

It's important for things to be clear. If I were to say to you, and to anyone who might be interested in attending services at Open Bible – we're meeting at a hotel. Which hotel? Well, it's off the Florida Turnpike. Which exit? Well, it's the one near Leesburg. We are meeting sometime on Sunday morning. If I were to talk that way, you would say to me, "You're not being very clear. You need to be more specific. Which hotel exactly? What exit off the Florida Turnpike? What time exactly? It's important to be clear, because without clarity, people won't show up.

Today, in our world, there is a great lack of clarity about all kinds of things. People are unclear about what is good, and what is evil. The past few weeks, we have seen protesters hurl bricks, bottles, and other objects at police officers. Is that Good or evil? It seems clear to me, but it's not clear to everybody. 1 million babies aborted each year. Good or evil? Some would say it is the mother's choice. Marriages of Homosexuals and Lesbians. Good or Evil? Some would say if you are against this, you are a racist, or a hate-filled person. Network and cable televisions willing to lie to promote a political agenda. Good or evil?

It would seem that it's clear what's right and wrong, at least to a Christian who is solidly grounded in the Word of God. But we live in a world where most people aren't grounded in God's Word. For many people, there is no distinct difference between right and wrong. Right and wrong is whatever you choose it to be. What's right and wrong to you might not be what's right and wrong to me. That's the world in which we live, a world that is very unclear about what is good, and what is evil.

And this can be confusing to a Christian. For example, why should I believe in Jesus if it doesn't really matter what I believe? Why should I show up on Sunday morning to worship in a church, if the rest of the world is telling me that there are much better uses of your time? Why should I go out of my way to do good things for others, when no one really knows what good is anymore? Why should I reach out to people with the Gospel, if everyone is going to heaven anyway, regardless of what they believe? Lack of clarity in our world can confuse you as a Christian. It can paralyze you, keep you from being the person that God has made you to be.

This morning, Jesus teaches a parable, and the purpose of this parable is to give you clarity. Today Jesus will make it very clear to you what is going on in our world today, and what will someday happen in the future. It is my hope and prayer that as you hear these words of God, you will be strengthened in your faith in Christ, in your understanding, and in your desire to serve Him. Let's look at "Life In The Weeds!"

Jesus uses a picture of a farmer. A farmer went out into his field with good seed and planted some wheat. Jesus tells us that this is a picture of him. And the seeds Jesus plants are Christians. Jesus puts Christians into this world – the good seed. And just like that wheat, Jesus wants his Christians to grow, and to produce a crop of good works in their lives. That's why Jesus has planted us here in this world.

But an enemy in the middle of the night goes out and plants some weeds. At first, no one notices. There's a weed in Palestine called the "bearded darnel," which is a common curse to farmers. In its early stages, it looks just like wheat. But when they both produce kernels, you can see the difference. The weeds look different, and its kernels are poisonous. Jesus tells us that this is what is happening in our world today. Jesus' enemy, Satan, is planting unbelievers in the world, right next to believers. Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference. But after awhile, an unbeliever will show himself by the things he says and does.

For example, that fun-loving group of baby boomers you have fun with and enjoy socializing with---suddenly you find out in conversation, that a couple of them see no real need to hear God's Word in church or have a close relationship with Jesus. They feel that because they are decent people, God will take them to heaven. They are weeds that Satan has planted. The nicely dressed accountant, who does your taxes-- you find out that the IRS has caught him in a scam to defraud the government. He is a weed Satan has planted. The TV executive who keeps pushing the moral envelope – how far can I go with the things I show on TV? He is a weed that Satan has planted.

The Devil places these people into your lives. They are weeds. They get in the way of you growing into the Christian that God wants you to be. We learn here from Jesus that there is such a thing as good and evil, and that evil people are growing right next to you. It's not just an alternate religion, an alternate lifestyle, an alternate way of looking at the world. Some things, Jesus tells us today, are just plain evil, and that evil is growing, just like a weed.

