear what this little story, this parable means. Verse 37, 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. Jesus breaks his explanation up into two parts.

[9 : 37] In this first part he just kind of explains the various elements of the parable and what they correspond to, who they refer to. Let's go through it a little bit.

The one who sowed the good seed is the son of man. That was one of Jesus' favorite ways to refer to himself. It's kind of a curious title, the son of man.

We know that Jesus was referring to himself because some places it's just so obvious. Probably the one we're most familiar with is Judas when he comes to betray Jesus. Judas, are you betraying the son of man with a kiss?

Jesus meant himself when he said the son of man. But, in many cases, like parables, it was a title that people weren't really sure what he meant by that all the time.

I'm sure the Pharisees and religious leaders were kind of wondering, is he making a claim to be the Messiah? The son of man was used in Psalm 8, a son of man, just generally to refer to a human being, emphasizing the humanity of somebody compared to, say, the angels or to God.

[10:58] Son of man was also what God called Ezekiel, and he was a prophet. So is Jesus claiming to be a prophet? What do you mean by that title, by calling yourself the son of man?

And then, of course, Daniel, in his vision, says that he saw one like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven, one who went before the presence of the ancient of days, and glory and authority and sovereign power was given him so that he could rule and reign over a never-ending kingdom. Clearly a reference to the Messiah. And so what did Jesus mean by that? Difficult to pin down if they wanted to accuse him of claiming to be the Messiah.

But Jesus, as he explains to his disciples, he's clearly talking about the Messiah in that sense. Look at verse 41. He says, the son of man will send out his angels.

This is the son of man who has authority and charge over his angels. They're his servants. He will send out his angels and they will weed out of his kingdom.

[12:17] This is the son of man, the king, the Messiah. That's who Jesus is talking about here when he says son of man.

That's what the one who sowed represents. The one who sowed the good seed is the son of man. The field is the world. This is one of those elements that often has been misinterpreted.

People are quick to say, well, the field is the church. The field is the nation of Israel. But this is not a story about people in the world infiltrating the church and kind of living among the church almost as imposters.

Jesus says very clearly, the field is the world. As we're about to see, this is a parable about the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one living and growing together in the world.

Jesus goes on to say that the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom, literally the sons of the kingdom. And here again, we've just heard the parable last week of the sower, and there the seed represents the word of God.

[13:32] But Jesus is not making the same point. He's using the farming analogy again, yes, but the seed does not represent the word of God in this parable. He's making a different point.

He says the seed, the good seed, represents the sons of the kingdom. The son of man is going to, he comes into the world, into his field, and as a result of his labor, there will be sons of the kingdom, people, children of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil.

At this point, some of us might feel a little uncomfortable. Jesus is pretty black and white here. There really only seems to be two options, sons of the kingdom and sons of the evil one, sons of the devil.

That thought makes some of us uncomfortable. And it's not the only time that Jesus talks like this. I mean, is that what we're meant to see here, that the world really only is made up of two different kinds of people, sons of the kingdom and sons of the evil one.

[15:10] Well, Jesus, on another occasion, he had a conversation about where he talked about this with some Jewish people who at first seemed to believe what he was saying, John chapter eight.

And it came up in the conversation about, they said, well, we're descended from Abraham. Abraham. We've got credentials. And Jesus challenges that.

He says, if you were Abraham's children, then you would do what Abraham did. You are doing the works of your own father, he said to them. And they were offended.

It says, they protested. We are not illegitimate children. The only father we have is God himself. Jesus said to them, if God were your father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth.

[16:21] So we see in this case, Jesus making this distinction. Children of the devil, children of God.

But, not everybody who's a son or a daughter or a child of the devil thinks they are. They're not people who would say, well, I'm a Satanist, or I worship the devil.

It's kind of something that they seem to fall to by default because they're not children of God.

They're on the side of the devil. There's only two families here. The family of God and the family of the devil.

Two factions. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of the devil. Jesus kind of frames it that way. And the people who are in the camp of the devil, they don't think they are.

In fact, they probably would have been offended and disgusted even at the thought, at the suggestion that you belong to your father, the devil. And yet, that's what Jesus says.

[17 : 36] The devil, he was a murderer. And you guys here listening to me in this conversation that Jesus is having, you want to kill me.

You want to murder me. He had a problem with the truth. He didn't hold to the truth. And you guys have a problem with the truth that I'm saying to you right now. there are only two families.

There are only two kingdoms. The sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one. That's the way Jesus paints it. And while we're on the subject of this, I heard someone this week say to me, they had heard somebody, some people had done some terrible things and they said, those people are children of the devil.

The thing that they did was so wicked. How could you do that unless you're a child of the devil? Just a couple things I want to say about that. First is, the devil doesn't make us do anything.

What does James say in his little letter? he says that each one is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.

