

Sermon 19 July 2026

Ephesians 4:20-25 Matthew 13:24-30

This parable, the Parable of the Wheat and Weeds, has points of comparison with last week's parable, the Parable of the Sower. The weeds referred to are actually dandelion and in some versions the word *dandelion* is used. This is quite important because dandelion is very similar in appearance to wheat and it is only when the ears appear that the difference becomes noticeable. By then the roots are so closely entwined that it is virtually impossible to pull out the dandelion without damaging the roots of the wheat. So it is after harvesting that the dandelion is sorted from the wheat, as the farmer directed in the parable.

Before we move on to explain why this similarity is important, let's just quickly refer to the enemy who has planted the dandelion seeds amongst the farmer's wheat. *'Here is another story Jesus told: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat."'* Matthew 13:24-25. This, if not perhaps a common practice, was sometimes done. This enemy reminds us that unfortunately there do exist in the world evil forces/people who, for whatever reasons, want to derail all the good that is being done by so many. We are bombarded on a daily basis of stories and events, whether they be on the international stage or in our local community, of people who seem to be intent on inflicting pain and suffering. Unfortunately, Satan is alive and well. Somehow, we have to provide a counter to this iniquitous force.

So bottom line, evil does exist and we have to be on the lookout for it and do what we can to combat it. It reminds me of the story of the elderly lady who would come out every morning on to the steps of her porch, raise her arms to the sky and shout, 'Praise God!' One day, an atheist moved into the house next door. Over time, he became irritated at the little old lady. So every morning, he would step out onto his porch and yell after her, 'There is no God!'

Time passed with the two of them carrying on this way every day. Then one morning, in the middle of winter, the little old lady stepped onto her porch and shouted, 'Praise God! Lord, I have no food and I am hungry. Please provide for me, Lord.'

The next morning, she stepped onto her porch and there were two bags of groceries sitting there. 'Praise God,' she cried out, 'He has provided for me.' The atheist jumped out of the hedge and shouted, 'There is no God. I bought those groceries.' Whereupon, the little old lady threw her arms into the air and shouted, 'Praise God! You have provided groceries for me and you have made the devil pay for them!'

So back to why this similarity between dandelion and wheat is so important. As I said before, we know there is a lot of badness or sinfulness out there. It can be in the form of attitudes, such as racism and sexism etc. It can be some sort of addiction. On the international scene, I think it is a case of a craving for power and no matter the cost, and I don't really mean in monetary terms. Closer to home. I believe one of the most common forms of wrongdoing or iniquity, if not the most common form, is dishonesty. There are, of course, varying forms and degrees of dishonesty, ranging from mild falsehoods to the more extreme corruption. Sometimes, the lines become a little blurred. We can be quite clever at covering up our deception. Hence, the difficulty in recognising the dandelion from the wheat.

However, there inevitably comes a time when our waywardness will be discovered and we will be judged accordingly. Hence, the separation of the dandelion from the wheat at harvest time. *'Let them both grow until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds.'* Matthew 13:30. Let me illustrate with a story.

A young man named Ping lived in a faraway country. The king of the country was getting old and he needed to find a successor. For the king, honesty was of paramount importance, so he devised a way to find his successor that would have honesty and integrity, and so therefore would be a worthy candidate for kingship.

The king sent out a tiny seed to the young men of the country. The seed was to be planted and nourished to the best of each man's ability. Ping really wanted to be the new king. When he received his seed, he went out and bought a very beautiful pot, good soil, fertiliser and planted his seed. He watered it and nurtured it and watched over it carefully. But nothing happened!

He moved his plant to another area with more sun. He watched it, watered it, nourished it and still nothing happened. His father suggested he put it into a different pot, which he did, but still nothing happened. Ping was so disappointed and the time was drawing near to go to the king and present his plant. The day finally arrived. Ping was so embarrassed because everyone else had such beautiful plants. He sat at the back of the hall, crestfallen.

The king started to look over all the plants and he was not smiling. In fact, he was frowning. He kept looking and all at once he saw Ping's empty pot and he called Ping to the front. The king announced that Ping would be the next king. The king said Ping would be the next king because of his honesty. The king also expressed his disappointment that there were so many dishonest men. He told them that he had boiled all the seeds before he sent them out, so that none of the seeds would grow.

There are three very important messages in this story. Firstly, in the end, truth and honesty will always win out. Sooner or later, dishonesty will be uncovered, will be exposed. There is an inevitability to this. I quote from Proverbs 12:19: *'Truth stands the test of time; lies are soon exposed.'* And unfortunately, we invariably have to resort to further fibs or fabrications in order to cover up the untruths we have indulged in.

Secondly, just as the weeds are separated from the wheat, so in the end we will all be judged, as were the others hoping to be king in our story. We will be judged by others, we will be judged by life, and ultimately we will be judged by God. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:10, *'For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done.'*

The third point flows on from this: honesty will bring respect, and you simply cannot have true leadership without respect. The king in our story understood this so very well. On a social basis, it is impossible to establish meaningful relationships without respect. William Shakespeare in his play, *'All's Well that Ends Well,'* wrote, *'No legacy is so rich as honesty.'* I quote from our first reading: *'So stop telling lies. Let us all tell our neighbours the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.'* Ephesians 4:25.

Let me finish on a somewhat lighter note, though there is still an underlying message to be digested. A group of boys were standing in a circle. In the middle of the circle was a dog which they had adopted. The local vicar came along and asked them what they were doing. One of the boys said, 'Reverend, we are telling lies and the one who tells the biggest lie, gets the dog.' 'Shame on you,' said the vicar. 'When I was your age, I never dreamed of telling a lie.' 'Give him the dog,' said one of the boys, 'He's the winner!'