

# Weeds Among Wheat Weed Yourself

Sept 15/47  
Matt. 13: 24-30

~~Delaware State~~  
5th Ave State 9/8/48 - Union Service

Albany District 855  
Northwestern  
University  
Chautauque

Corr Greenlusk 1/12/58  
Stremont St Gloverville 1/20/58

Emma Willard 1/25/59

Cleveland Aug. 23, 1959

1st Presby Union Service Aug. 14, 1960

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## WEEDS AMONG WHEAT

Read Matt. 13: 24-35

Matt. 13: 24-30

- I. Introduction--How is one to live the perfect life in the midst of an imperfect world?
  - A. Frank and the beetles
  1. Potato bugs
  2. Fruit trees
  3. Fine to have a garden--if
- B. It would be easy for me to live a Christian life if I did not have to go to that factory tomorrow morning

- II. The parable of the Tares
  - A. Four parables in Matt 13
  1. The Sower 2. Tares and the Wheat
  2. The grain of mustard see 4. The leaven
- B. All these have to do with the Kingdom of God--how it comes--something of its nature--some of the problems that confront it.
- C. The Parable of the tares
  1. Comment on how seeds grow
  2. Describe the care of selecting seed etc.
  3. Then the disaster
  4. What shall we do?

- \* D. Reasons for some scholars not accepting this parable
- E. I think that view misses the whole point.

- III. What the parable says to me
  - A. Jesus does not explain the presence of evil--he just says--here it is
  - Life invests itself with certain inevitable conditions which the unwise seek to dodge
  - B. In the second place Jesus displays his confidence in the good
    1. You can't exactly call it disinterestedness--it is more indifference to the secondary things
    2. A real fisherman knows that he will be bit by mosquitoes, that he may get wet, and that he may not get any fish. To anyone who is not a real fisherman he is crazy
    3. Nehemiah--"I am doing a great work, I cannot come down."

Too many of us  
are afraid of the  
unpleasant  
conditions which  
Jesus says--are with us?

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4. Trimming lilacs
5. One reason why people cease enjoying their church related things--they see only weeds!
6. Jesus is saying, Do not let the enemy control your life.
7. Trueblood--"We must not wait so long for the development of a perfect system that we end by doing nothing at all. The abstract best may be the real enemy of the concrete good."
8. It is possible for the ideals of the Kingdom to germinate in our world. We need people who are willing to help create now a living redemptive fellowship

- C. Finally--the basis of it all--there comes a reckoning
  1. You can place this either in history or beyond history
  2. The parable says, the weeds will not kill the wheat and eventually they will be separated from it.
  3. I do not think that the good will win automatically. It is still possible to pull up the wheat and that seems to rest with you and me.
- \* There are things we must do now  
which are not in the Kingdom of God
- IV. Conclusion--Bishop Oliver J. Hart--"O God give us the fortitude to endure the things which cannot be changed and the courage to change the things which should be changed and the wisdom to know one from the other."

God help me to tell weeds from wheat!

Perhaps this is the function of the Christian Church--not to be an exclusive club. The Church has mission which is greater than its survival. That mission is to create this redemptive fellowship that will affect all life.

Political  
Economic  
Cultural

What sort of disciples do we need to do this



1/25/59  
Dana Willard

#### INVOCATION:

Almighty God, from whom every good prayer cometh, and who pourest out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and supplication; deliver us, when we draw nigh to thee, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind; that with steadfast thoughts, and kindled affections, we may worship thee in spirit and in truth."

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 40: 27-31

SECOND LESSON: Matthew 13:24-35

#### PRAYER:

*Responsive Reading p 248  
#143*

CLEVELANDALE Aug. 23, 1959

#### INVOCATION:

"O God, our heavenly Father, we are all thy children, and we seek thy blessing. In thy presence may our thoughts be lifted to the wide horizon of thy Kingdom and the all-embracing purposes of thy love. Unite our spirits in worship and fellowship. In this hour may we renew our dedication of life, through faith and obedience, to the tasks of thy Church, and thus fulfill the prayer of our Lord that they all may be one.

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

#### GLORIA PATRI

RESPONSIVE READING - *See 53*

HYMN - 140

#### THE READING OF THE SCRIPTURE: Matt. 13:24-35

"Another parable he put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while 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 householder came and said to him, Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds? He said to them, An enemy has done this. 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.

