

July 23, 2023 Mt. 13:24-43 & Gen 28:10-19

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#### ENTERING THE SCENE:

The weed Jesus was referring to in His day was, when ripened, slightly poisonous causing dizziness and sickness and yet having a habit-forming effect. The seed gives rise to the poison of blaming; it has dizzying effects as we try to keep track of all who are to blame for our personal and communal shortcomings. It makes us spiritually sick because it lifts our spirits with a lie. Worst of all, in spite of these effects, it is habit forming. In other words, we can rely on it for relief, but we can't trust it for salvation from our shared condition of brokenness. At some level we each know that; it makes us restless. To ease the restlessness we simply follow the crowd.

#### Mt. 13:24-43

24 Jesus told them another **parable**: "The kingdom of heaven is like a **man** who sowed **good seed** in his **field**. 25 But while everyone was **sleeping**, his **enemy** came and sowed **weeds** among the **wheat**, and went away. 26 When the **wheat** sprouted and formed heads, then the **weeds** also appeared. 27 The owner's **servants** came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow **good seed** in your **field**? Where then did the **weeds** come from?' 28 An **enemy** did this,' he replied. "The **servants** asked him, 'Do you want us to go and **pull** them up?' 29 No,' he answered, 'because while you are **pulling** the **weeds**, you may root up the **wheat** with them. 30 Let both **grow** together until the **harvest**. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First collect the **weeds** and tie them in bundles to be **burned**; then gather the **wheat** and bring it into my barn.'" 31 He told them another **parable**: "The kingdom of heaven is like a **mustard seed**, which a man took and planted in his **field**. 32 Though it is the smallest of all your **seeds**, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the **birds of the air** come and perch in its branches." 33 He told them still another **parable**: "The kingdom of heaven is like **yeast** that a **woman** took and **mixed** into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the **dough**." 34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in **parables**; he did not say anything to them without using a **parable**. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the **prophet**: "I will open my mouth in **parables**, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." 36 Then he left the crowd and went into the **house**. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the **parable** of the **weeds** in the **field**." 37 He answered, "The one who sowed the **good seed** is the **Son of Man**. 38 The **field** is the world, and the **good seed** stands for the sons of the kingdom. The **weeds** are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the **enemy** who sows them is the devil. The **harvest** is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 As the **weeds** are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The **Son of Man** will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be **weeping** and **gnashing** of teeth. 43 Then the **righteous** will shine like the sun in the **kingdom of their Father**. He who has ears, let him hear.

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Some wheat and weeds often look alike until they mature so it is hard to tell the difference if we decide too soon. How hard is it for you to wait long enough to make a wise decision?

**PRAYER:** Master of the parable, I like the disciples often need your help to explain the teaching hidden in them. When I am fearful, I resist or ridicule the teaching as nonsense. When I am more open, I find myself pondering the teaching in my quiet moments. When I am feeling your unconditional love, I grab their truths like a thirsty person being offered a cool drink. Help me always to be thirsty for your truth. Amen.

#### WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

**PARABLES:** We find this word 7 times in today's reading. Seven usually connotes completion.

*Do these various examples in the parables help you to get a more complete picture of what Jesus was teaching about God and God's kingdom? Which one helps the most?*

**MAN / WOMAN:** Both women and men were used in today's text to give examples of the working of God in bringing completion to God's kingdom.

*What does this tell us about Jesus' understanding of God?*

**GOOD SEED / WHEAT:** The life sustaining wheat is a symbol for what it is like in the kingdom of heaven.

*How does this example help you to deal with the paradoxes in your life?*

**FIELD:** God's creative process in space and time seems to be the 'field'.

*Do you experience the happenings of your life as the 'field' of God's activity? If so, how?*

**SLEEPING:** Things happen when we sleep that we have no control over.

*Is it comforting to know that you don't have to be in control of God's process?*



**WEEDS:** The weed seed planted was probably darnel. It looks like wheat until it is mature. Since it is poisonous and deliberately planted, not just a natural weed, it is seen to be the work of an enemy.

*Can you give an example of something in your life that looks like wheat but is really a poisonous weed?*

**SERVANTS:** The early church was puzzled by the presence of evil in the world even after the Resurrection. Like the servants, they struggled to explain this mystery.

