

May 7, 2017

LET THEM BOTH GROW TOGETHER

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

Jesus said, *"The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to..."* this! (v. 24) It's like a time of harvest, not an age of good and evil growing together. It's not a field where The Enemy can sow weeds. That's the world, not heaven. Heaven would be where *"the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father!"* (v. 43)

A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus had just explained the Parable of the Soils, and Matthew's narrative carries on the image of the seeds being sown in a field. There is no question here about the quality of the soils; nothing here about the seed being the Word of God. The field, the good seed, and the weeds are the world, the children of the Kingdom, and the children of the evil one.

The problem with this imagery is that the good seeds never chose to be children of the Kingdom, and the weeds never chose to be children of Satan. The good news is that this parable comes in the context of the Parable of the Soils where the proper hearing and understanding of the Word is what reveals the quality of the fruitfulness at the Harvest. (13:13)

The fact of the matter is that the world (the field) has both good and evil people living here. Christ is teaching that there will come a judgment day when they will be separated. And, He is teaching that there are some who are influenced by faith and are thus the children of the Kingdom of Heaven; and, there are some who are influenced by evil and are thus children of Satan. They can't be separated yet!

Anyone who hears this parable will want to shine like the sun in the Kingdom of the Father! No one wants to imagine themselves as *"causes of sin and evildoers,"* (v. 41) destined for the *"furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (v. 42) That's why the ultimate conclusion is always, *"Let anyone with ears listen!"* (v. 43b)

Imagine the field being, not the world, but the human mind. Good seeds are sown in our thoughts, and yet, evil ideas keep cropping up. Remember how Paul said, *"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the Law is good. But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me... Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"* (Romans 7:15-20, 24-25) Paul saw his own mind as a sort of field that needed a lot of weeding. In fact, he sometimes seems to have felt that there was nothing good in him. But...he knew that His redeemer lived! Jesus!

Earlier, in Romans Chapter Six, Paul spoke about the old-self / new-self dichotomy and he said how we *"must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under Law but under Grace!"* (11-14)

How wonderful would it be if a time came in our lives when the causes for sin and evildoing were eradicated from our minds? Paul had a vision of this: *"Behold, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:13-14)

Still, I am challenged by the notion of how Jesus said, "*Let them both grow together.*" (Matthew 13:30) We don't want the evil to grow in our minds, we want it to be outgrown! We don't want to just put up with the causes of suffering and oppression, we want to overcome them. We don't want to just put up with evil people, we want to change their hearts!

Actually, this is not really the issue here. The longer I have meditated on this parable, the more I have been moved to understand it as not really about wheat and weeds, and letting them grow together so as not to uproot the stalks of grain. This parable is about the Harvest, the separation of the weeds from the wheat, and the final elimination of evil. It's a parable that evokes a great hope – the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of the Father!

We want to be the righteous! We want to experience the Kingdom of Heaven! We want to shine! We want to be gathered into God's heavenly Barn at the end of time! We want to be wheat, not weeds! Right?