

Today's scripture passage is one that I had to wrestle with at length this week. It is a difficult parable message even when you try to parse it out in the technical way a minister can.

The main reason it was a struggle to me this week, is this parable comes out of the apocalyptic tradition of faith. Where we talk about the end of everything, the salvation of the faithful and the damnation of the rest. As Jesus illustrates in his parable, the good seeds are sown by the farmer and the farmer's enemy comes into the field and sows weeds. Which sounds like quite the arduous task to me, unless he chose a weed that seeds in a way that is easily harvestable. But I digress.

The point is this farmer has sown bad seeds in with the good ones. And when the farm hands find this out they run to the master and their first reaction is to say "Hey I thought we were planting the good stuff?" Which is an absurd thing to say to the farmer, but they do it anyway. The farmer responds that the weeds are the doing of an enemy and rather than risk the good crops being pulling up by the bad they will both grow.

Which again, in a farming metaphor I feel like letting the weeds growing will result in some good seed not growing, but again I digress. The story ends with the weeds being harvested along side the wheat and the weeds being bundled and burned.

A hard to grasp parable without the guidance of Jesus. Which luckily we and the disciples have on hand to explain, though I am not sure that the explanation is any easier to sit with in my heart.

After Jesus has come to shore, out of the boat into a house nearby presumably, the disciples ask him. Jesus what was that wheat parable about?

Jesus then explains to them that the good seeds are sown by the Son of Man. The Son of Man of course is Matthew's code phrase for Jesus, whereas in other Gospels he is referred to as the messiah, or in John is called Lord. All of these are ways to identify his power and holiness.

Jesus then says to the disciples that the bad seeds are sown by his enemy, Diabolos in greek, or translated to the devil in English. I have always had mixed feeling about Devils and Demons turning up in scripture

and being referenced in our modern society. But as a friend of mine says when we bring these things up in discussion, Evil is real and is at work in the world. I agree.; So I think we can safely set aside the pedantic discussion of who Diabolos in this greek text is, and agree that there is something out there trying to sow seeds of evil in world.

Jesus declares to the disciples that the field in this parable is the world. The seeds are people being sown by Christ and by Diabolos. And it is a difficult thing to talk about and understand. Because for me I am not sure this metaphor holds up under scrutiny. Unless you believe in Predestination, which is always a touchy subject.

In short, the parable seems to be telling us that there are those of us who are sown in good faith, and those sown in bad faith. And that we just have to grow along side each other, until the angels come to reap the harvest and some of us are burned up and some of us shine in glory with God on high.

And I think that if we take this as a literal interpretation, it leaves zero room for forgiveness and grace, it leaves no room to grow and to change. Because once you are a weed, or are wheat, there is no changing who you are. You are either saved or damned, and I refuse to believe in something so simple as that.

I understand that we are all given our free choice and sometimes our choices are bad. Sometimes we are influenced by the world around us to make bad decisions. Sometimes it is a single person in our lives who seems to be active in ruining our days.

However, I think that following down this specific line of logic leads us to find an individual evil that we can pin the blame on that isn't ourselves and attempt to liberate ourselves from responsibility by saying something as foolish as the devil made me do it.

That's preposterous, while you are susceptible to influence just like the rest of us, you also have the right to choose your own actions. Nobody is going to make you buy that new energy drink everyone is talking about. Nobody is going to make you buy fast food. Nobody is going to make you ignore the people in need in your community. They just might imply that you should.

There are influences in the world around us that we are susceptible to. The little small voice enticing us to do evil, and to ignore good. And if we think that things are as simple as saying it is an evil external figure, and not coming to terms of what the alternative might be. We risk ignoring the fact that some of those thoughts are our own, and some have been put there by people around us, some by corporations who buy ad space in our minds, and yes even some thoughts are placed by the evil one.

If we refuse to take responsibility for our action, we will will never come to the place of proper repentance and reconciliation that Christ wants us to. We need to understand that even if we live in a world where weeds and wheat are decided our actions still matter.

We are still called by God to live up to the name of Jesus. We are still called to the difficult path of discipleship. Last week I spoke at length of coming to terms with the unknowingness of our faith. And this week it is similar and also distinctly different.

I don't think we should use texts like this to justify coming up with our own rules and understandings of who is getting into heaven. We shouldn't have a holy score board of souls saved be our driving focus. Nor should we assume that we are the holy ones, and can isolate ourselves from the world and ignore the cries of the needy declaring they are not chosen.

Our faith calls us to trust in Jesus Christ, and to live into that expectation. I for one am far more concerned with what my calling is as a Christian in the here and now, than I am worried about my own salvation.

Not because I have not considered it, but because I have faith. I believe in the salvation that God has offered to us through grace, and I trust in Jesus Christ that his word and his actions have given us the freedom to live lives unfettered by doubt and despair.

Christ came down in the form of a little baby for all of us. Christ climbed up on the cross and died for all of us. So let us live into his life, by caring for others, seeing to the needs of the poor. And letting this apocalyptic literature sit to the side. Because fear mongering is not how we connect to Christ.

We connect to Christ through love and compassion, and it is by Christ's compassion and gift of salvation, that we are set free from the fear of damnation and being bundles up and burned like weeds in the field.

Let us then respond to grace with Joy and thanksgiving, and by giving our all to assure the Kingdom of God is brought here on earth, where none may go hungry, where no one will freeze, where peace will reign. And all who have the opportunity may come to know Jesus Christ.

This the word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

Amen

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