[19 : 03] Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. It's our own evil desires, more often than not, that lead us to sin, the reason that we sin.

And even when the devil is tempting or his minions are tempting us, it's our choice to listen and to do it. And we're responsible for that. The devil doesn't make us do anything.

He's not the reason why some people seem more wicked than others or why some people do terrible things. We're quite capable of that on our own.

That's what James says. So I think as Christians we should not when we hear of a terrible thing, we shouldn't be quick to say, well, they're children of the devil.

That's where we all start. We all have the same sin problem inherited from Adam. We all start as children of the devil. The second thing I want to say is more often than not when people speak of others as being children of the devil, it's with a tone or an attitude of self-righteousness.

[20 : 16] those children of the devil. I'm not one, but you guys, you're especially wicked. Or kind of a vindictiveness, you know, maybe sometimes even name calling.

You're a child of the devil, you know. You want to know what people hear when we say that to them, especially if they have no religious background and haven't been in the church?

this is what they hear when we say things like that to them. You're despicable. You're disgustingly evil. You're as evil as the devil himself.

Is that what we mean to communicate? If we take up the language of children of the devil, it better be because like Jesus, we are having an honest and thoughtful conversation about the spiritual reality of our world.

So the weeds in Jesus' parable, he says, represent the sons of the evil one, the devil. The harvest is the end of the age and the harvesters are angels.

[21 : 34] So Jesus has made his correlations to reality from the story and now he's going to draw out of that and give us the point and tell us what this little story is about. And so he does, starting in verse 40, he says, 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.

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. Whoever has ears, let him hear. This is Jesus' own explanation of his story and what it means.

And I think one of the first things to notice is what he doesn't explain. I mean, the initial parable that we heard, it talked about how if we deal with the weeds early, then the wheat will be uprooted or be hurt.

Jesus doesn't say anything about that in the explanation. We notice that a lot of these elements of the story have something they represent. Jesus kind of lists them all out for us, but who are the servants?

[23 : 00] Are they the disciples? Are they the angels? What about the gathering into the barn? Jesus doesn't say anything about that. He just says the righteous will shine in the kingdom. Is it implied that they were gathered?

We don't know. And the reason why I bring these things up is because we need to follow Jesus' lead on what his own story means.

It's easy for us to look at the various things that he kind of says mean this, this means this, this means this, and then to want to jump in there and start saying, yeah, and these are the things that he didn't explain mean this, and this, and this, and this.

But just like when any of us gives an analogy, if you press every single detail, eventually the analogy breaks down. We're kind of in the realm of speculation when we do that.

So I think it's important that we listen to Jesus and acknowledge what's here. What's his explanation for this? What's his main point? And almost all of it has to do with the weeds.

[24 : 07] Most of it. All the detail, all the emphasis seems to be on the weeds. And so what does Jesus say it means? What's his explanation?

The first thing that we notice is this. The end of the age is coming. Just like the harvest is coming for the farmer, the end of the age is coming.

There will be a time and it's time. It's happening. And what will happen at the end of the age? So will it be at the end of the age.

What? The weeds will be pulled up and burned in the fire. 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.

Jesus gives two kind of references to the sons of the evil one. He describes them in two different ways. As stumbling stones, those who cause others to sin, and as those who do evil, literally those who practice lawlessness.

[25 : 30] Jesus has already said a word about those who practice lawlessness. If you remember back to the Sermon on the Mount, did we not do this and this and that and this and this in your name?

And I will tell them, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness. I never knew you. let's not miss the truth that the weeds are not just flowers that are innocent, that just happen to be planted in the wrong place at the wrong time.

No. They are generally those who cause others to sin against God, who incite rebellion against God, and those who themselves practice lawlessness, who live without regard for God and what he has commanded and said.

They ignore it as a practice, as a habit, as a way of life. They have been people who lived in rebellion against him. Those are the weeds.

And Jesus says, at the end of the age, they, the sons of the evil one, will be gathered, they will be weeded out of his kingdom.

[26 : 52] They have no place in his kingdom. They will be gathered and thrown into the furnace of fire, the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Jesus is talking about hell. And it's not the first time, it's not the only time. He talks about hell in many places. And the words that he uses are awful.

The images that come to mind, people being thrown into a furnace, being burned alive, a place of weeping, gnashing of teeth, a place of anguish and torment.

torment. This is what Jesus says will be the fate of those who are not sons of the kingdom.

He will send out his angels and they will throw them into hell. hell. That's heavy.

[28 : 16] Some of our minds might be thinking, how could God do that? Oftentimes, though, as I've said before, we tend to downplay our sin and our rebellion against God.

we minimize it. But God is just. He sees that the punishment fits the crime. And so, if that's what the punishment is, then what does that say about the crime?