But God doesn't immediately destroy evil in our world – he lets it grow. In the parable, the servants of the farmer discovered weeds in the field. They went to the farmer and asked, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?" "No," the farmer said, "because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest." That's how it is in our world today. Evil and good both exist, and grow together. Against all odds, the church continues to grow – more and more people come to faith and believe in Jesus as their Savior. And right next to that, evil continues to grow – that's why more shootings are occurring in Chicago. Why buildings and flags are being burned up in Portland and Seattle. The morality of television programming continues to go down the drain. Good and evil continue to grow.

If God tolerates evil, does that mean he approves? People continue to loot and get away with it. Religions that don't believe in Jesus as Savior continue to grow in popularity. Biblical morality is almost extinct in our world, as alternate lifestyles, foul language, and sexual experimentation is promoted to you and your children through the media. Evil continues to grow! God tolerates that, but does that mean that God approves? Has God changed his mind about these things?

The answer is no. Jesus makes that very clear to us in this parable. The farmer allows the weeds to grow. But at the harvest, things change: "Let them 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." The farmer will not treat the weeds and wheat the same. Jesus says that this is what will happen on Judgment Day.

The idea of a final Judgment Day followed by an eternal heaven or hell seems alien to our permissive culture. Our culture is one where criminals are released from jail into our communities. Recently, Tony Wiggins from Florida, was involved in a triple homicide. He was out on the streets after 230 felony convictions. In our a society, it seems strange to hear about a final Judgment Day and eternal punishment, but that's what Jesus talks about this morning: "The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This is the fate of all those who do not believe in Jesus as their Savior from sin. This includes everyone who holds to the teachings of the Islam, or any other religion that does not believe in Jesus as God and Savior. This includes every American who rejects the Bible and buys into all the various forms of immorality and non-Biblical lifestyles as portrayed on TV – "everything that causes sin

and all who do evil” – will be picked up by an angel on Judgment Day and thrown into hell. Jesus describes hell here as a fiery furnace, where there is weeping and grinding of teeth. Jesus teaches us that while God allows evil to take place in our world, he does not approve, and he will show it on Judgment Day.

This is not a pleasant teaching, but it’s necessary for us to hear. There is a line between good and evil, and God, not network TV, not your friends, not you nor I, but God is the one who has drawn the line between good and evil. And those who cross that line, or who flirt with that line, no matter what the reason, will be thrown into the fiery furnace on Judgment Day. God is a God not only of mercy, but also of justice. For an unbeliever, God’s justice is very scary to think about, but it is very real, just as real as the chair you’re sitting on or the person you’re sitting next to.

This parable Jesus teaches us this morning causes us to repent to God for all those times we have blurred the difference between right and wrong. This parable causes us to repent to God for all those times we have made sinful choices in our lives. The good news is, that God does forgive you. He forgives you because the person who told this parable, Jesus Christ, later died on the cross for your sins. Because of Jesus, God forgives you, he wipes out all of the sins you have committed in your life. All the times you have crossed that line between good and evil – Jesus has taken all of your sins away. God forgives you.

Jesus is the reason you are not a weed in the eyes of God, but wheat. Because of Jesus, God will gather you on Judgment Day, just as a farmer gathers his wheat into the barn. God will gather you, and then, Jesus says, “Then the righteous will shine like the sun, in the kingdom of their Father.” You are righteous, because Jesus has made you righteous. Someday, you will shine like the sun. You will glorify God on Judgment Day, and forever. Just as the sun shines brightly and powerfully on a hot, summer day, so also someday you will shine in the kingdom of your Father. You will radiate God’s love and joy, and that will happen for you at the harvest, when God returns and gathers you, the wheat, into his barn.

This parable of Jesus encourages us to stick to our beliefs, no matter what the rest of the world says and does. Life in the weeds is not easy, but God will give us the strength to remain faithful to him. This parable also encourages us to be different from the weeds. Don’t try to blend in. Be that one stalk of wheat that produces Christian good works in your life – even if no one appreciates it. And finally, this parable encourages us to reach out to those weeds that surround us, especially to the weeds we’re related to, or are friends with, or work with. It’s very clear what their fate will be, but perhaps, through you, a miracle will take place, and God will change that weed in your life to a stalk of wheat. My friends, look forward to that day, when God will gather you, and you will shine like the sun forever. Amen.