

Last week we read a parable from the 13th chapter of Matthew and today we are reading another one. The 13th chapter contains several parables. Parables are stories that Jesus tells using every day images that have layers of meaning to them.

Last week we heard a parable about a sower sowing some seeds. We heard about the different types of soils that these seeds were planted in including rocky soil, weed infested soil, and good soil.

In last week's parable I shared that the soil with weeds may cause us to reflect about who we hang out with and that we may need to distance ourselves from some weeds in our lives. But we are about to read a parable which may be a direct contradiction to what I shared last week.

And that is one of the aspects of the Bible that I appreciate. We may read some stories and conclude one thing and then we may read something else and discern that God is directing us to something different. Reading the Bible may leave us feeling ambiguous sometimes. The Bible may challenge us to different conclusions.

We are going to be reading another parable from the 13th chapter of Matthew which is also about seeds and weeds. In this parable the weed that will be described is a type of ryegrass that looks very similar to wheat.

In fact, they look similar until it is time to harvest them. At harvest time the wheat will bend over with seed while the ryegrass weed will stand straight up. The roots of the ryegrass weed are also poisonous.

Read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

I want to show a clip that appeared on "CBS This Morning" one day this week. As you watch this clip ask yourself if the motives of this banker are pure or not?

<http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/a-more-perfect-union-banker-bonds-with-the-homeless-through-music/>

I found myself having mixed feelings about this banker. On the one hand I find myself applauding his actions. How many of us when we see someone on the street look the other way and do not engage in any conversation. This banker has made the decision to get to know some people living on the street and treat them with respect.

On the other hand I found myself being cynical and wondering if this banker was using these people living on the streets to advance his budding music career. I don't know. And it could be both. It could be that he is seeking to do the right thing but as he does the right thing he is mindful that this is beneficial to him as well. I don't know. I certainly should not judge.

Mark Twain once said that there are two kinds of people. There are people who accomplish something of value and there are people who claim to accomplish something of value. Twain says that the first group is less crowded.

Dear Abby also once said that there are two types of people. There are people who come into a room and say, "There you are" and there are people who come into a room and say, "Here I Am."

So which are we? Are we the type that seeks to help others? Are we the type that seeks to do good or do evil?

In the parable that Jesus tells you can't differentiate who it is that is the good and who it is that is the bad. They both look alike. In the parable that Jesus tells there is good wheat and bad weeds but you cannot tell which is which.

The slaves want to go through the garden and pull out the weeds but the master says, "No, don't do that." The master says to let both the weeds and the good wheat grow up together. The master says that people are not able to judge what is good and what is evil. Only the angels at the harvest are able to differentiate between the good and the evil.

But we Christians sure do like to put ourselves in the role of the harvesting angels do we not? We like to be the ones to decide who is the good wheat and who are the evil weeds. And our desire to pick out the weeds and wheat leads to lots of brokenness. Our desire to be the harvesters causes us to create separation in our families and in our churches.

I think about the Amish family who must cut off communication with the child who leaves the Amish lifestyle. A brokenness in the family. I think about the parent in our culture who cuts off contact with their child because the person their child chooses to date or marry is not the right skin color, ethnicity, religion, or gender.

I think about the many Christian churches that split themselves apart by deciding who is holy and who is doing the work of the devil. I know that some of us have been called people who are bidding the devil's work. That type of language just leads to division and brokenness.

But when we go back to the parable we discover that it is not our place to make the judgements about who is good wheat and who are poisonous weeds. In the parable it is not clear who is good and who is evil.

Our job is to be the ones who produce good fruit. Because I hate to say it but sometimes we are the wheat and sometimes we are the poisonous weeds.

But we can differentiate ourselves from the weeds by the fruit that we produce. There is a story about Martin Luther that may be apocryphal but I will share it. Someone once asked him what he would do if he knew that the world was about to end. He replied, "I would plant a tree." In other words, we are called to produce good fruit no matter what the circumstances.

Sometimes you and I are the wheat. Sometimes we are the poisonous weeds. We do not make the judgments about who is the wheat and who is the weeds. That is God's call. Our job is to produce the good fruit. AMEN.

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-<https://lectionarylab.com/2014/07/15/year-a-the-sixth-sunday-after-pentecost-july-20-2013/>

-http://day1.org/978-why_cant_we_pull_up_the_weeds

-Given: July 23, 2017 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)