

# Let Them Be

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# Scripture Passage

Matthew 13:24-30

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

NRSV

# Sermon

## Let Them Be

When we read today's parable given by Jesus, we realize that the kingdom of God is different from the utopia we know of. Utopia – We imagine a place where there is no problem, no imperfection. A beautiful and perfect place. That's what utopia is, but the kingdom of heaven Jesus is talking about is different. It is a place where good and evil coexist. Jesus came to this world but he did not eradicate all the evil in the world. He did not solve all the problems of evil, we still have problems of evil. Evil still exists around us.

## Seeing Ourselves Honestly Through Jesus

But, the evil exists not only around us, but the evil exists within us. St. Paul lived all his life believing that he was a good person, like all other Pharisees do, and like we all do. We all think that we are good people. He could not imagine that he had evil within himself. But after meeting Jesus Christ, he realized that the evil did exist right within himself. Not just around him, he experienced the evil within his own heart.

So you see, Paul's change was not the change of an evil person becoming a good person. Paul's change was the person who didn't realize that he had evil within himself, and after meeting Christ, he realized that he had evil within himself. He used to be blind about himself, but now, he saw what was going on within himself.

Listen to St. Paul's confession. ***"For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."*** (Romans 7:18, 19) This is rather a bold statement. Who can say that, "I have evil within me." It was pretty difficult to admit that he had evil within himself. It is difficult for anyone. But St. Paul was able to do that. What he could not do as a Pharisee, he was able to do through Christ. Yes, the evil is within us also.

## Letting it Be

In today's parable, a person sowed good seed but the enemy came by at night and sowed weeds. As they both grew, the servant could see the weeds. When they were small, they didn't see it, but as they grew, they started seeing the weeds in the field. So the servant

said should we gather them, should we pluck them out? And Jesus said, "No, let them be."

Jesus' answer really bothered me at first. When I read this passage, I felt really uncomfortable to accept Jesus' message. Why did he tell the servants to leave them alone? If you see evil, don't you want to take them out? If you see evil, don't you want to get rid of it? If you have evil in you, don't you want to get rid of it? Don't we have to fight against the evil?

So I struggled with what Jesus said. I tried to enter into Jesus' heart. What was he trying to say? And I realized that, when Jesus said, leave them alone, underneath what he said, there was truth that he was saying. The truth was the weeds can never conquer the wheat. That truth, the weeds can never conquer the wheat. Because he had that conviction, he let them be.

## **Evil Can Never Conquer the Good**

This is the good news for us. The evil can never conquer the good. Even though we have evil within us, it will never consume us. Even though we have darkness within us, it will never control us. Even though we have sin within us, it will never paralyze us.

That's what Jesus believed. And that's what we believe

.Sometimes we become dark when we see our own shortcomings. We see greed, selfishness, and laziness within us. Because of our greed and selfishness, we hurt others. We make people suffer. We don't like ourselves doing that, but somehow we do it any way. We feel so powerless and helpless. Our selfishness and our greed make other people suffer. We have no power to not do it. And we fall into self-pity, focusing so much on our negative traits. That doesn't help us overcome our own weaknesses.

That is my second point. When Jesus said, let them be, he wants us not to focus so much on our weeds, not to focus so much on our problems. Don't give so much attention to them.

When Jesus sowed good seeds, the Pharisees, and the religious leaders sowed weeds. They didn't help Jesus, they sowed weeds. They attacked Jesus, they misrepresented what Jesus said, and they even said that Jesus got the power from the devil and did all those miracles. They never helped Jesus, they continuously spread weeds when Jesus sowed good

seeds. But Jesus did not give so much attention to their opposition and attack. Jesus let them be. Even to the point of letting them take Jesus to the cross. Jesus simply continued to do what he had to do. He wasn't discouraged because of opposition. You know, Jesus' disciple, Judas, I mean, Jesus spent so much time with him, all the twelve disciples. But Jesus knew that Judas would betray him. That is hurtful. He spent so much time with him, and he knew that he will betray him, but Jesus let him be. This is what the scripture says, ***"Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, 'Do quickly what you are going to do.'" (John 13:26, 27)*** Even though it was hurtful, Jesus let him be. It is aching. When somebody betrays you, it is hard to take, and that emotion of Jesus was well captured in gospel John. It says, ***"After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, 'Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.'" (John 13:21)*** Jesus was troubled in spirit. But Jesus let Judas be.

## Finding God's Strength in Our Weakness

Once St. Paul had a thorn in the flesh and this thorn really hurt him. And also this thorn was not just a regular thorn, it was a thorn given by Satan. Most people would want to get rid of the thorn, because it was given by Satan. I don't want that. And most people want it, and Paul wanted it too. So he prayed about it three times. Three times doesn't mean three times physically. Three means a perfect number. So as much as he could, he prayed for God to take away that thorn. But God's answer was strange, God's answer was, "Let it be." Let the thorn be in you, even though it was given by Satan. Then God said this, ***"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me."*** (2 ***Corinthians 12:9***) Instead of focusing on the thorn, God told Paul to focus on God's grace. The thorn made Paul weak. But in that weakness, Paul experienced the power of God working through his weaknesses. He focused not on his weakness but on God's power. He discovered the spiritual secret. When you meet Christ, you don't become strong, but you find God's strength. Sometimes, you even become weak when you meet



Christ, because you see your own sins, you see your own evil, so you become weak. But, in that weakness, you find God's strength. So through Christ, we see God's strength. St. Paul became weak because of the thorn given to him, but he saw the power of God. Because of the cross, Jesus became weak. But in his weakness, the power of God was manifested and brought about the resurrection. Those who don't believe, they only see the weakness of the cross. But those who believe, they see the power of the resurrection behind the cross.

## **Focusing on God's Goodness**

We witness sometimes, my friends, that the evil in this world is getting stronger and stronger. We feel so powerless and hopeless, and when the evil oppresses the weak, and takes advantage of the powerless, sometimes we wonder, "What can we do?" When we witness the power of evil, we become very weak. We experience our own powerlessness. But let us trust that the evil will never overcome the good. Evil will never conquer the good, because there is God, and we trust that. But if we focus too much on our evil, and give too much attention to the evil, then there is the

danger of falling into darkness. We have to put our focus on God, God's goodness, and God's righteousness. We have to fight the good fight. We may face evil in our own lives. We see it, but let us not dwell on that. Let us focus on the good will of God. When we focus on the evil, eventually without realizing it, hatred can arise from within you, that's what we do. When we face the evil, hatred comes up from within us. And through that hatred, we may do worse evil. Then it will be like uprooting the wheat in our attempt to get rid of weeds.

## **Fighting the Good Fight**

When Jesus said, let them be, he didn't mean to do nothing. We have to continuously do our best to do good. Don't get discouraged because the evil gets stronger. It will never win. That is our conviction. In the end, good and evil, God will divide. God's righteousness will be established. God will bring his justice. Let us trust that, and let us fight the good fight. I know you all struggle with the darkness within you, the evil within you. Don't dwell on it, you'll be consumed by it. Trust in God, look to Jesus, and his grace. You'll be able to overcome your own darkness,

your own negativity, your own criticism. And you'll be filled with God's strength, and God's grace. Trust that good will overcome the evil. Always do good, fight the good fight.