*Have you ever been put on the spot by someone demanding to know how a "good God could let this happen"? Have you ever been the questioner?*

**PULL / PULLING:** The immediate response to the situation was to get rid of it the weeds (evil).

*Can you name something in your life that is part of your nature that never seems to be pulled out? Has this something ever been the source of growth and compassion in you?*

**GROW:** By letting the growth continue, the master saves the harvest and gains fuel in the process.

*As you grow in faith, do your 'weeds' provide fuel for your purification?*

**HARVEST:** The master trusts that the wheat is strong enough to thrive in spite of the weeds and he can outwit the enemy at its own game.

*Do you trust that God knows what God is about as you continue to grow in faith? Do you trust that the good in you is stronger than the bad?*

**BURNED:** Fuel of any kind in this part of the world was valuable, so even the undesirable can be put to good use.

*Can you embrace your weaknesses and trust that they will ultimately be put to good use as you grow? Have you ever 'burned' with a passion that proclaimed; "It shouldn't have to be this way", and worked to change something evil?*

**MUSTARD SEED:** A mustard seed was often used as an example of something very tiny that had surprising potential.

*What 'mustard seeds' are producing surprises for you?*

**BIRDS OF THE AIR:** Birds of the air was often a code word for the gentiles. You are probably a 'bird of the air' or a non-Jewish believer.

*Does the church seem like a bush to nest in? If so, why? If not, why?*

**YEAST:** Yeast, often an example of something undesirable, is now used as a metaphor for good.

*Can you give an example of 'yeast' in your faith life?*

**MIXED:** It is at this juncture in the gospel that Jesus begins to turn to the gentiles in his ministry.

*Who would be the 'gentiles' in the mixture of our culture today?*

**PROPHET:** Matthew, by quoting Ps. 78:2, once again brings forward the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures. David connected the present with the past.

*What helps you keep connected with God's continuing revelation? Is there a 'David' in your faith life?*

**HOUSE:** The explanation of the parables is done in private inside the house for those who will be the ones to 'plant' the good news after the Resurrection.

*Does your private meditation on scripture help you in planting your part of the good news story?*

**SON OF MAN:** The Incarnate Jesus continually grounds himself with humanity with this self-description.

*In what way does this help you are you mature in faith?*

**WEEPING / GNASHING:** Both these activities are common responses by those who have come to realize that they are their own worst enemies.

*Have you ever had this experience? Was it growth producing?*

**RIGHTEOUS:** Parables are full of paradoxes. They challenge us to probe for what is really the point/truth.

*Have you discovered a deeper understanding of God and God's will for your life by engaging with this text? If so, what is it?*

**KINGDOM OF THEIR FATHER:** Once again, Jesus names the reason that people were drawn to his message. That is: Who is God, and what is it like where God is?

*How would you answer this question today?*

**PARALLEL TEXTS:** Mt. 13:24 // Mk. 4:26; Mt. 13:30 // Mt. 3:12; Jn. 15:6; Mt. 13: 31f // Mk. 4:30ff; Mt. 13:32 // Dan. 4:11-2, 20-21; Lk. 13:18f; Mt. 13:33 // Lk. 13:20f; Gen. 18:6; Mt. 13: 34 // Jn. 16:25; Mt. 13: 35 // Ps. 78:2; Mt. 13:39 // Rev. 14:15; Mt. 13:41 // Zeph.. 1:3; Mt. 13:42 // Mt. 8:12; Rev. 21:8; Mt. 13:43 // Dan. 12:3; Wis. 3:7; Mt. 13:44 // Mt. 19:21; Prov. 4:7;

**OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:** Wis. 12:13, 16-19; [Ps. 86: 5-6, 9-10, 15-6](#); Rom. 8:26-7; Mt. 13:24-43

Revised Common Lectionary: Gen. 28: 10-19; [Ps. 139: 1-2, 23-4](#); Rom. 8: 12-25; Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43;

### **SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:**

The parable is suggesting that overeager weeders might overdo the job. Or, to translate the image into the lesson it is really talking about, the parable is suggesting that zealous religious watchdogs might not show the kind of judgment that would do justice to the compassion of God. Better to let matters be, and leave it up to God to decide. God knows that there is no shortage of religious guard dogs doing God's work for him. And they usually have a firm, even fixed, idea of what God wants. And it usually involves punishment. Seldom compassion. Fr. Beck, 2008. Pgs. 117-8.

