



Life of Christ

A study of the life and teachings of Jesus

Parable of the Weeds

by Bronson Duke

He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’” —*Matthew 13:24-30 (ESV)*

Agricultural sabotage is not something most of us are readily familiar with, but I’d be willing to bet that all of us have experienced sabotage in one form or another. Maybe someone whispered to you the wrong answer to a question a teacher asked in grade school, and you confidently shouted it out (this may or may not have, or definitely did happen to me...more than once!). Maybe a coworker intentionally gave you bad counsel on how you should handle a meeting with a superior. Whatever the situation, everyone experiences sabotage at some point.

Agricultural sabotage was a common enough problem in the Roman Empire that they had a law specifically dealing with the crime of sowing a weed called “darnel” into a wheat field as an act of revenge. It was, as the kids used to say, a savage move. Here is why this was such a big problem: darnel very closely resembles wheat in the early stages, and only when it starts producing its seed can you tell the difference.

Once it starts to produce “fruit” you can tell it apart, and only then can you distinguish the good crop from the weed. But you can’t just start pulling it out because, at this

phase of growth, the roots of the good wheat have become tangled with the roots of the insidious darnel. If you try to remove the bad, you will ultimately harm the good. Secondly, while darnel looks a lot like wheat, it is poisonous. If you try to remove it, the poisonous seed will spread, and the whole crop will be compromised and ruined.

There are many ways we could look at this text, but here is my main takeaway: If we are patient enough to wait and watch, in time all things will be shown for what they are by the fruit they produce. It reminds me of what the Pharisee, Gamaliel, said in Acts 5:33-39:

When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

In this day and age, EVERYBODY seems to have an opinion on EVERYTHING, and the loudest voices often get the most attention. But here is my advice: Be patient, pray, and wait for the fruit. Fruit will always reveal the roots. Lemons don't grow from apple trees; and, in the same way, true love, true joy, true peace, true patience, true kindness, true goodness, true faithfulness, true gentleness, and true self-control come only from God.

As you'll notice, the good farmer planted the right and healthy seed, and his enemy came in and planted the unhealthy seed. Friend, there is an enemy out there, and don't be mistaken: He is planting seeds, too. They look like the healthy crop at first; but in time, when you see the fruit, you will know the difference. We have to be wise, we have to be patient, and we have to keep watch. It is not always easy to tell right away. In time, though, all things will be revealed.

At its core, this parable is one about the sovereignty of God. I don't think the point of this particular parable is that we should sit around trying to judge everything and be passive. Rather, we need to do our best to abide in and spread the love of Jesus and trust God with the end results.

I fully believe that the wonderful work of God will always outgrow destructive weeds of the enemy. We need only to look at the cross for evidence. Satan planned to kill the Messiah and stop the Kingdom of God from springing forth, but God always had something else in mind: that we, the Church, would no longer be the people of Adam marked by the Fall of Man, but would be the people of Jesus marked by His resurrection. That in the same way the Fall of Man marked with death the descendants

of Adam, the resurrection from the dead would mark with life the descendants of Jesus. That we would carry a power and authority far greater than that of a strong nation, but that we would be indwelt and empowered by the actual Holy Spirit of God. That God Himself would be both our High Priest, our Guide, and our King. The enemy has plans, this is sure, but let's have faith that God's plans are higher and greater and more wonderful than we could ever ask or imagine. Let's be the people of faith, the People of the Resurrection, that, like the wheat in the field the farmer planted, would grow tall, healthy, and clearly full of the ultimate mark of a follower of Jesus: love.

Let's close with a passage from Romans, where Paul perfectly expresses how we should live:

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.—*Romans 12:14-21 (ESV)*

Question What does it mean to be people marked by resurrection? Is there anything growing in your life that seemed like a good idea at first but over time has proven to be a weed and not wheat?

Family Chat Do you sometimes think friends or classmates are "better than" you, or that you are "better than" them? What would Jesus say about that?

Take Action Invite the Holy Spirit to uproot any weeds He has revealed and strengthen the roots of your wheat. Find small, unnoticeable ways to humbly serve others today, especially if you've been judgmental lately in your thinking towards them.