

## Why, God?

### [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#)

Why did God create weeds? In our gardens, a weed is simply a flower that it is in the wrong place. Or so the RHS says. In this parable, however, the weeds which threaten the farmer's good field of wheat are a bit nastier.

You could see this parable as a case of mistaken identity. There is a particular weed called dandelion which, when it is still just mainly green shoots, looks for all the world like wheat. If this farmer goes and lets his servants loose in the field with all his good wheat to get rid of the weeds, they are likely to go and trample on everything and may well end up weeding out the wheat instead of the weeds. An easy mistake to make – but potentially hugely costly.



It's no wonder then, that the farmer tells his servants to leave the wheat and the weeds to grow together. He wants the seed he planted to mature and ripen so that he can get a good harvest. He's prepared to bide his time and not disturb his precious crop. It's a picture of his confidence in both his own wisdom, and his confidence in the plants which he looks forward to harvesting. He is not going to be distracted by the shouts for a quick fix from his servants.

There will be a time for separating the weeds from the wheat at harvest, when the weeds can be bundled up and burned, and the wheat gathered in the barn. This sounds very neat and tidy, but the risk of mistaken identity still lingers: the seeds of the dandelion weed are poisonous. If the separation is not done carefully, the consequences could be disastrous. You need skilful people to sift them out.

The field of wheat and weeds mixed together is a striking picture. Yet the weeds in the parable have not simply grown up by chance: they have been put there by an "enemy", a person or force which deliberately wants to spoil and spread poison.

Why doesn't the farmer go and take revenge on his enemy? Why doesn't he act swiftly against him to stop him? Do we find ourselves asking this same question of God?

How many times have you heard – or found yourself saying – "If God is love, how come he lets such bad things happen?"

This parable shows us God's nature is very different from our human nature. Good and evil co-exist. There often seems to be little to distinguish between which is which. God bides his time. He is not careless of his people and their plight, however much some might think this is the case. Just as the farmer waits until the good crop in which he has invested much expense is ripe and ready to be harvested, so God waits for the right time to demonstrate his sovereignty. He does not want to lose any of his precious, beloved people.

We can also try to do the judging between good and evil ourselves. In his explanation of the parable to the puzzled disciples, Jesus makes a distinction between the current time and “the end of the age.” The eager servants who offer to root out the weeds belong to the current time and are not skilled at making the crucial distinction between the good and the bad. They are well-meaning, but wrong. It can be easy for us to be like those eager servants, making judgements upon others when we are not equipped to do so. Harsh judgements of people can make them turn away from faith, so that they do not flourish.

It is not our place to make the decision about who’s “in” and who’s “out” of the Kingdom of God. Jesus makes it clear that there will be a final judgement, but that is not for us and it is not in this time. In his explanation to the disciples, Jesus says that it will be “his angels – who will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.” We cannot know exactly what that word “angels” mean, but it suggests that the process is a mysterious one which is beyond human understanding.

We are rooted in our earthly life, surrounded by good and evil, loved and cared for by our Father God. As we gradually mix with one another again, we are being given the opportunity to reassess how we live together, and how the Church can be part of these renewed relationships. Let us listen to God and ask how he wants us to love and serve him.

Creator God,  
you made us all in your image:  
may we discern you in all that we see,  
and serve you in all that we do;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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