*There is about 98% of good in everyone and there is about 2% of men imitating things. If you give your attention to the 2% you are going to be miserable.*  
*Applied to a marriage*  
*Apply to all relations with people*

*At the close of the 18th century William Pitt said: There is scarcely anything amiss but ruin and decay.*  
*At the beginning of the 19th century Wilberforce said: I do not mind the future is so dark and uncertain.*  
*In 1848 Lord Shaftesbury declared: Nothing can save the British Empire from bankruptcy.*  
*In 1849 Dearelli said: Industry, commerce, and agriculture there is no hope.*

*In 1851 the Duke of Wellington, as close of his death, thanked God, he would be spared from seeing the conservation of ruin that is gathering about us.*  
*In 1970 Lord Hailsham said: Everything is tending to confusion.*

#### SEEDS AND WEEDS

"Let both grow together until the harvest..."  
Matt. 13:30

*Read Matt. 13:24-35:43*

The other day I was coming into the Parish House and our sexton was taking care of his flowers. The beetles are awful this year, he said, it seems as if there is always something. I was driving along the road and I saw a large field of potatoes. There was a man working in the field—I knew what he was doing—he was fighting the potato bugs. If you want good fruit from your fruit trees you can't just let the trees go—you have to spray and you have to fight all the pests that attack fruit trees. A friend of mine exclaimed wearily one day—it would be fun to have a garden if it were not for the weeds and the bugs and the pests. Yet we know that if we are to have vegetables and fruit we have to recognize the existence of these things.

In a discussion about living the Christian life a woman said, It would be easy for me to live like a Christian if I did not have to go to that factory tomorrow morning. You have felt the same way. If you did not have to be a part of everyday life, then you could live according to the principles of the New Testament. Why under the sun does God permit evil people to exist? We pray, Lead us not into temptation, but we cannot turn without facing temptation because we are living in an unchristian society.

This is a very old problem. As a matter of fact there are two problems here: If God is good, why does he allow evil to flourish? and—how is one to live the perfect life in the midst of an imperfect world? This is the problem of weeds and wheat.

In the 13th chapter of Matthew's Gospel there are four parables—the Parable of the Sower, sometimes called the parable of the Soils, the parable of the Tares and the Wheat, the parable of the grain of mustard seed, and the parable of the leaven. All of these have to do with the kingdom of God—how it comes, something of its nature, some of the problems that confront it. Now I have heard sermons on all of these parables but one—and that is the parable of the Tares, or to use a modern word, of the weeds.

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I read that parable to you this morning. Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while he was sleeping his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat. Eventually the plants came up, seed s have a way of doing that. On my first charge there was a second appointment that had the custom of having a harvest service. The people would bring some of the finest things they had raised to the church and fill the chancel with produce. The minister preached a harvest sermon and we thanked God for the harvest. Then all this produce was given to the minister. The first year I was married it seemed that everyone was proud of his squash. I never saw such big squash and so many squash. We ate squash until we dreamed about it, we gave squash away, but we still had squash. So one day when it was snowing I took these squash down to the back of my lot and threw them out into the snow. A white blanket covered them and I was glad. The next spring I planted my garden and soon like this man's wheat the plants began to come up. One day my wife said, What are those vines down at one end of the garden. No, it couldn't be! I had planted corn, and potatoes, and lettuce, and tomatoes. Ah, but it was, yes it was squash. I guess I know how that man felt. He had carefully sowed the best seed. He had prepared his ground. He had sowed that seed. Where in the world did those tares come from. His servants were disturbed and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then has it weeds?" He said to them, "An enemy has done this. 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. Jeremiah says that the tares were entirely like wheat until the ear appeared and had been so soon that the roots were intertwined and some of the wheat would have been destroyed if the tares had been pulled up. Anyway the farmer said, "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." This was Jesus' way of dealing with the problem of Christians living in an unchristian society.

Now I realize that there are scholars that do not accept this parable as a genuine utterance of Jesus on the grounds that it is unlike Jesus to allow sins to go on unchecked and unchallenged. They say

that this story comes from a time in the life of the early church when it was too timid to tackle various evils and that this represents an effort to rationalize their behaviour. Their explanation does point out a danger that we shall have to deal with. We know certainly that Jesus never compromised. But I think that this view misses the whole point. We ought not to push this story which Jesus told any farther than it ought to go but it certainly does reflect, as far as I am concerned, the real attitude of Jesus.

In the first place Jesus does not attempt to explain why God has permitted evil to flourish in the world. Here it is, our problem is to deal with it. Emerson said once, "Life invests itself with certain inevitable conditions which the unwise seek to dodge." There is a place to discuss why and to speculate and to theorize. Most of us, however, do not have either the equipment or the time to do that. This is one thing that appeals to me about Jesus attitude. You will find that he lives on our level. He recognizes that you and I are in the field. We could spend hours discussing why this has happened—but Jesus says, here it is—deal with it. That is an attitude of healthy mindness.

In the second place, this parable shows an attitude which is characteristic of Jesus and of all great souls but which is very hard to name. You can't exactly call it disinterestedness, it is more indifference to the secondary things. Can I put it this way: a real fisherman knows that he will be bit by mosquitoes, that he may get wet, and that he may not get any fish. To one who is not a real fisherman these things assume great importance. To such a person a fisherman is just a little "bought." Just think—leave a comfortable home to go through all of that! But the fisherman is too busy fishing to be bothered about these things. If you would like me to use a more orthodox illustration I can refer you to a gentleman of the Old Testament, Nehemiah by name. He was building a wall, you will remember, and his enemies came and called to him but he said, "I am doing a great work, I cannot come down.

