

Title: “Let it grow.”

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Matthew 13:24-30,36-43

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Lesson: *Among the people of Christ’s church will always be weeds. It is not our job to identify and eradicate them but to work the field and nurture that which grows.*

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

²⁴ He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds^[a] among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷ And the servants^[b] of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ ²⁸ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, “Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

What if, just what if this parable was performed as a movie? Can you picture this scene? The curtain opens to an empty field, the midday sun shining down upon it and off in the distance you can see the outlines of men and beast as they work the ground. The camera takes to the air and speeds towards this activity but as it gets closer, we find that there are more than just a few men - there are a great number, hundreds, in fact. And not just men but women and children - all performing different tasks but working towards the same goal - the harvest. Each one seems to be contributing in a slightly different way. The ones out in front, all men, on the outskirts of the group seem to be leading the rest and they seem to know how to break open the ground. Their tools are each slightly different as though handmade to meet the unique needs of their respective owners and they use them when they find ground that seems new, as though it has never nurtured seed. It probably has, at some time, most likely the previous season, but at present it looks untouched, unexposed to any crop.

Immediately behind them are another group of people, men and women, who are further working the ground that was freshly exposed. The tools that they carry are their eyes and fingers - and they use them to sift through the dirt looking for rocks and other obstacles that will hinder the growth of the harvest. They are not afraid to get dirty, to get covered in dirt, and to strain their backs as they work tirelessly to prepare the new ground to accept the seed. The very moment they see something harmful they grab it and pull it out of the way. They keep possession of it until they can later discard it. And they fill the void that was created with soil. The bad is replaced with good and as they pass, the field becomes ready for the next group of workers.

This group of workers is immense and there seems to be no limit in age or gender. Young and old, men and women, children and teens, all walking the freshly prepared field. They seem to travel in a random pattern - not a straight line and not even as consistent groups - they wander from one area of the field to the next but with every step they move, they carefully plant a seed. They allow no exception, there is not a single step that they take where a seed is not planted first. And the seed? It is precious to them. They protect it with their lives and when they plant each one it is done with enormous care. They carefully level the ground before indenting it just enough to plant but not too deep, so the seed has a chance to grow. And then they lay down the seed, perfectly, with just the right amount of care and intentionality that no one can claim it was planted in haste or accident. And before they move on and take their next step, they gently cover the seed for protection, doing what they can to keep it from being snatched up by a bird or ground animal.

But as the camera pauses on one of these workers it becomes clear that they do more than simply plant a seed. As they move from one place to another, as they take one step after another, they search the ground for evidence of a seed planted by another worker. And when they find one, they pause in their travel, pause in their own planting, and kneel down to interrogate the ground. They check to confirm that the seed, the one planted by another, is still covered, still protected, and still in fertile ground. They water it with just a drop of water to ensure that it has what it needs to continue to grow - even if the growth can't be seen with the eye. When satisfied that the seed has been cared for, they continue on their own way, planting their own along their path.

The camera, now towards the back of this large group begins to ascend into the sky and as it does, we see just how large the field is. It's unmeasurable, we never do see the perimeter - not even a single side! The camera ascends and we see that the field, as large as it is, is populated with people! Their numbers are too many to count. And as the camera ascends, they become smaller and smaller until they cannot be seen, but even then, the field continues past the frame.

The scene fades to black.

As the next scene opens, it is clear that time has passed, and the field has begun to support wheat. The camera is positioned in the midst of this field where several of these laborers have gathered with the owner to discuss the problem at hand. It seems that among their carefully planted crop weeds have been introduced and they don't know what to do. They are deeply troubled at the thought of this invasion destroying that which they worked so hard to achieve. These weeds are stealing the very nutrients from the ground that the wheat requires to produce grain. "What shall we do," they ask? They want to correct the problem, they believe that they have the answer to this terrible problem, and they are motivated to carry out their own plans. Give them the opportunity, they tell him, and he will have a field to be proud of, a field of nothing but good.

But the owner corrects them. He tells them that they are just the workers, the harvesters, and that even though they think they can discern weed from wheat, that's his job. He is the only one that can truly know a weed, a true unrepentant weed, from a fruitful stalk of wheat.

He repeats to them "Let it grow. The wheat, the weeds, everything. Just let it grow. Go out into the field and care for the ground and care for all that is produced from it. Concern yourself not with the type of plant but care for each equally. Nurture the weed as you do the wheat for only, I can discern

them both. I have placed you into the field as caregivers, custodians, not as judges. Do not judge. Do only that which I have called you to do - care deeply, to love me and to love all that has grown from this field - for everything that grows here is mine and everything that grows here, I love. Let me be the one to sift at the time of harvest.

The scene fades to black.

As the final scene opens, we begin to understand why the owner refused to let a single weed be pulled from the field. This is the backstory of the parable and it begins in the first garden, where the first weed was planted. And it continues forward to the introduction of the owner, to God himself as he enters into the world, *into the field* full of weeds and full of wheat. And he makes his way to the cross whose shadow covers all the land. And there he is beaten, and he is hung upon it, and he receives the punishment for every sin from every man. And from his wounds, his blood flows and touches every weed and it touches every stalk.

This is the moment when we realize that this is a story of love. The suffering that he endured, the blood that he shed, was meant for all. Not a weed in the field was spared a drop of his precious blood. He poured it out for all and willed that every plant drink, especially the weeds. Some may refuse, but others may not and though we may think that we can tell the difference, we cannot; only he can. And so, he tells us that we must wait for the harvest but until that day comes, we must work the field, and care for all that grows.

The scene fades to black.

Please pray with me.

Lord, you have called each of us by name, and have sent each of us into the field. Some you have sent ahead of others, to break open the ground where no seed is planted. To bring the message of your Gospel into the ears that are closed. Some you send behind to help nurture and prepare the environment through the teaching of your Word, through song and administration. Many others you send with the seed of life and they plant with every step that they take, every action of love and service that they perform in your name. But regardless of how careful we are when we plant and when we serve, we know that among us grow weeds - weeds in the field and weeds in our church. Lord we ask you to restrain us from passing judgement, from attempting to eject that which we believe doesn't belong, and to focus on what you have called us to do and to be - your servants that love you and love others. Lord, give us humble, servant hearts that proclaim your name to everyone, weeds and wheat.

In your name we pray. Amen.