

“WHAT’S A PERSON TO DO?”  
Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24, Romans 8:12-25, Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43  
July 23-24, 2023

Any gardener or farmer knows that one of the greatest struggles to a good crop production is the effect of weeds among the desired crop. Gardeners will spend enormous amounts of time and energy pulling the weeds in their gardens so that the desired plants will grow up strong and healthy, thereby producing an abundant crop. Farmers will spend many hours and much money on herbicides in the attempt to eradicate the weeds and allow as much of the nutrients of the soil to go to the crops that have been planted. The more nutrients the crops get, the better they usually do in producing a great harvest.

But weeds don’t know when to quit. They scoff at border lines and jump at the opportunity to reproduce in the freshly tilled soil. Sometimes I think they conspire to take over the entire garden. It seems that they grow to maturity overnight, and multiply even as the wind blows. Weeds are hardy and fight off any kind of effort to control them. And if not removed, the weeds will certainly take over any plot of land such that they will crowd out anything else but their own.

George Washington Carver once said, "A weed is a flower growing in the wrong place." So when those “flowers” begin blooming all over the place, it’s easy for them to start to take over the rest of the garden. Oh, they may look nice when they bloom, but they are not what any gardener or farmer wants in their fields. Thus it takes energy and hard work to keep those “flowers” from invading and conquering the garden plots. It takes much time and energy to prevent the “flowers in the wrong place” from diminishing the crops that are intended to grow.

But agricultural weeds is not what God is the most concerned about. In fact, He created all the plants on the earth, and called them all “good.” But when “flowers” show up in the wrong place, they become weeds and that moves them from the “good” category, to the “wicked” category. And that is when the invasion of the flowers into the crops becomes an illustration that Jesus uses to compare with the people of the world. He is not concerned with the productivity of a garden or field, but rather the harvest of the world with regard to the lives of people.

Today's Gospel lesson from Matthew 13 gives us an excellent concept of God's desired outcome for the crops He most desires from the earth. Listen to Jesus' Parable of the Weeds. (READ Matthew 13:24-30). We're going to stop there for the moment and pick up with the rest of today's Gospel lesson in a few minutes.

Jesus' allegory to the Kingdom of Heaven is portrayed by a farmer and his workers. This "owner" has done all he could to prepare the land for a proper planting and growing and harvest of his wheat. And he has purchased or prepared the finest of wheat seed to plant so that it might produce the greatest harvest possible. The workers have done their very best to make sure that everything is just right to guarantee a plentiful harvest. It all looks right and ready, but then something unexpected happens. An enemy comes to those fields and sows weeds among the wheat.

Now it's hard to understand why a person would spend so much time attempting to negatively impact the production of another business owner. The enemy would have to have used the separated weed seeds from the wheat grains to infect the land with the weeds. Instead of putting them into a refuse pile, this enemy determines to use them against the farmer to reduce and even ruin the desired crop of wheat.

It's a lot like computer hackers today, using their computer knowledge to disrupt or even destroy the operations of a business. Why can't those brilliant minds develop constructive programs that benefit an organization rather than spending time and energy into destroying businesses? I don't get it! But that's what we're up against here in this parable; the one man doing his best to be productive with his time and energy, and the other doing his best to disrupt and destroy the efforts of the first.

Anyway, the evil that is done is not realized until the plants begin to grow up alongside each other. The wheat is recognized as the desired crop, but the weeds are also recognized in their growth, something that is not the desired crop. The workers see and recognize the difference. Yet they know the hard work that was put into preparing the land and sowing the good seed. They are baffled by the presence of the weeds among the wheat.

So they question the owner about it. “*Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?*” (Matt. 13:27). They want to know what they did wrong, so they question the quality of the seed that was planted, so that they are not punished for not doing their part of the preparation of the land. And of course, it is recognized what an enemy has done and the workers can rest a little easier.

But the solution is a strange one. The farmer understands that by trying to eliminate the weeds at the very beginning of the growing season would bring disaster to the good plants they want to grow. So it is decided to let both the weeds and the wheat grow up together until the harvest, when they can be separated safely - the weeds being gathered and thrown into the fire to be destroyed, and the wheat being gathered and put into the barns for their proper use.