The kingdom of heaven is not like the kingdoms of other powers. For these rule by coercive force. But the heavenly kingdoms attract us by the force of love. Pg. 72. Viviano, Benedict T. O.P. The Kingdom of God in History. Eugene, OR. Wipf U Stock Pub. 1988.

The line I often quote from Paula D'Arcy should be obvious: "God comes to you disguised as your life." Why didn't someone tell me that earlier—that this life is the raw material that I need to take seriously? Every day, what's right in front of me is the agenda. And even more, the natural world all around us has all the lessons that we need for life, love, death, and salvation. Really! Just look and listen, and note how Jesus himself seems to have looked and listened to lilies, birds, hens, sheep, "red sky in the morning," green and dry wood, moth and worm, etc. You can see how merely believing doctrines and practicing rituals is very often a clever diversionary tactic to avoid my actual life—to avoid the agenda that is right in front of me every day, which is always messy, always muddied, always mundane, always ordinary—and all around me. Richard Rohr: Emerging Church Conference, Swannick, England, 2010

**Darnel** resembled wheat in its early stages of growth, but it is poisonous. If rooted out early, the wheat might also be torn out, for the roots intertwine. As the wheat grows taller, it can be harvested without ever touching the noxious weeds. Later the darnel can be harvested, and laid out to dry, for it makes an excellent kindling. Wisely, then, the harvest-master patiently waits, for it is the best course of action.

Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men. A Merton Reader, ed. by Thomas P. McDonnell, (New York: Image Books, 1989) 426

The word 'field' is used in scripture 253 times it is often a metaphor for the world.

It looks as if we are condemned to live in a world that is a mixture of darkness and light, of good and evil. Jesus spoke of the field in which wheat and weeds grow alongside each other. ... We'll never win if we launch a frontal assault on evil. If we do that we may incorporate into ourselves the energy and weapons of evil. We can end up by turning into what we hate (see M. Scott Peck, *The People of the Lie* {NY: Simon & Schuster, 1983}. That's why Jesus told us we have to love our enemies; otherwise we become just like them. .... There is no perfect political system. Jesus never promised us that any political system could realize the Reign of God on Earth. He advised us to take a humble position in this world, a position of non-participation in the lie. He called this position "yeast". Pgs. 70-71. Rohr, Richard. Simplicity: the Art of Living. NY: Crossroad. 1992.

Gospel of Thomas, Logion 57. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of the Father is like a man who had (good) seed. His enemy came by night, (and) he sowed a weed among the good seed. The man did not let them pull up the weed. He said to them, 'I fear lest you go to pull up the weed, and you pull up the wheat with it.' For on the day of the harvest the weeds will be apparent; they will pull them up and burn them." Ehrman, Bart. After the New Testament. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pg. 241

On the other hand, as day followed day, year after year, and that generation of disciples died without the Lord's returning, the Spirit aided human experience to understand that the Lord's return was not imminent. Rather, the Day of the Lord (the Parousia) was in the indeterminate future, a final guarantee of the worth of this life. Yet the word of the Lord had been true: the kingdom had come in the lifetime of the disciples, as the church filled with the Spirit. Matthew, again, is the most explicit about this. He divides the kingdom of heaven (as a Jew calls it) into the *kingdom of the Father*, which is to come at the end of time as the final eschatological kingdom, and the *kingdom of the Son of man*, which is the kingdom now present in the Spirit-filled community. (Mt: 13:24-30)

That is to say, the kingdom of the Son of man will be composed of both good and evil, as is the Christian church. At the final judgment, the good will be accepted into the final and complete kingdom of the Father, but in the meantime the church is in fact a stage of the kingdom of God. Topel, L. John, S.J. The Way to Peace. NY. Orbis Books. 1979. Page 92.

