

Dear Friends in Christ,

I have used the word **“weed”** that is used in our modern Bible translations. The KJV has the translation of this word, “weed”, as **“tares”**, and that is closer to the original word. The Greek language calls the weed a **“zizanium.”** The tares or zizanium in this parable are weeds that closely resemble wheat—that is until the wheat begins to ripen. (*picture 1*) The tares Scripture is describing here are actually something called *“darnel”*. And that is a poisonous weed organically related to wheat but difficult to distinguish from the real wheat in the early stages of its growth. It is only in the final stages of growth when the kernals of the tares actually turn black that their falseness becomes apparent. (*picture 2*)

In Matthew 13 Jesus is teaching through a series of parables about the Kingdom of God. He has told his disciples that the kingdom grows. Several of the parables also teach about life in the kingdom here on earth. In the parable of the weeds and the wheat Jesus is making the point that Christians live in a world that contains weeds. He calls us, his disciples, **“wheat.”** What Jesus is telling us today is that **“You Are Wheat in a World of Weeds.”** Jesus is encouraging us to live as wheat in a world of weeds.

1. Wheat and Weeds live side by side.

Our Lord uses this parable to tell us how the **Wheat** and **Weeds** came to live side by side.

A. Jesus lived in a society where people were familiar with farming. He uses an illustration from farming to teach an important spiritual truth.

1. He tells us that a certain man owned a field and he planted good seed in the field. Jesus tells us that the field represents the world. We are later told that this seed will grow into wheat. Jesus explains that the man who was sewing good seed was himself, the Son of Man. **“Son of Man”** is a title for the Messiah or Savior. Jesus also tells us that the good seed represents the people of his kingdom.

2. When you and I receive God’s word it causes us to grow spiritually. We learn about Jesus’ love for us. We hear that he suffered and died for us. We understand that he gives us forgiveness and new life. Just as seeds of wheat grow into a tall stalk of grain, so we grow up in Jesus and bear spiritual fruit.

We are filled with peace and joy and that spills over in words and actions.

This is a happy story. There is more.

B. Jesus tells us about a wicked enemy. He tells his disciples that the enemy is the Devil.

1. During the night this enemy came to the field and sowed weeds among the wheat. Notice that the enemy comes during the night. What he is doing is wrong and so he sneaks under the cover of darkness. We are reminded of Satan sneaking into Eden and tempted Adam and Eve. The weeds are more than just two people. The weeds are scattered throughout the farmer's field. People belonging to the evil one are scattered through the world. (38)

2. Jesus tells us that the difference between the wheat and weeds weren't immediately recognizable. **“When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.” (26)** As the plants matured, the servants began to see that there was a problem. There were many weeds mixed in with the good grain, the wheat. The servants did not know what had happened, but the owner knew and tells them.

Application: What is Jesus telling us in the opening verses of the parable? Remember that other parables in Matthew 13 tell us the Kingdom of God will grow. We might feel positive, everything is going to be good for God's children. However, Jesus tells that there are a lot of sons and daughters of the evil one in the world. We may not always recognize them because they can look just like God's children. However, they will at times cause trouble just like their father, the Devil.

What are you and I to do as we live side by side with the weeds? We may be tempted by the old motto, *“If you can't beat them, join them.”* We should repent of any such attitude. We have forgiveness and peace with God through Jesus. We have peace and joy forever. We are “wheat” that is children of God. The answer, to *“What do I do?”*, is to be what Jesus has made you. We are to bring that into our relationships whether it is at work, at the grocery store, at the park where we walk, as we watch the “big game.” When we live as “wheat” we are giving glory to God and we are advertising God's Kingdom to those who are wondering about it.

2. Live knowing the harvest is coming.

Some church groups have taken a stand against weeds. To put it simply, they go to war against what they see as weeds. In The People's Bible commentary on Matthew, Pastor Albrecht states, *“There have been too many*

instances when the church has attempted to do just that. The Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and many other religious wars, some of which still trouble us today.” (TPB Matthew, page 202) Does Jesus want us to do this? No, he tells us that we live knowing the final harvest is coming.

A. What it means is that uprooting weeds is not a part of our mission. In verse 28 of the parable, **“The servants asked him, ‘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.’” (28-30)** The reason Jesus doesn’t want us doing this is that we don’t always know who will become a believer. If we end that person’s time of grace, then they have no further chance of being saved.

Our job is to live for Jesus. As we do hopefully what Jesus said will come true, **“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”** (Matthew 5:16)

The difficulty is that the devil uses his sons and daughters to cause us trouble, pain and suffering. So it is tempting to think, *“They are just weeds. It would be nice to get rid of the weeds.”* That isn’t what we do. God forgive us if we ever think this way. Jesus died for all, including the weeds. (picture 3) So we need to pray for strength to live a life of love as Jesus wants us to. We have this comforting promise from Jesus in John’s Gospel, **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”** (16:33)

B. There is a comforting gospel promise in Matthew 13. The final harvest is coming and the weeds will be uprooted.

1. Jesus explains tells us that on the great Harvest Day, he will send his angel harvesters and they will collect everyone. The weeds, that is the sons and daughters of the evil one will be sent with him to eternal fire. Those who tormented us will experience an eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2. Jesus also tells us that the “wheat”, the believers will also be gathered up. In the story, the harvesters take the wheat to the owner’s barn. In Jesus’ day, the harvest crop was precious and valuable to the farmer. Jesus’ message is clear. Believers are precious to him and we will be gathered up to the safety and joy of Heaven. You and I can be sure of this because we are not precious by ourselves, but we have been made precious by the blood of Jesus. Our heavenly Father will not lose even one of his precious children. Jesus promises us, **“If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”** (John 14:3)

Conclusion: Jesus provides a conclusion to this lesson. **“Whoever has ears, let them hear.”** (43) This was delivered privately inside a house to his own disciples. Why? There are two possibilities. One, they needed to keep listening to the word or they would forget the lesson. Two, they would be teaching to their own disciples someday and they should remind them that this is a lesson that needs to be remembered.

Whatever Jesus’ original intent was for his original group is history. What is important is that we have ears and we need to listen to the parable and its meaning. We want to remember the Final Harvest is coming soon. We need to continue in our faith in Jesus. That means hearing his word and living by that word. Then we are wheat. In being wheat, we can help others. This is Jesus’ plan. Amen.