

Familiar subject for Jesus—the earth and growing things

Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-23—last week

Notice what comes next... another story about a farmer sowing seed, but it is different

Matthew 13:24-30

Wheat and weeds growing in the same field—weeds are darnel

Particularly difficult because this weed looked a lot like wheat when it was young

The roots of the two plants entangle themselves around each other

Only when they produce grain are the weeds differentiated from the wheat

The workers asked the master if they should weed the wheat—get rid of the weeds

The answer is no—

I don't know about you... but to me this answer is surprising

When I plant a garden, weeds are a fact and they need to be removed

But here, Jesus says to let them grow together

If you pull the weeds now, the wheat will be pulled up as well

At the harvest, they are to be separated out

Jesus goes on to explain... to the disciples in Matthew 13:36-43

We'll be a mixed bag... evil growing among good

But we're not to separate them out

Let them be

At harvest time—at the final judgment

Jesus will separate them out then

This is an important message for us to hear

Truth is there will be those among us who are not truly part of us

We aren't to do anything about that

We aren't to remove them or prune them

Let them be

Not like the Pharisees who were concerned about keeping the law...

They put emphasis on defining who belongs and who is excluded

Old Testament/Old Covenant teaching was all about the law and those who kept the law

It would clearly say those who broke the law should be barred from the inner circle

...the weeds must be removed

But Jesus gives us a new paradigm—a new way of thinking—a new covenant

The new covenant that Jeremiah talks about:

*But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. Jeremiah 31:33-34 NRSV*

In Jesus—the time is here—the new covenant is in place

Jesus gives us a new way to live

*“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

*John 13:34-35 NRSV*

Love is the new standard

No longer is the law to define God’s people

...to prescribe who is in and who’s out

This really threw the Jews—the law set boundaries about who is in

Jesus’ way doesn’t function by boundaries, rules, laws

But by a new standard of love

We easily criticize the Pharisees for their judgementalism, but we get caught in the same trap

From “The Divine Conspiracy” by Dallas Willard

The church has focused on sin management and predicting the future

But Jesus managed sin—it’s all done—we don’t have to do it

Jesus conquered sin and death—therefore, it has no power over us

When I fuss about sin in others it doesn’t work—in fact it backfires

Letting God deal with sin in other people works much better

Jesus gave us a case study on this from his own life and ministry

Judas Iscariot was one of Jesus’ chosen 12 disciples—chosen to live and minister with Jesus

Jesus even trusted him enough that he was the treasurer—holding the “purse”

Surely Jesus—the Son of God—knew that Judas would betray him for 30 pieces of silver

In fact, Jesus “chose” Judas after a night in prayer to God

Surely God could have told Jesus that Judas was a bad choice

John even tells us that Jesus knew from the first that Judas would betray him

Yet, Jesus never kicks him out of the disciples—never tells him he doesn’t measure up

In the end, Jesus releases him, saying, “Do quickly what you are going to do”

Even then, there is no judgment or condemnation

The new way of being followers of Jesus—is with love

But truth be told, as human beings, we are easily persuaded to judge each other

The church today too often falls into the trap of being concerned about purity

Jesus was critical of the Pharisees for their emphasis on the letter of the law

He called them to compassion and inclusion

Let us be wary of trading our call to love everyone for being sure that we are pure

Jesus said, don’t pull up the weeds because it will damage the wheat

Let them grow up side by side

Worry and focus on the weeds will take nourishment from the earth

and make it more difficult for the wheat to grow

Pay divine inattention to the weeds and any issues that they cause—ignore them

Jesus never says the weeds will diminish the wheat

When we worry about the sin of others, we focus on the weeds

Often, we hear talk of contamination—don't be contaminated by their sin

But the truth is that the weeds can't change the wheat

Wheat=Wheat→nothing else

Jesus doesn't say anything about a hybrid wheat-weed

Apparently, that was not a concern

Healthy wheat is the best thing

—like the apple tree—the best way to get healthy apples

is to fertilize the tree, NOT to spray for bugs

So, focus on what is good and healthy—on the presence of God among us

Let the God stories become the main thing

Too often we worry about the future—Jesus will take care of the future

The Son of Man and the angels will sort it all out

The separation will happen at harvest—then and only then will they be separated

But it is not ours to do

Then Jesus goes on...

Are you listening? Really listening?

The kingdom of God is of such great value that we are to pursue it wholeheartedly

Rather than worrying about the purity of those among us

Let everyone grow together and trust God to be at work in our midst