

*Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. 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?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied. The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 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.'" – Matt. 13:24-30*

This week we are talking about what the Kingdom of God is like. So far we see that it is anywhere that God reigns as King, presumably in the hearts of His people. And we've seen that this idea of the inauguration of the Kingdom of God was a hallmark of Jesus' teaching. But what is the Kingdom actually like? Rather than showing us a picture of the Kingdom, or drawing us a map, Jesus tells us a story, the very best way to truly tell someone about something. He paints a picture with which His listeners would be very familiar – farming. "It's like sowing season on the farm," Jesus says.

In college, we had a group of friends who were always together. And as we grew together, we would visit one another's homes. Jeff came to my house for Thanksgiving. I went to Ben's house for Easter. And then one year, we all went to Cindy's house for a long weekend. Cindy was from Nebraska, and lived on a farm, so we spent the weekend playing in the corn bin, looking at the enormous machinery, riding horses, and basically enjoying time on the farm. As a suburban boy, this was the first time I'd really spent time on a farm, and I still remember it to this day.

And I continued to learn about farm life after my family moved to Dekalb, IL; corn country. Driving the kids to school every morning was a lesson in sowing, growing, tending, and harvesting crops. I never farmed myself, but friends of ours did, and the community had a high percentage of farmers. It was there that I truly began to understand Jesus' parables about the Kingdom of God being like a farm.

This parable is all about patience. Lots of people think it's about seeds, or weeds, or competition. But ultimately, this is a parable about patience, and the Kingdom of God. Yes, an enemy sows weeds among the seeds. Not a big deal? Farmers rely on their every crop to make ends meet for the year, to put food on the table for their families. If the crop is ruined, so are they. There isn't enough excess to weather a year without a crop, and so this Farmer – God in the parable – has two life-threatening problems to deal with. First and most obviously is the Enemy. Maliciously, this enemy has planted weeds among the crops, probably dandelion, a weed that is poisonous but looks exactly like wheat until it is full grown. If mixed with the wheat at harvest, it would poison the crop. But the second danger, just as dangerous as the first, is the hidden danger – the impatient workers. They want to go pull the dandelion from the field before it grows up. What the farmer knows that they don't is that the roots of the dandelion plant grow sideways, entangling themselves with the roots of the good wheat crop. To pull up the dandelion would be to uproot and ruin the crop.

The Kingdom of God is patience, Jesus says. It is not condemning, uprooting, anyone until they are full grown. It is letting the bad seeds grow, trusting God to separate them from the good when the time is right. We live in a culture that thinks it knows everything. Google, the internet, social media, and arrogance have got us convinced that we know best on every matter. There is no room for God, or for patiently waiting on His activity. But that is the Kingdom of God, Jesus says.

Trust God. Wait patiently for Him to work. Let go of control. If you want to be part of the Kingdom of God, these are the things you must do. So watch out when you condemn others. Watch out when you want to weed people out of your society, your church, or your life. That's God's job, and He's so very much better at it than you are.

Questions to ponder:

If you were blatantly honest, who are the "weeds" in your life, your church, or your society?

What ways, blatant or subversive, have you tried to weed people out in the past?

What would help you to be patient and wait on God's intervention?