Thus, a lack of ease in natural virtue is not necessarily a sign of an inauthentic spirituality. If there are underlying signs of growing faith, hope and love, I would judge that the Spirit of God is at work, even though there are still many thorny (and highly visible) weeds in the garden of the Lord. After all, he himself told a parable about leaving the weeds to grow with the wheat until the harvest, lest in uprooting the weeds the fragile shoots of wheat also be uprooted (Mt. 13:24-30). Pg. 73.

Green, Thomas H. When the Well Runs Dry. Notre Dame, IN. Ave Maria Press. 1979.

The title "son of man" is used 81 times in the gospels and only once in Acts 7: 56.

In the fall issue of *Parabola* titled "The Teacher" we find: Spiritual instruction is not a matter of mere technique; it has to do with inner transformation, and beyond a certain preliminary point this can take place only by the introduction of a kind of subtle catalyst that somehow causes change in one's very being. One of the oldest metaphors for this catalyst is leaven or yeast as one can see from the Gospels. When introduced to certain substances, leaven causes their fundamental properties to change; flour and grape juice become bread and wine. It's the same with the essence of a teaching, which is somehow imparted into one's very nature and transforms it.

Smoley, Richard. The Source of Wisdom: What can we trust to direct our search? *Parabola*. Fall, 2000. Pgs. 6ff.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries the early church struggled with the emerging concept that came to be known as the trinity. One person named Praxeas was spreading a teaching that was confusing the people. In a document by Tertullian we find: "But the tares (weeds) of Praxeas had then everywhere shaken out their seed, which having lain hid for some while, with its vitality concealed under a mask, has now broken out with fresh life. But again shall it be rooted up, if the Lord will, even now; but if not now, in the day when all bundles of tares shall be gathered together, and along with every other stumbling block shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire.

Ehrman, Bart. After the New Testament. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998. Pg. 226.

A false thought in the mind already contains the whole structure of illusion, just as a seed sown in the earth contains the whole plant, which will grow out of it. (From Bishop Ignatii) (Mt. 13: 24-30)

The real purpose of searching after facts is not so that we can manipulate the world to our advantage, but so that we can transform our own awareness. Pg. 88. Kingsley, Peter. . Parabola, Winter 2010

“Emergent” means that it is something greater than the sum of its parts—a new order of relatedness, a new level of consciousness, a deeper and higher perspective that is always unimaginable until the moment it explodes into existence.~  
Andrew Cohen

As Teilhard stated in 1923, the truth of tomorrow appears today as heresy. This is not only a provocative way of stating the dilemma, but it implies a number of consequences. First of all, this statement is not reversible. Not all heresies of today will be the truth of tomorrow. Thus, at the time of their appearance, nobody will really know what will be the weed and what will be the wheat. This suggests that the church community and the magisterium should develop a greater tolerance for the heresies that show up within the church. Instead of slashing them whenever they seem to be identified, it might be wise to let them grow. The magisterium might distance itself from such new teachings without condemning them. Within the Orthodox Church one sees the habit not of condemning but of letting the Holy Spirit decide; a growing acceptance within the church supports the truth-value of a newly formulated “heresy.” Great truths evidently require great sufferings in order to survive and bear fruit.

Schmitz-Moormann, Karl. The Future of Teilhardian Theology. Zygon. Vol 30 No. 1. March 1995. Pages 117ff.

As a mentor you can't really pull or force people forward. In the final analysis, you cannot “grow up” other people. All you can do is reveal the real and keep growing up yourself. Jesus walked the earth as a mature, transformed, and enlightened man; and power went out from him. Those who have eyes to see and ears to hear will be attracted and will be pulled on the subconscious level—the soul level—just by being around you. It isn't something that you can make happen. You simply are who you are; and others must finally do their own work, facing their own shadow, their own prejudices, their own egocentricity, and their own narcissism.

Richard Rohr: Mentoring (a webcast on CD and DVD)

### **SUGGESTED READINGS:**

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: [www.theark1.com](http://www.theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs.143-147. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs. 117-120. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](mailto:Carol.Oberfoell@theark1.com)

Wiederkehr, Macrina, OSB. [Seasons of Your Heart](http://www.theark1.com). Silver Burdett Co, Morristown, NJ. 1979. THE RISING: Page 49