



**St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene  
The Reverend Glenda Empsall, Deacon**

[Genesis 28:10-19a; Psalm 139: 1-11, 22-23; Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30,36-43](#)

God of abundant grace, we ask that you speak to us today through these scriptures. Give us ears to hear and the ability to recognize your voice, so that our hearts may listen to the cares of the world. May we respond as Jesus would have us do. *Amen.*

The Gospel according to Matthew, Chapter 13 is called “The Parables Discourse -- on mysteries of the kingdom of heaven<sup>1</sup>.” Last week, we heard the Parable of the Sower and next week [at Church in the Park] we will explore five visions of what the Kingdom of Heaven is like. While much of Matthew’s Gospel is derived from the Gospel of Mark, the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (the KJV refers to the weeds as ‘Tares’) read today, is unique to Matthew.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus went outside of the house and began teaching the great crowds through parables from the seashore. He explained the parables to his disciples, his inner circle, after he went inside the house, away from the crowds. Jesus wanted the disciples to understand. We are also privy to Jesus’ explanation, but when I hear his words about the personification of good versus evil, they seem too harsh to be spoken by an all-inclusive savior. But there they are.

“The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!”

Jesus has ‘explained’ the parable so I don’t need to repeat. I want to go back to what is happening in the parable instead of discussing what is good, what is evil; who is in, who is cast out, who is weeping and gnashing their teeth, and who is ‘saved.’ And I wonder, WHY didn’t Jesus do what he often did and answer their request with a question, “What do you think it means?”

In my research, I learned that the “weeds” planted by “the evil one” were likely Darnel, *Lolium temulentum*, a poisonous narcotic plant, difficult to recognize from wheat in its early growth stages. Before it headed out, not even the wisest farmer could distinguish

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<sup>1</sup> [Introducing the New Testament](#), Mark Allan Powell, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> MT 13:24-30, 36-52, *ibid.*

Darnel from wheat.<sup>3</sup> In those days, rivalries between farmers could be so malicious that Roman law forbade planting Darnel in another farmer's field. That explains why the enemy planted the weed seeds while everyone was asleep. Bad things happen when good people are not paying attention!

The servants were anxious to yank up those weeds, but the farmer knew that in the process they would probably destroy the wheat crop. He told them to wait. The footnote in my Oxford Annotated NRSV for these verses [36-43] says, "God allows good and evil to exist together until the close of human history." Please notice that the farmer did NOT call for war against the enemy who poisoned his field. That was above his paygrade. Whether 'good,' 'evil,' or somewhere in between, we are ALL connected until the end when God will be the judge!

Individually and collectively we have opportunities to walk the way of love. Love of God and love for our neighbors. I am often reminded of the saying, "A rising tide lifts all boats." On the flip side of that, when our neighbors are in trouble; when houses fall into disrepair and neighborhoods are blighted, everyone's property values fall. Hear then another story:

"There was a farmer who grew excellent quality corn. Every year at the Fair, he won first prize for the best corn. One year a newspaper reporter interviewed him and learned a critical detail about how the farmer grew prize-winning corn. He shared his good seeds with his neighbors. The reporter asked, "How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are competing with yours each year?" The farmer replied, "The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn."

What are your gifts? How do you relate to the idea of sharing your best gifts with those around you? Can you remember a time when a gift you shared came back as a blessing to you? God allows good and evil to exist together. We choose which we will be. What helps you pay attention to how your everyday decisions affect others?

St. Augustine of Hippo wrote this sometime in the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> century.

"I tell you of a truth, my Beloved. Even in ministry there is both wheat, and tares, and among the congregation there is wheat, and tares. Let the good tolerate the bad; let the bad change themselves, and imitate the good. Let us all, if it may be so, attain to God; let us all through God's mercy escape the evil of this world. Let us seek after good days; and in the evil days let us not blaspheme, so that we may be able to arrive at the good days."<sup>4</sup>  
*Amen.*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.tricklesntrees.com/darnel-a-weed-that-looks-like-wheat/>

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo [CE 354-430], from *Wheat and Tares*, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of his nearly 900 sermons.

Interesting but not used: <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2016/02/luthers-notes-on-the-gospel-epiphany-5-the-church-militant-tares-among-the-wheat/>