



July 20 • 2008

Focus Scripture
Matthew 13:24–30,
36–43
Additional Scriptures
Genesis 28:10–19a
Psalm 139:1–12, 23–24
Romans 8:12–25

Compassionate
God, we give
thanks that your
way is not our way.
You embrace all
who come. We look
for enemies. You
engage suffering.
We seek relief. You
overcome evil in
your time. We are
impatient to judge
prematurely. Grow
us into your life.
Amen.

Wheat and Weeds Together

God reigns now, but God’s influence is incomplete. Jesus’ followers wanted to know whom to exclude from God’s reign. They wanted to judge who was a “genuine” disciple. Jesus’ parable opens another way. In our time, all may live together in community as faith grows. God will decide what is acceptable and what is not, in God’s own time.

Focus Scripture: **Matthew 13:24–30,** **36–43**

This Bible passage is one of several “Parables of the Kingdom” in Matthew, which expand Jesus’ teaching about God’s reign as summarized in Matthew 5–7. This parable invites consideration of issues of Christian authenticity and God’s judgment. In the word picture of God’s reign that Jesus paints here, grace and compassion, dissent and opposition exist together as those who follow Christ form a community of faith. In God’s reign, disciples patiently support each other’s growth in faith. After Jesus’ parable, a detailed explanation follows (verses 37–43). While this section does not seem to reflect Jesus’ style of language, the theme remains true to Jesus’ teaching.

Early Christians faced challenges as their unique community emerged. Some people wanted to return to the practices of temple worship. There were conflicts and disputes as church members struggled with what it meant to remain faithful to tradition while responding to the call to follow Christ in a changing world. Imagine the tension in Matthew’s community as they wrestled with what it meant to be loved and guided by God.

The weed seeds were probably darnel, a type of rye grass. Darnel plants harboured a sleep-inducing, poisonous fungus. In Jesus’ time, it was thought to cause blindness. Darnel and wheat are similar in appearance. The difference between them becomes clear only as plants mature. Darnel roots knit together with wheat roots, so pulling a darnel plant can uproot a wheat plant, too. In Jesus’ time, it was more prudent to separate wheat from darnel at harvest.

Verses 25 and 28 state that an “enemy” sowed the weeds among the wheat. Too often, identifying an enemy to blame enables one group to define itself against another. Labelling others as enemies can fuel

insecurity and injustice – prejudice and judgment feed on such perceptions. An attitude of “them and us” is destructive for community. Still, the parable acknowledges that weeds are problematic. In several places, Jesus addresses the challenges of following God’s leading. Matthew’s community probably could relate Jesus’ words to the tensions surrounding the growth of their church. Jesus teaches that judgment is God’s prerogative. Good and evil exist side by side. Meanwhile, Jesus’ followers are to live in mutually supportive communities.

Matthew’s gospel often includes elements of judgment, perhaps in order to motivate disciples. For Matthew, Jesus was sent from God. Jesus embodied God’s authority, so he had both the right and power to judge. Rejecting Jesus’ teaching meant rejecting God’s authority – God would judge each person according to her or his response to Jesus’ teaching.

The other readings affirm that faith grows where God is present. In **Genesis 28:10–19a**, we hear the promise of God’s abiding presence and Jacob’s worshipful response. The psalmist in **Psalms 139** affirms that God knows us and is ever present with us as we mature. The apostle Paul, in **Romans 8:12–25**, calls on Christ’s disciples to practice Jesus’ teaching and live compassionate lives. The Spirit of God dwells in them and empowers them to serve as partners in expanding God’s reign.



As we live into God’s reign, God shapes the faith community. How might your church live if you were liberated from the need of enemies and judging one another? In what ways could such a church influence the community around it?

Go to
www.spiritseasons.com and
click on Spirit Sightings for
international current events,
links to this week’s theme,
discussion questions,
and intercessory prayer
suggestions.