What have I done against the God of heaven? Have we caught and understood the seriousness of my offense against this glorious, good, righteous God?

it's a terrible punishment for a terrible crime, for terrible sin.

The mercy and the love of God is not seen in his willingness to break the rules, to bend the rules and just let them get off scot-free.

[29 : 31] the mercy and love of God is not seen in his willingness to pervert justice and just give them less than what they deserve. The mercy and love of God is seen in his willingness to let someone come and suffer the wrath that they deserve, the punishment they deserve in their place.

Jesus rescues, saves us from the coming wrath, as we talked about earlier. That's what happened when he died on the cross, so that we could be spared what we deserve.

Why is this parable here? Why did Jesus tell this parable of the weeds? Was it just to give us information about the spiritual reality of our world?

Just to let us in a little bit behind the scenes, backstage pass, FYI? Or does Jesus expect some kind of response?

I don't believe that Jesus just gave us this parable as an FYI. Here's how things are. And I don't believe that the point of the parable is some kind of hopeless fatalism.

[31 : 01] Well, you're either a son of the kingdom or a son of the devil, and it's not really up to you which one you are, and this is what's going to happen to you at the end. I don't think that's what Jesus meant.

Why did he speak this? Why does he say these things? That those who are not sons of the kingdom will be thrown into hell, what is that meant to do in our hearts?

To stir up inside of us? I believe Jesus gave this as a gracious warning.

This is the fate of those who are not sons of the kingdom. A gracious warning which is meant to cause us to ask the question, am I of the wheat or am I of the weeds?

Whose camp am I in? Am I in the camp of God or the camp of the devil? Whose side am I on? Do I wholeheartedly have my allegiance to the Messiah, to the Son of Man, to the kingdom of God, God, or do I default to the other side?

[32 : 30] And along with that is, it's not stated here, but the analogy breaks down if we go here, because weeds don't change and become wheat, not in ordinary life, but the unspoken thing that goes along with all of this, that Jesus has been saying throughout all of his preaching about the kingdom, what has he been saying about the kingdom?

Mark gave it to us in a nutshell right at the beginning, we talked about it last week, the time has come, the kingdom of God is come near, repent, and believe the good news, you're not doomed to be a son of the evil one, repent, acknowledge that you have blown it against God, seek his forgiveness and you can become a son of the kingdom, that's why the kingdom is good news, because some people are going to live in it as children of the king, but they have to admit and acknowledge their sin and what they have done against the king.

Verse 43, then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father, he who has ears, let him hear.

What a contrast, the sons of the evil one are cast into hell, they receive what they deserve, but the sons of the kingdom, they shine in the kingdom of their father, they live in the kingdom, they belong in the kingdom.

It says they are righteous, then the righteous will shine. what has been planted by the son of man has grown, the heads have formed, righteousness shines through, they're beautiful, they're glorious, and they will live in the kingdom of the son of man, of God, as true sons, as true children of the king.

[34 : 58] John said it this way, for as many as received Jesus, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

And so this parable is a gracious warning. are you a son of the kingdom?

Or do you default to the other side? It's not too late to change. The disciples, one time, they said this, they went to a town and they were not welcomed, and they said, what should we do, Lord?

Should we call down fire from heaven to destroy them? Jesus rebuked them. No. Why?

Because God is patient. The day of the Lord is coming, the harvest, the end of the age is coming, but he does not want any to perish. He is patient, wanting all to come to repentance.

[36 : 12] This is the window of opportunity right here. Are you a son of the kingdom? A son of the king? for those of us who are and who know it, what does it do in your heart to think that everyone in our world who is not is headed for hell?

will you do about it? What will you do about your neighbor who doesn't want anything to do with Jesus?

What will you do about your co-worker who hasn't even been to church, doesn't know anything about it? What will you do will you pray for them?

Will you tell them the good news of the kingdom? Will you graciously, lovingly, like Jesus did, warn them? What do you desire more?

Your own comfort? To be appreciated by them? To tell them what they want to hear? Be liked by them? Popular? What's stronger?

[37 : 41] That or your faith that this is the spiritual reality in our world? Thankfully, when the disciples said, should we call down fire, Jesus said, no.

God is patient. He wants all to repent, to be saved. Do you know why you're here? do you know what he has for you to do?

Let's pray. Father in heaven, these words are heavy. We want to hear nice things.

We want our hearts to be brought to the place of joy again and again, but again and again, you give us hard truths. You speak hard words. We receive them, Lord.

We feel that mixture of sadness and sorrow as we think of people in our lives that we love who don't know you, who are not sons of your kingdom, but we also feel joy.

[38 : 56] We feel thankfulness for those of us who are, that you have graciously come into this world and given us the chance, given us the opportunity, given us the gift of repentance and a relationship with you.

You are our king and we love you and we look forward to and long for the day when we will shine in your kingdom forever. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen. Amen.