It seems like a simple story. But Jesus uses this parable to demonstrate what is happening among the people of the world. Listen to His explanation of the parable. (READ Matthew 13:36-43)

Here’s where we become intimately involved into this parable. God started by making all people good, like the wheat. Yet, our enemy, the devil, has corrupted many into wickedness, transforming them into the weeds. The wicked and the good are “grown” together in the world, and while God desires that all people turn to Him and follow His ways in order that they might receive eternal life, and not perish, the wicked among them pervert the ways of God, deceive the people and drive out any hope that they had in the Lord. The wicked seek to destroy the good by leading them away from the ways of the Lord God, crowding out His Word from their lives. They do their best to lead and transform the good into the bad, thereby conquering the whole land, eliminating the good and strengthening the monopoly over all people. And so a war begins, the good against the bad, each trying their best to take over the other.

According to the parable, Jesus tells us that the wheat and the weeds both already have an end destination determined. God has already made it clear that He wants only the righteous into His eternal kingdom. Those who are counted as the weeds, the wicked and evil ones, also have a destination, “*the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 13:42).

Now, I don't know about you, but I would very much like to be a part of the first option here, being in God's eternal kingdom. Being destroyed by a blazing furnace is not something I want to experience. So if you are of the same mind as I am, how do we determine that we are headed in the right direction?

Well, Psalm 139 helps us to begin our journey. David makes it very clear for us to understand. He says, "*You have searched me, Lord, and You know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down' You are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue You, Lord, know it completely*" (Ps. 139:1-4).

God knows us right down to our very thoughts! He knows all our actions. He knows all our words. He knows our intentions and our desires. God knows us even better than we know ourselves. And He still loves us! BUT God desires that we follow Him, that we abide by His Word, and that we obey His commands. He does not like us to disobey Him, or walk away from His commands, or let anything else take His place as #1 in our lives. God wants only those who are diligently seeking after Him as His own. So what's a person to do to make sure they're God-approved?

**The first step in becoming a part of the desired wheat harvest is that we must evaluate ourselves carefully to see if we align to God's Will and God's Ways.** That means that we let God walk in and around the garden of our life and point out the weeds in our lives that need to be removed. Could it be the weed of greed? Maybe it's the garlic mustard of anger or jealousy? Could it be the ragweed of pride manifesting itself? Or maybe it's the thistle of judgmentalism? Could the crabgrass of discontent be edging its way into your life's garden? Or maybe it's the violets of activities outside of the life of the church that is pulling you away from the Lord? How about the dandelion of sporting activities consuming your time away from worship of the Lord? Or how about the chickweed of entertainment through TV or movies? What flowering weeds would God point out in your life's garden that you need to contend with in order to bring about a healthier life for yourself?

David invites us to say with him, "*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my*

*anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (139:23-24). Let God open your eyes and heart to come to know all that is detestable to Him, and if it happens to be in your life, be bold enough to confess it and get rid of it. Let God clean up your life’s garden so that all that happens within it is pure and honest and right according to His Word in the Bible.*

**Step two in the process of becoming the wheat harvest of the Lord is to ask the Lord to become the primary influence in your life.** That means that we confess Jesus Christ as our Savior and begin to make Him the Lord of our life. We humble ourselves to His control and allow Him to lead us in all that we do and say. As we claim the work that Jesus Christ did for us on the cross to pay the penalty of our sins, thereby forgiving us of all our unrighteousness, we become the desired wheat in the land of the living. This is absolutely essential for every one of us to do so that we receive all the nourishment and support from the Lord God Almighty that helps us grow up to bear much fruit.

The apostle Paul lifts this up for us in Romans 8(:12-14). He says, *“Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation - but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”*

Those who have claimed Jesus Christ in their life as Savior are not to turn right around and walk according to the ways of the world. Those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus must let go of the wicked worldly ways, and focus on doing the work of the Lord instead. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:24, *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”* So we have to choose whom we will let be the lord of our life - the world, or Jesus. We cannot be a part of both and expect to find God’s blessings. If we claim to have Jesus as our Savior and then live according to the ways of the world, we are liars and have no part of the kingdom of God.

**So step three of the process of becoming the wheat harvest of the Lord our God is to give up all the things of the world that causes us to be the weeds instead of wheat.** We cannot proclaim

to be a good follower of the Lord Jesus and then live by the standards of the world. We have to weed out those things that are against God's Word, and daily consecrate ourselves to following His Will and His Ways. It's a daily battle over whom we will allow to lead our hearts. If we do not let the Lord God lead us by His Word, then the war has already been decided and we will be swayed by the things of the world.

