

Gardening 301: A Long Term Strategy

Intro. One day I was sent out by my mother to weed her flower garden. I was not happy about it and I started yanking out every weed in sight. When my mother came to check on my work, she not so gently pointed out that I had pulled up a lot of her flowers too! I told her they looked like weeds to me. *Not* a good answer.

I. This gospel has three parables about the kingdom of heaven. The others are about the mustard seed and yeast in bread. I want to focus on the first which has similarities with last week's gospel yet is also different. It addresses one of the oldest questions about good and evil existing together in the world: who does evil seem to prosper better than good? Again, this parable is not about the sower. He and his crew worked hard and planted

good seed. But unlike last week's sower, this one keeps a close eye on his crop. As the seeds shoot up, he is thinking this is going to be a *really* good harvest. The field is full of tall plants as far as he can see. Near the end of the season, it becomes obvious something is very wrong. When they waded out into the field they discover it's *not* all wheat but mixed with a weed that looks a lot like wheat. The first solution proposed in the parable seemed easy enough: rip up the weeds and try to replant the wheat. That solved one problem. But the sower knew the season was too far gone and the odds of the uprooted stalks giving good fruit were dismal. He made a difficult decision: let them continue to grow and sort it out at the harvest. The wheat and the weeds would have to battle each other for the scant

life-giving rain and nutrients in the soil. The sower wanted as much of the wheat to be saved as possible. It is easy to think evil prospers while good struggles because some days it *does* seem that way. Many of the issues in our world are complicated and good ideas are often intertwined with bad intentions and worse decisions. We believe most people are good, but we know all too well from personal experience how temptation and weakness allow evil to change and overpower the good, even in ourselves. *Simple* solutions may look good in the short term, but can be worse in the longer term. To the workers in the parable, pulling up the weeds got rid of them but the sower knew that would also destroy any hope of a successful harvest of wheat. That would have been a total win for his enemy.

Concl. When we feel evil seems to be winning over good, we might remember *primary* meaning of the parable: patience and tolerance until the “harvest” when punishment and reward will be given by the owner of the “field,” **God** [D. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina*, p. 208]. There might be a second meaning. In the parable there was a long time when the wheat and the weeds looked the same. Later the weed showed its true fruit. In agriculture, weeds *never* become wheat. But this is a parable about how God’s Word can work in us. It **can** miraculously change “weeds” into wheat; turning us away from evil and returning us to the best part of us that God originally created. All of us have the possibility of bearing a good harvest. At the harvest, God alone is the one who decides who is wheat and who is weed, not us.