

## What is God's Love Like?

July 9, 2017

Matthew 13:24-30 (NIV)

---

*Bishop Theodore Potter tells a poignant story about judging another's character, as he speaks about a trip he took to Europe on one of the great transatlantic ocean liners – back before taking cruises was popular. When he went on board, he found that another passenger was to share the cabin with him. After going to see the accommodations Bishop Potter came up to the purser's desk and inquired if he could leave his gold watch and other valuables in the ship's safe. He explained that ordinarily he never availed himself of that privilege, but he had been to his cabin and had met the man who was to occupy the other berth. Judging from this man's appearance, the bishop was afraid that the man might not be a very trustworthy person.*

*The purser accepted the responsibility for the valuables and remarked, "It's all right bishop, I'll be very glad to take care of them for you. Your roommate has already been up here and left his for the same reason!"*

Judging the character of another – is that what Jesus' parable about the wheat and the weeds is all about?

For a second week in a row, Jesus is using an agricultural image to speak to us of our relationship with our Creator and our relationships with one another. For it is within those relationships, Jesus taught, that we see evidence of the "Kingdom of Heaven."

Before I "dig into" today's parable of the Wheat and the Weeds, it is important to explore the term, "Kingdom of Heaven," because many people hear that phrase and think, "Oh, Jesus is describing what heaven must be like – isn't that nice." Remember that our Gospel writer, Matthew, is a Jew and is writing predominantly to a Jewish community, and thus instead of using the term coined by the other gospel writers, "Kingdom of God," he alone uses the term "Kingdom of Heaven." But when modern linguists and theologians look at the early text, they say the best translation is really, "Reign of God," or "God's Domain," or perhaps the best translation is simply "**God's Love**," which is, indeed, the core message found throughout the Bible.

So, in today's Gospel, Jesus the Christ tells us that **God's love** is like a sower of good seed whose field yields both wheat and weeds. Again, Jesus uses a metaphor which is commonly known – a part of the everyday life of most of his hearers, something to which folks in an agricultural community can relate.

In this parable, the sower's servants discover that although the sower used good quality seed, weeds are growing along with the wheat. And while the discussion between the sower and the servants reveals the conclusion that this is some sort of agricultural terrorism, the primary subject of the conversation asks, "what do we do with the weeds and the wheat?"

It is likely that the weed that was planted amongst the wheat was a plant named **Lolium Tremulentum** or more commonly called darnel. As you can see on the slide, this weed looks similar enough to wheat that, from a distance, one could easily mistake one plant for the other. Interesting, this weed is such a nuisance because its roots are strong like a nylon cord, and the darnel roots will wrap around the roots of any other plant nearby in order to sap the strength from the other plant. The sower knows that if the servants are sent out to pull up the weed, they will likely uproot the wheat as well, and they will be left

## What is God's Love Like?

July 9, 2017

Matthew 13:24-30 (NIV)

---

with no crop to harvest. Therefore, the sower instructs the servants to let the wheat and weeds grow up side by side, and then they will be separated at harvest time, with the wheat going into the sower's barns, and the weeds to their destruction. For if the dandelion is ground into flour along with the wheat, it will give all who consume it a massive bellyache!

Now, this parable is **not** describing to the crowd how they should attend to their fields, but rather **how they should live their lives**. For many folks become obsessed with trying to identify the good wheat and the bad weeds, spending much time examining minute differences and proclaiming with certitude eternal salvation or damnation for others. In our culture today, an enormous amount of time and resources are spent determining at any given moment who is right and who is wrong, who is in and who is out, who is worthy and who is not. But really..... who are **we** to be judging anyone? We are all wheat and weeds, a strange, unique, and special mixture of saint and sinner, for we have each, at some point, fallen short of God's glory. And at that moment, I could be judged, and you could be judged, as weeds: unworthy of God's love and saving grace.

But Jesus' parable gives us hope in that the sower instructs the servants to allow the weeds and wheat to grow together, perhaps in hopes that the weeds will wrap their thirsty roots around those of the wheat, and gain enough good nourishment, observe examples of bearing fruit, witness the growth despite adversity, in order to give the weeds a chance to change, be useful, and perhaps produce beauty.

In this parable Jesus calls for us to stop judging who or what is wheat and weed and to understand that **we are all children of God** and **that God's love is unconditional** – God takes our weeds, our faults, our imperfections, and fills them with God's love, grace, and holiness. If you look through the Gospels you will not find Jesus admonishing a sinner – rather, he is more focused on offering forgiveness.

Perhaps, all we are called to do is recognize who we truly are and give ourselves back to God as a gift....blemishes and all!

PICTURE....

\*\* blobby handprints (not even recognizable to his mother!)

\*\*far less than perfect from an artistic viewpoint

##but so treasured that we had it professionally framed...

Because it came from Paul

@@after years of admiration the once red construction paper has faded, but it is treasured no less! Because Paul will always be precious to us!

That is how God loves us – imperfections and all – just waiting for us to grow into the person God has created us to be, with God's love encouraging us all along the way.

This is indeed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, filled with good news for the wheat and the weed alike. This gospel reminds us of a love that consoles us when we cannot recognize whether we or those around us are wheat or weeds, and nurtures us to grow to full maturity.

## What is God's Love Like?

July 9, 2017

Matthew 13:24-30 (NIV)

---

*And so, may you be open and present to experience this great love God has for all of us...*

*May you discover God's desire to be in relationship with you, with an abundant love that accepts you as you are: both wheat and weed...*

*And may you never forget, no matter what, that you are a cherished child of our God – God who is, indeed, pure Love!*