Jesus is saying, Do not let the enemy control your life. Do not let the weeds overwhelm you. You take care of the wheat. I spent one day to trim some lilac bushes. I had a wonderful pair of pruning shears and I snipped here and I snipped there and then

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I took a little off at that point which made it necessary to take a little off at this point and I got so interested in snipping that I forgot the lilacs. We didn't have any lilacs after that. That farmer could just see his men going after those tares! Here then is the way Jesus would have us Christians act in an unchristian society. We must, with His help, develop this ability to be our best regardless of outward circumstances. We must always look at the wheat. If someone points out those eternal weeds we are to say, Sure, but here is wheat.

One reason why many people cease enjoying their church relationships is because they cannot do this. They expect perfection in an imperfect world. When they see a weed here and there they get all excited. They have no—here is the word I want,—they have no confidence in the wheat. When I was going around visiting churches there was always at least one person in every church who always sniffed when the report of the membership committee was read. What about our inflated church memberships? What about these weeds? Shall we pull them out? Not according to this principle that we are talking about today. In his book "Alternative to Futility", Truett Lunt says, "We must not wait so long for the development of a perfect system that we end by doing nothing at all. Here, as in so many other areas of experience, the abstract best may be the real enemy of the concrete possible good."

It is possible for the ideals of the Kingdom of God to germinate and spread even in our world and in spite of all the evil. We need people who are willing to begin to live Christ lives now, we need people who are willing to help to create a living redemptive fellowship now. We need people who will stop discussing and start living.

Of course the most important thing which this parable says and the real basis for the confidence and assurance which we have been talking about is the fact that there comes a reckoning. There comes a time of separation. There comes a time when the weeds and the wheat may/and are separated. Kent says, "Evil is but an impermanent element in the universe: the good alone will permanently survive." The New Testament, throughout, has a robust faith that the bad cannot permanently overcome the good. Darkness cannot put out light. You may use many

different kinds of imagery. This parable says, the weeds will not kill the wheat and eventually they will be separated from it. There are some who would place that point of separation within history. There are others who would place it at a point outside of history. This morning it does not matter to me which you do. I do want to give you this great faith that it is not necessary for evil to triumph. I do not think that the good will win automatically. It is still possible to pull up the wheat and that seems to rest with you and with me.

Bishop Oliver J. Hart has written a prayer which I like very much: "God give us the fortitude to endure the things which cannot be changed, and the courage to change the things which should be changed, and the wisdom to know one from the other."

Do you think you could learn that? I can give you the same idea in much shorter form—God help me to tell weeds from wheat!

"These servants are of course disciples of Jesus who wish to purge the church of unfaithful members; and the purpose of the question is to bring out the point of vs. 30. It is disastrous to try to achieve a 'pure' church in which there are no sinners."

"But by whatever exegesis, the story has a salient and perennial truth. It confronts the mystery of wickedness."  
(Int. Bible)

"Three pairs of parables with a single concluding one in this section. The first pair 'The Sower' and 'The Tares'—set forth the manner of the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, and the obstacles it must encounter."

"There are, however, other obstacles than those found in the nature of the soil. There is the diligence of the enemy, and the impossibility of getting rid of those who have come under his influence, as set forth in the second parable, that of The Tare in the Field. In this parable the good seed is no longer the word but the children of the kingdom; as if to suggest that Christians themselves are to be to the world what the word has been to them; while the bad seed—sown when men sleep, sown when Christians are asleep—does not remain as mere seed, but embodies itself in 'Children of the wicked one' who take their places side by side with the true children of the kingdom, and whom it is so difficult to distinguish from the them, that the separation may not be attempted till the time of the harvest, when it shall be complete and final, and the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father."

Instructions for the  
visiting minister  
and choir director

EMMA WILLARD SCHOOL  
Alumnae Chapel

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

### PRELUDE

### 45' PROCESSION

(As soon as the processional hymn has been concluded, the minister and the choir join in the following:

Minister: The Lord be with you  
Choir: And with thy spirit  
Minister: O Lord, show thy mercy upon us  
Choir: And grant us thy salvation  
Minister: O Lord, make clean our hearts within us  
Choir: And take not thy holy spirit from us.)

INVOCATION (said by the minister following the above sentences.)

VENITE (Hymnal #223; sung by the congregation without introduction.)

143  
192 248  
RESPONSIVE READING (announced by the minister. The reading is followed immediately by the GLORIA PATRI.)

FIRST LESSON (the congregation seated)

ANTHEM (unannounced)

SECOND LESSON (the congregation seated)

PASTORAL PRAYER followed immediately by the LORD'S PRAYER  
(the congregation seated)

OFFERTORY (placed on the table by student ushers)

DOXOLOGY

201 HYMN (unannounced)

SERMON

121 HYMN (unannounced)

\*BENEDICTION (followed immediately by a CHORAL AMEN)

POSTLUDE (The minister customarily stands in the hall to greet the congregation.)

\*The minister is requested to give the last phrase of the benediction to the choir representative.