



## 48A Pentecost 7A - Bible Study

### A world of wheat and weeds

Sunday, July 19, 2020 | After Pentecost | Proper 11 | Year A

#### *Old Testament & Psalm, Option I*

*Old Testament*     Genesis 28:10–19a

*Psalm*             Psalm 139:1–12, 23–24

*or*

#### *Old Testament & Psalm, Option II*

*Old Testament*     Wisdom of Solomon 12:13, 16–19 or Isaiah 44:6–8

*Psalm*             Psalm 86:11–17

*New Testament*     Romans 8:12–25

*Gospel*             Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43<sup>1</sup>

## Welcome and Introduction

'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.'

We are the people of the kingdom.

Come now to worship the Son of Man.

Come seeking new understanding

of all that he has done for us,

and of all that we are called to do

for the building of the kingdom.

*Let us pray*

Lord, sometimes we are just so impatient,

wanting to get on with our lives,

wanting everything better.

But we know, our ways are not your ways.

We come to you

rejoicing in the knowledge that you

can transform our lives

and the lives of those around us –

starting exactly where we are.

Thank you, Lord.

Amen.

Do we live alongside people we find difficult? Are there colleagues in our workplaces who make life hard for us? (Or we, them?) This parable speaks to the idea that the good and wonderful signs of the kingdom of heaven often exist alongside negative and much dark-er aspects: the wheat grows

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<sup>1</sup> [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

intermingled with the weeds. While we remain here on earth we live in a very mixed economy. What do we live alongside that makes our kingdom life difficult? What or who are the weeds in our fields?

It can be easy to overlook the 'wheat' around us and see only the 'weeds'. But the parable speaks of both growing. The wheat still bears grain even with the weeds surrounding it. Do you look for signs of the kingdom or concentrate on symptoms of evil? What signs of God's kingdom are in evidence where you are? There is a necessary tension within this parable, also reflected in Paul's words to the Romans – a sense of living in both the 'now' and 'not yet'. We have the first fruits but wait patiently for our full redemption.

## Read the text

*Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43 (NIV)*

<sup>24</sup> Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

<sup>27</sup> "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?'

<sup>28</sup> " 'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

<sup>29</sup> " 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> 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.' "

<sup>36</sup> 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."

<sup>37</sup> He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> 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, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

<sup>40</sup> "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear. <sup>2</sup>

respond

For the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

**A monologue version of the parable Jesus told,**

set in an imagined contemporary farming context, and presented as a report on the ABC TV series LandLine.

<sup>2</sup> [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

Welcome to LandLine.

This week we are standing in farmer Matthew's wheat fields.

It's a lovely spot, at the edge of rolling hills,

and in a normal year these fields yield hundreds of bushels of wheat.

However, we are here to report on a very worrying phenomenon

affecting these wonderful wheat fields.

Farmer Matthew noticed that this year there is not just wheat growing in his fields.

Among the tall heads of wheat, you will notice, if you look carefully,

something else growing.

At first it looks pretty similar to the wheat.

But examine it closely and it certainly is not wheat.

It's actually a rather nasty weed that goes by the name of darnel,

and this is causing farmer Matthew quite a few headaches.

For a start, he can't just pull these weeds out.

If he tries that, he will pull up the wheat before it's ready

because the roots of the darnel go down deeper than those of the wheat.

So, he must wait it out until the harvest,

gather it all in together

and then start to separate his wheat from these nasty weeds.

And then there's the worrying issue of how it got there in the first place.

Farmer Matthew has never had an issue with weeds here

that was until he began to have an issue with his new neighbour Amos.

He moved onto the farm next door around a year ago

and farmer Matthew claims he's had nothing but trouble ever since.

First it was a few missing packets of cow food, then a load of hay,

and his problems culminated in a tractor disappearing for a whole day.

When farmer Matthew confronted Amos,

the neighbour vowed 'to teach him a lesson he'd never forget'.

The next thing he knows, the wheat field is full of weeds

a deliberate act? Sabotage? Revenge?

The truth isn't yet clear yet, but the fact is

that farmer Matthew is going to have to grow the wheat and the weeds together

until he can harvest the lot.

Let's hope this weed wreaking is not something we will see again

in this peaceful part of the countryside.

This is Jim Sciple reporting for LandLine.

## Exegesis

### Matthew 13.24-30,36-43

In this parable, told to the crowds, the sown seeds are of two sorts: the food crop wheat, and non-food weeds. The weed is probably darnel, common in wheat fields, which looks similar to wheat until the seed heads form. However, it has deeper roots than wheat; consequently, pulling it up at an early stage risked pulling up the wheat with it. Later, when the separation is easier, the weeds would normally have been gathered and used as fuel, as the story indicates.

The reading then jumps to the disciples asking for an explanation of the parable. Jesus portrays himself as the sower, the 'Son of Man' (Matthew often records Jesus speaking of himself in this third

person way, e.g. 8.20 and 10.23). This seed is the 'children of the kingdom' being sown in the field of the world, accompanied by the sowing of the children of the evil one. Thus, Jesus explains the continuing presence of evil despite the advent of the kingdom – it is the result of ongoing enemy action. However, the story continues to promise the eradication of evil at 'the end of the age', which is again portrayed as a time of harvest (cf. Bible notes for 14 June, Proper 6). This time, the angels go to collect sin out of the kingdom, in contrast to Matthew 24.30-31 where they gather up the elect. This highlights the need not to press the parable for more information than it is designed to communicate – images mean different things in different parables!

The 'causes of sin' (v.41) can also be translated as 'that which causes stumbling' (cf. Matthew 18.6-9). The 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' motif is found mainly in Matthew (but cf. Luke 13.28) as an expression characterising response to a negative end-time judgement. It has been variously suggested to denote anguish, fear, or anger.

## Picture pointers



Figure 1: Jude Berman, judeb.com

## Reflection questions on this week's picture

### Questions for reflection

- What do you see in this image?
- Where do you see 'weeds' and 'wheat' growing together in the world?
- How might God be calling you to cope with the tensions this causes?

## End the session

A sending out prayer

Lord, thank you that we have been able to spend time with you today.

We have felt ourselves grow stronger as we have been blessed with your presence.

Send us out to spread your love, in your precious name.

Amen.

### Live your faith

Do some weeding in a garden. Make each weed you pull up part of your prayer that God will help you embrace the wheat in your life and reject weeds.