

Wheat and Weeds

This Lenten Season we are looking at some of the parables of Jesus which teach us about the Kingdom of God (heaven). A parable is literally a “para” + “ballow” – “to throw (ball) alongside (parallel).” A parable throws two or more things alongside each other for the sake of comparison (and contrast).

In the Catechesis classes I will often ask a catechumen to give me one of their shoes – then I take off one of mine – and I throw them alongside each other, and we compare them. I do this to show them what a “parable” is. That’s why our text says that the “kingdom of heaven MAY BE COMPARED TO ...” The kingdom of heaven “is like” a man who sowed good seed

And, as our second reading teaches us – Jesus speaks in parables in order to reveal what is hidden. What is hidden is God’s kingdom – that is – how God rules on earth. We don’t see things the same way God does. Jesus’ work of ruling here on earth is misunderstood. His work is not apparent to natural man – and so He must reveal to us what He is doing. Thus, His parables.

We see a man sowing good seed in a field – what we don’t see is the enemy who sneaks in and sows weeds in that same field. We see the plants coming up all nice and green – what we don’t see is that one thing is not like the others. We see the plants ripen – and wait, what!!!! – those are not wheat, those are weeds!!!

While they were growing together we couldn’t tell the difference – the weeds were hidden from us – but what was once hidden is eventually revealed. As Jesus Himself says elsewhere – “you will know them by their fruits.”

Not knowing what is going on in the kingdom of heaven – not seeing the work being done behind the scenes – the workers question their Master (or, are they blaming Him?). “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?”

This isn’t how things are supposed to be in the kingdom of heaven. Something has gone horribly wrong. Is the Master to blame?

He is not. The Master, the Son of Man – Jesus – sows good seed in His field. It's the "good" we hear about in Genesis 1 – when God created the heavens and the earth and everything in it. All that the Master does, is "very good." The seed He sows in the world are "the sons of the kingdom" – those who belong to Him – those who live under His GOOD and gracious rule.

But just as it was in the beginning – the devil cannot leave God's GOOD well enough alone. He's the enemy of God – and he is real. He sows the weeds – the sons of the evil one – side by side – mixed in with the sons of the kingdom living in this world.

You can't tell them apart – the ones who belong to the Lord, and the ones who belong to their father the devil. Yes, "you will know them by their fruits" – but even then it's hard to tell because of the sin we produce in our lives.

If you take a Christian and an unbeliever and "throw" them "alongside" each other – it would be hard to tell them apart – because Christians sometimes do evil things, and the sons of the evil one sometimes do things that look good.

Master, "do you want us to go and gather" up the weeds? Man is eager to come to the rescue – to clean up the mess that they attribute to God. We don't like how God rules in His kingdom – we don't agree with how things are done – and so we take it upon ourselves to handle the problem, to take care of the kingdom.

We are shocked, and appalled, when we look around and see weeds growing right here in our pews. We are suspicious whether that one is truly wheat, or a weed. In our quest for a utopia, for perfection – for a church that we can be proud of – we long to rush in and begin pulling out the weeds right and left.

Weeds in the kingdom? That's not how it should be. God, you're doing this all wrong. Let me show you how it is done.

"NO, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them." Don't harm my "good seed" – the sons of the kingdom. "Let both grow together until the harvest."

"Let them be," Jesus says – which, ironically is the Greek word for "forgiveness." Forgive the weeds for now, "until the harvest."

In this parable Jesus is revealing what is hidden. He has planted you in this world – where the devil is also at work, planting his sons. Sons of God and sons of the devil live and grow together in this world until the harvest.

But do not worry – and do not try to take matters into your own hands. “Let them be.” I will take care of it – not now (as you expect, and desire) – but when my Father says the time is right.

Then I will send my angels to reap the harvest. They will gather out from God’s kingdom “all causes of sin and all law-breakers” and they will be thrown into the fiery furnace. God will separate the weeds from the wheat – and the wheat His angels will gather into His barn, their heavenly home.

So, do not fear the evil that surrounds you, for the Lord Jesus Christ will sustain and protect you in the one true faith until the harvest. He continues to be present in this world – ruling over your sin and death – even though you cannot see Him.

And what you cannot see today, you will see on that day. Indeed, you are a field of ripened wheat – shimmering in the sun (like Jesus Himself on the Mountain of the Transfiguration). And while the evil ones are being destroyed in the furnace – you are preserved like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – who were saved from the fire, unharmed.

Dearly beloved, Jesus has revealed that you are His good seed – surrounded by evil – but protected and preserved until the harvest of the last day – promising that He will gather you into His barn, your heavenly home.

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.