

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

GROWING SEASON

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

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Analysis by Paige G. Evers

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!

DIAGNOSIS: A Long Wait

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *What Is This? A Weed?*

It's a question asked by amateur gardeners everywhere. Staring down at a tangled mass of green growth, they ask anyone within earshot, "Is this a weed?" It can be so hard to tell sometimes. But everyone knows if it is a weed, it must be pulled out of the ground. When the slaves in this parable see that weeds have appeared overnight among their master's carefully planted wheat (v. 25), it's no wonder they ask him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?" (v. 28, NIV). The workers know that weeds must be dealt with swiftly and decidedly. But the master surprised them by saying No, because the wheat might also be pulled up by accident. He tells them to wait and let them grow together until the harvest (vv. 29-30). The slaves pull their hands back from the plants and follow their master's orders to wait.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *What Am I?*

While one waits to see who is a weed and who is wheat, one starts to wonder, "Which am I?" The heart starts to ponder, question, and debate with itself. "Let's see, how much fruit have I born lately? How productive have I been? I think I've done enough to be considered wheat. But I'm not sure. Wait a second, look at that plant over there. He's got to be a weed. He hasn't done nearly the amount of good deeds that I have. Surely he's a weed and I'm wheat. This waiting is killing me!"

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Weeds Who Will Weep*
Actually, it's not the waiting that's killing us. It's the

confidence in our own merits, the trust in our actions, and “all causes of sin” (v. 41) that will come back to haunt us at harvest time. The waiting will finally come to an end when the weeds are pulled up and burned (v. 35). When Jesus explains this parable to his disciples, he goes even further. The weeds will be thrown into the furnace of fire and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (v. 42). The Son of Man won’t ask for a progress report to determine whether someone is wheat or a weed. There is no exemption for good behavior during the waiting period. There is just the decisive cut, the separation of weeds and wheat, and the fire that brings the weeds to an end once and for all.

PROGNOSIS: The Wait Is Worth It

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Promised Harvest*

This parable is about the kingdom of heaven (v. 24). The reason-defying logic of the kingdom is that the One who planted this garden with good seed (v. 24) carries it through to a bountiful harvest despite the commingling of the weeds and the wheat. Our sin invades and tries to overtake this garden. Jesus conquers our sin once and for all. He takes on our sin, suffers on the cross for it, and goes to the fires of hell so we can be made righteous before God. Here’s Jesus’ own promise for the future of the wheat. It’s one that sums up the grace of God’s kingdom: “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (v. 43). Now there’s a full-bodied, whole-grain promise you can sink your teeth into.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *The Gardener’s Grace*

Now we don’t have to look inward and tally up our wheat-points anymore. We don’t have to gaze out at others and compare our good works to theirs. We don’t have to label them weeds in order

to boost our confidence as wheat. We can turn our attention and trust from the growth in the field to the gardener himself. Our hearts can rest in the love of the Son of Man who sows good seed (v. 37) with his word, his death on the cross, and his resurrection to new life.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *The Joy of the Kingdom*

There is still some waiting to be done, but it's not the anxious waiting of what will happen when the reapers come. It's the joyful waiting for the fulfillment of God's kingdom. Borrowing from today's epistle text, we hope for what we do not see, and we wait for it with patience (Romans 8:25). While we wait, we can share the story of the kingdom with others. We can invite them into the presence of the master gardener. Tell them what it's like to be a child of his kingdom (v. 38). Spread the good news that God has a plan for their life and growth. God has a place for them to shine like the sun in his kingdom, forever.