

## Shine with the Righteous

☠ **Recognize the work of the enemy. (vv.24-30)**

✚ **Do the Work of the Lord. (vv.36-43)**

In the name of Jesus, the Master of the House, dear saints of God:

Parts of Europe and Asia Minor are still reeling from Christian swords, not in modern wars, but from three centuries of Crusades beginning about A.D. 1000. Roughly halfway between Christ and now, Europeans under papal banners were convinced it was the “will of God” to drive the Mohammedans out of the Holy Land. For what they thought a noble cause, these Crusader “armies of God” attacked fellow Christians and political enemies. To this day scars remain in the lands of the Eastern Orthodox.

We shake our heads at such violence in the name of Christ. Didn’t any of the churchmen or rulers read what our Lord says in this text? Yet the more deeply you care about your faith in Jesus, the more damage you can do in God’s Kingdom. Think of the leper who disobeyed Jesus’ orders and told everyone Jesus healed him. *“As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places.”* (Mark 1:45) Before we **Shine with the Righteous**, Jesus wants us first to...

☠ **Recognize the work of the enemy. (vv.24-30)**

What if you had a neighbor who was nobody’s friend? Every bonfire – he was kicking dirt in it. Every party – he kept opening the front door for bugs. With friends like that, who needs enemies? So the rest of the neighborhood might have to devise a signal for when he’s gone so everyone else can party while he’s away. Just make sure that if he sees it, he still can’t understand what the signal means.

That’s what Jesus was doing with parables. You have to admit this is pure genius. Mixed crowds of disciples and enemies meant Jesus had to teach and hide the truth at the same time. His solution? Earthly stories with heavenly meanings to sound like nonsense for unbelievers and inspire us still today.

Try this one, for instance. One fine farmer is as good as the seed he throws down. He obviously is a great boss; you can tell by how his workers respect him. *“Sir,”* they ask, *“you sowed good seed in your field, didn’t you?”* They know that’s the only kind of seed He has. But with his whole wheat field fully infested, they can’t help asking, *“Where did the weeds come from?”*

It’s not what you’d expect. Don’t you appreciate neighbors who take care of their property and keep an eye on yours? It’s one of the great things about living in Minnesota that we have so many fine neighborhoods where people really watch out for each other. Look out on fields of green to see farmers making a living off the land. God gives daily bread through good neighbors and civic righteousness

So what would make someone wait until everyone was asleep, then scatter weed seed all over a new wheat field? What would he gain? Especially if he did his dirty work, then just *“went away”*? Notice: Jealousy needs no reason. And sometimes when your best meets with someone’s worst, jealousy may be the only reason. It may also explain our own dark feelings when someone else is doing well.

Strange as the enemy, so also the good man. He somehow knew everything that was going on. He also saw how his own servants might do more harm than good if they went to work pulling weeds from the wheat. In Syria and places in Israel, you still find darnel or cockle referred to as “false wheat,” because you can’t tell until the ears of real wheat open up. Harvest time is the only time to separate the weeds from the wheat. Until then, the Master says, *“Let both grow together.”*

First, **Recognize the work of the enemy.** Only then can we begin to...

## † Do the Work of the Lord. (vv.36-43)

Ever find your computer won't work because you lost the password? So the disciples missed the Lord's meaning. But never fear. Jesus is always patient with all who ask His help to learn. No doubt, He was tired when he left the crowd and went back to the house. But He was right there for His disciples to ask, "***Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.***" To **Do the Work of the Lord** – first watch the Lord work! See how His study of God's Word as a twelve-year-old in the temple is paying off? Jesus set aside the full use of His divine omniscience in order to learn, then spent the three years of His ministry sharing God's Word in person. How about you? Are you still learning? Are you sharing what you learn?

Line up the details, and you have a quick-couple, power take-off on this parable. The sower – the ***Son of Man***, Jesus. The ***field*** – the ***world***. The ***good seed*** – ***sons of the kingdom***, believers. ***Weeds*** – ***sons of the evil one, the devil***, who is also ***the enemy*** that sows the weeds. The ***harvest*** – end of the world. The ***harvesters*** are ***angels***. They will have their orders on Judgment Day to pull up all the weeds and throw them into a special furnace of fire that will never go out. And these weeds have feelings because "***there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth***" – sorrow along with angry, inescapable pain.

Clear enough, isn't it? Yet sometimes churches get it in their head that to **Do the Work of the Lord** means to "weed out the dead wood," clear the books of members not coming or not contributing. No matter how good some can make that sound, the Lord commands us to seek the lost in order to lead them to repentance. And if they refuse to repent, to excommunicate them as the last act of love. If they come back and admit their sin, we **Do the Work of the Lord** by forgiving and restoring them.

The Lord has done His work with us. Lord how He cares to count you as "***good seed.***" Our Lord and Master has sown His believers throughout "***the field***" of His Kingdom. By the power of His Word and promise in His holy water He has made you "***good***" through and through. It's His judgment of us in Christ who has great plans to make your life fruitful like fields of grain waving in the summer sun. In fact, it gets even better, but first we **Do the Work of the Lord** by patient endurance.

We face a massive challenge from Satan, God's enemy, that fallen angel thrown out of heaven along with the demons who followed him. Jealous of God's power and despising His eternal love, the devil still accuses the saints day and night before the throne of God. But he can't get a guilty verdict because God has already ruled on the sins of all sinners, you and me included. All Jesus, our Lawyer and Judge, needs to do is hold up His hands to show the marks from the nails on the cross. Those trophies of victory along with the fact that He lives again, always silence Satan.

But then comes the question: What should we do about the hypocrites in the church? Some people refuse to join because they think the church has too many hypocrites. And they're not generally impressed if you kindly inform them, "There's always room for one more." But not to publicly commit to Christ for fear of hypocrites makes as much sense as not driving a car because you might have flat. Without question, Jesus shed His blood and rose again for us all. He wants you to enjoy the fruits of His victory over your sins, your death, your hell, in order that you can enjoy His heaven eternally.

There's one other thing that strikes me as strange about this *Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat*. It's how much we are like those servants. What is it about us that in a fruitful, productive life we seem to see only the weeds? Children with all the youthful energy to run and jump and play, sometimes feel bad because they can't run fast enough, jump high enough or play long enough. Husbands and wives with every reason to enjoy God's gifts of marriage by supporting each other and growing old together still find so many things to complain about each other. Singles with the constant companionship of Christ sometimes can't see the wheat for the weeds. But look through the eyes of the Master and you will faithfully, patiently **Do the Work of the Lord**. He who gave His life for you has vistas beyond the harvest for you to **Shine with the Righteous**. After the harvest "***the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.***" Amen.