In their book, *Watch Therefore...Your Lord Cometh*, B.W. Miller and G.F. Owen put it this way: *"We are to watch and be ready [for the coming of the Lord], robed in wedding garments. We are to confess Him before depraved and sinful men. We are to be faithful, to repent completely, to stem the fierce tide of worldliness. We are warned to be moderate and patient; to mortify the deadly soul-blighting lusts of the flesh; and to be sincere and godly and righteous in this present world. We are commanded to be holy and unblameable, unrebukeable and upright. We are admonished to obey the commandments - for Christ is coming!"*<sup>1</sup>

Notice in the parable of the weeds that Jesus tells us, there is a distinct difference between the wheat and the weeds. There is not to be a transmutation so that there is a new species mixed with wheat and weed characteristics. We are to be either wheat or weed, remembering that each has their own destination already set for them.

Therefore we are to *"choose this day whom we will serve..."* (Joshua 24:15).

**Step four of the process of becoming a part of the wheat harvest is to begin living our faithfulness on a daily basis so that the whole world might see our faith in Jesus Christ.** Jesus told the disciples (and us), *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..."* (Matt. 28:19-20). We are to go out as His Disciples to proclaim the truth of God's Word to the people of the world so that they might hear the truth, believe the truth, receive the truth, and then become changed from weeds (flowers in the wrong place), to wheat (the righteous of the Lord).

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<sup>1</sup> (Found in *Herald of His Coming*, [Seelyville, IN: Gospel Revivals, Inc.] Vol. 82 No. 4, July/August 2023)

Notice Jesus did not tell us to “Go out into the world and become just like the world, living like everyone else so that you blend in and so that you accept all the ways of the world as your own.” NO! He tells us to put our trust and faith IN HIM, and then boldly live that faith so that everyone around us can see the difference. We are to live according to the ways of God found in the Bible, and live them so blatantly that the world can’t help but see the difference between us living by God’s ways and the rest living by the world’s ways.

Remember, that’s precisely what Daniel and his friends did as they were led into captivity in the land of Babylon. They continued to live according to the ways of the Lord, even in the face of persecution and even death, and not only did the Lord bless them for doing so, but the people around them saw the difference, and even the king decided that it was a better way than living by the ways that they had lived before.

We’re not to be covert, undercover Christians, keeping our identity with Christ a secret. We are to live in such a way as to let everyone know what we believe even before we tell them about our faith with words. Our actions are to speak much louder than our words, but they must coincide with what we believe. We have to put feet on our faith, preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ wherever we go, and if necessary use words.

Aaron and Sarah Emmerson are doing just that. They work for CRU (Campus Crusade for Christ) in Florida doing campus ministry with the students. This summer they took a group of students over to Bosnia for a mission trip at the University of Mostar. They talked with the students and lived their faith before them. Aaron states in their recent newsletter: “To give another example [of how different we were from others]...Marko (a Bosnian friend) told me after one of our meetings:

“I didn’t even know there were people in the world like you. I have never met anyone like you before. And here, in this room, there are many of you in one place. I thought I was a good person until I met you. You have been a highlight of my life. I can’t even tell you. I’m not just, um, [searching for English words]...‘putting a cherry on top’. I mean this.” Needless to say, students were very spiritually

open and sensed something unique about our team.”

Sarah shares this account: “She and Logan (a student missionary with the team) enjoyed coffee with (a Bosnian student) Ivana and had the chance to share the Gospel with her. Ivana grew up Serbian Orthodox, and after the conversation she said, “I never knew this!” (referring to why Jesus died, and what it meant to put our faith in Him). She walked away with a huge smile on her face! And Logan was so excited to get to learn and grow in communicating her faith.”

If we are to become the wheat in the harvest of the Lord, we must 1) take a look at ourselves to see whether we are wheat or weeds, 2) we must let Jesus Christ become Savior AND Lord in our life, 3) we give up the things of this world and live by God’s Ways, and 4) we must live our faith so that others might see the difference in us, and find Salvation in Jesus for their own. And as we live for Jesus, we have the chance to change the lives of those around us so that they might become the wheat of the Lord, too.

The return of the Lord Jesus is going to happen soon, and it is our part to do all we can to live as the wheat of the Lord so that we might influence those around us and help them to find Jesus as Lord of their lives as well.

Live your faith, folks, and be seen as the wheat of the Lord here in our world, today! Let’s pray.

Father, You desire that all people come to You and follow Your ways. But our enemy, the devil, has convinced many that they don’t need God in their life. So they live hard, but only to their own destruction. Give us the eyes to see all that is wicked and evil in us so that we might change our ways and become Your children, seeking all Your ways. Give us the courage to put our trust in Jesus each day, so that we can find forgiveness of our sins and be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we might do Your good and perfect will (Rom. 12:2). Help us to give up our pursuit of worldly things, and decide to follow You with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Then open up opportunities for us to share our faith as we live as Your wheat here among the weeds in our world. Guide our every step and word, for Your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.