

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Gospel Year A

Are You There, God, It's Me

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Analysis by Cathy Lessmann

24 [Jesus] put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. 26 So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. 27 And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' 28 He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' 29 But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. 30 Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'" 36 Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." 37 He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; 38 the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. 40 Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and

they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

Author's Note: I encourage you to check out the four marvelous Crossings already done on this parable, and a sermon, archived in our Library. Each one is excellent; each offers a completely different perspective.

To save you time, here are the links:

[Growing Season, Paige Evers](#)

[Dumpster Diving, Steve Albertin](#)

[Harvesting the Dead, Bruce Martin](#)

[Growing in the Sunlight, Author Unknown](#)

[Sermon: "What a Way to Farm!," Steve Albertin](#)



DIAGNOSIS: Demanding the God of Justice

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): God, would you please do something about the weeds?

Hi God, remember me? First soprano, front row church choir, Sunday school teacher, dependable, hard-working volunteer. Just, ahem, want to remind you, I've been one of your shining "wheats" my entire life. So would you listen up? I have to tell you, things are getting downright awful around here and I wish you'd do something about it! Actually, I wish you'd do something about the people who are mucking things up so dreadfully. I'm talking about those thorny, selfish weeds that have cropped up all over—even (sad to say!) among my relatives. They're hogging all the good soil. They're choking out the good wheat! Plus, they're sneaky; they don't follow the rules; they're usurping and rigging the system. They are all about themselves. It's gotten so bad, I can't tell some of the plants apart—whether they're wheat or weeds. I just don't get it. But I do wish you would DO SOMETHING about it!

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): A Matter of Trust

By the way, I am not at all like those weeds. I care. I care about wheat and the rules. I care about your fields. I care about justice. And I know you do too, so I want you to get with it and do what's right. Like get rid of the weeds. They deserve it after all.... Well, O.K., maybe just shake them up a bit so they "turn around." Isn't that what you mean by "repent"?

What? What did you just ask? Who made ME the arbiter of right and wrong? You say I'm trying to tell YOU what to do? You say I'm making unwarranted assumptions about how you operate? That I'm not trusting you? That I am opting for you to be a God strictly of justice? Well, of course I am!

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Thrown in with the Weeds

Say that again, God? You're saying that when I claim to know better than you, make myself the arbiter of justice, that I am making myself into a god—I'm taking your place? You say when I insist that you be a God of justice, I end up getting the same? Absolute justice from you? Well, (hem, haw) I know I'm not perfect, but I have to say I won't ever be able to survive all that! Oh! I get it, I have judged myself. You have no choice but to give me my way: Pure justice.

Oh good! I see you're finally having those weeds pulled up and thrown in the fire. It's about time! Ouch! Wait. What's happening? I just got pulled up too! Now I'm lying on top of the weed pile and ... oof, someone just landed on top of me. We're being thrown into the fire! And you're nowhere to be found. This is hell.

PROGNOSIS: Receiving the God of Mercy



Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): The Big Rescue

(Moaning) I hear something! It's a voice! The voice is saying, "Hang on, hang on to me!" Okay, I'm hanging on. Who are you? What's your name? Jesus? Thank you, Jesus. How did we get out of that raging fire? What? You jumped into the pile with me? You were thrown in too? But how did we get out? Seriously? Your Dad pulled you out, and because I was hanging on to you, I was pulled out too? But why? Why would anyone want to save me? We both know I didn't deserve it. Say what? Please repeat that. I can't believe my ears! Because you and your Dad love me? Because you treasure me? Because you and your Dad have been in cahoots to rescue me all this time? I don't deserve that kind of mercy, but boy will I take it.

Hey! Now I get it, God! You have been doing something all along! For one, you have been patient with me and other pesky weeds

that drive me nuts. You have been delaying your (righteous) judgment and giving me—all of us—a second chance.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Loving Mercy

Just FYI God, I've been hanging out a lot with your Son Jesus lately. Do you know he told me I could hang on tight while he was pulling me out of the fire? I don't know which of us was holding tighter. He even whispered that you wouldn't be able to tell us apart—as if, we're identical twins, linked together. He said you'll treat me exactly the way he is treated. Now that's lavish! But before I go on, I want to agree with you about who I was before. I agree I was arrogant, smug, proud, and Law-driven. I thought I deserved your goodness. I was demanding you to be a God of justice. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for being patient and giving me a second chance, and for being, finally, a God of mercy.

You know, it's such a relief to trust you're in charge. In fact, it makes me want to sing and dance. I feel, well, free! I'm not the same anymore. Golly! How ironic! All along I thought it was those weeds who needed changing and saving, and it was me you were being patient with.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Sharing Mercy

I can hardly wait to tell everyone about what kind of God you really are—that you prefer mercy over justice. I know because you sent Jesus to my rescue. I want to tell everyone. In fact, I'm thinking ... I'm thinking I'm going to call my brother tomorrow just to tell him I love him. I'm thinking I'll get my work clothes on, grab my rake and hoe and get out in the dirt and start clearing away some rocks and debris, start cultivating the soil out in the fields. In fact, I'm going to pay attention to those pesky weeds too—I wouldn't put it past you to graft them into wheat somehow or other! And yes. I finally get it.

You've also been patiently waiting for me to start doing all those "somethings" I wanted you to do. It's humbling that you rely on me like that. Oh, sorry, I gotta get to work—my twin is tugging me out to the fields.