



Vincent Van Gogh

The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat

Jesus tells another parable in the Gospel of Matthew about wheat growing in a field—only this time, “an enemy came during the night and sowed weeds among the wheat.” As the plants begin to mature and the heads of the grain can be seen, the weeds and the wheat are seen to be growing together. During Jesus’ time this weed, which looks a lot like wheat, was very common in Israel. The normal course of action would be to pull out the weeds as soon as they are recognized.

Jesus tells a different story. The good seed is to be grown along side of the weeds—they are to share the same soil, the sun, and the rain that waters the field. The householder, whom Jesus names as the Son of Man, tells the workers in the field to “wait.” And why wait? They are to wait because the weeds are pulled up, the wheat would be uprooted along with the weeds.

What gardener or would-be gardener has not pulled up the very plant they cherish while trying to persuade a weed not to share the soil and the water and the fertilizer that has carefully been set aside for the good plant? Every single wheat plant is precious in the eyes of God, and apparently God is going to continue to care for the weeds as they grow beside the wheat until the time of harvest. In a time when resources were precious Jesus tells a parable of the weeds and the wheat growing along side of each other---. What are we to make of this during this time of a pandemic of sickness and a culture of “us” and “them”---a time of loneliness and a time when we are looking for hope?

Jesus tells a parable that challenges the disciple (and us!). The disciples ask what this parable means, “*Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.*” One of the elements that is challenging is Jesus’ reference to the “good seed (who) are the children of the kingdom”, or children of the reign of God, and “the weeds (who) are children of the evil one.” The enemy who has sewn the weeds with the wheat perhaps imagined that the weeds would choke out the wheat or subvert the plan for a good harvest. We do not know. The tearing out of the weeds while still growing is not

going to happen! The weeds and the good seed are to grow together until the time of harvest. At the end of the age the angels will separate the wheat from the weeds.

Harvest in other parables is a time of abundance and a time of judgment. In the Gospel of Matthew judgment comes at the end of the age and it is by our service to one another that we will be recognized and judged.

*“Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you? And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Matthew 25:37-40*

Is Jesus suggesting that we live beside both good and bad, that perhaps we cannot tell which is the wheat and which is the weed? Perhaps we ourselves are both good and bad and we ourselves will be known by our fruits? If we are to “love our enemies” as Jesus says in Matthew, and not be stumbling blocks to people who are seeking God, we need to welcome and feed the stranger. We cannot know who is “in” or “out” or “right” or “wrong”, but we can seek to serve, indeed the life of Jesus suggests, serve sacrificially for the other.

Where does this strength come from? We need the power of God’s love acting in our lives. We have been invited to be children of the householder, heirs, children of God. We have been given the power to enter into the life of Jesus through the power of the Spirit; we are invited into his life, death and resurrection in order that we might bind up the broken hearted, heal, and welcome others into a family that celebrates a new way of living together.

*For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. Rom 8:14-17*

To be children of God is to enter into deeper relationships with one another, discovering that our neighbors may be bearers of hope and healing. We ourselves need to forgive and be forgiven in that tangle of roots growing beneath the soil that is the very system in which we live and move and have our being. We know that Jesus comes to reconcile and empower us to live in a God’s new creation.



Vincent Van Gogh Wheat Fields with Reaper