

The Rev. Michael J. Bridge  
Sermon- Matthew 13:24-30, 34-43  
Sunday, July 23, 2017

## Context

1. Most of you know that I follow the principle “never read a bible verse,” and that I occasionally bring it back up just to remind you of the same principle. The idea is that we don’t isolate specific verses (or even concepts) without viewing them in their larger context.
2. When we remove verses or passages from their context, we can easily draw wrong conclusions, or believe that God has made promises to us that were not for us. Our gospel passage for today has the potential to be misused or misapplied if we are not careful in keeping it in context.
  - a. Notice how the passage skips a few verses and then picks up again. That is because the two sections are about the same thing, while there is a bit of an interlude in between. It could be dangerous, however, to read only verses 24-30 without reading 34-43.
3. Why am I even bothering with this? Because, as I was reading through the readings in preparation for this week, I read through verses 24-30 and was already making application to issues we faced in our church in the past. It was easy to make a connection that says, “Yeah, there are weeds in the church, and wheat in the church. It is hard to deal with the weeds without harming the wheat.”
  - a. But that isn’t what is being said here at all. The parable isn’t about the Church as a whole, or the local church. It is about the world. When we understand that, we understand the parable. It isn’t particularly hard to come to that conclusion, either. Jesus tells us in the second half of the passage- which could have easily been isolated out of the reading since there was that “interlude” of verses in between the two halves of the story.

## The world is full of weeds

1. Jesus explains his parable by saying that the sower of the good seed is Jesus himself, and the field into which he sows the seed is the world. Jesus sows good seed, which grows into wheat- sons of the kingdom. The evil one comes and sows bad seed, and those bad seeds grow into the weeds, which Jesus tells us are the sons of Satan.
  - a. At this point, it is worth driving home another oft repeated point. Not all humans are God’s children. The one’s sown by the Son are the sons of the kingdom- they are God’s children. But the bad seed planted by Satan yields his own children. Jesus tells the Pharisees elsewhere that they don’t believe him because their father is the devil.
2. Getting back to the parable, obviously it is a big deal that the weeds grow up amongst the wheat. While we, as Christians- sons of the kingdom- aren’t perfect, and are still prone to much sin in our lives, living alongside so much evil and rebellion makes it so much harder to live faithfully to God.
3. We know this from experience. When we are around other believers, we find being better and more faithful Christians easier. We help one another. We lift one another up. We pray for one another. But when we hang around non-Christians, we are faced with a ton

of temptation, and are even present for things they do, that make our own faithfulness much more difficult.

4. It is so easy to identify with the servants in the parable who are aghast at the presence of weeds and want to yank them from the soil. Wouldn't it be better for us as sons of the kingdom if we were only surrounded by other sons of the kingdom? Again, not to say that it would be perfect or that there wouldn't be sin. But I certainly think my life would be easier if I didn't have to deal with those who actually reject God and want to lead us away from him- the sons of Satan.
5. We look around and we see all kinds of craziness. People the world over- even in our so-called civilized nation- are slaughtering babies by the thousands and millions through abortion. It seems like almost every day there is another Muslim terrorist attack somewhere in Europe. We feel the secularizing of our culture, which is now a post-truth culture.
  - a. Post-truth means that our culture believes it is beyond truth. How much more evidence do we need than the current gender debate? Our current cultural "truth" is that you are coercively pronounced a boy or a girl by a doctor at birth based solely on what body parts you have. That makes complete sense to those of us who believe in basic truth. But in a post-truth world, this is viewed as bigoted.
6. The point? We live in a world where we are surrounded by weeds. It often feels like they are threatening to strangle us. Jesus will not allow that to happen. We have his Spirit and we will not be choked out by the weeds of Satan's children. We are sons and daughters of the Most High.

### We must learn to live alongside the weeds

1. So, we must learn to live alongside the weeds, and we must do so for two reasons.
  - a. First, Jesus says they will always be there until the end of the age.
  - b. Second, because we don't know who all are weeds. Some of those whom we would look at and call wheat are really weeds. They aren't sons of the kingdom because they aren't truly believers. They weren't planted by the great Sower, Jesus. While many who currently look like weeds only look that way because they have yet to respond to the gospel. They aren't sons of Satan, planted by Satan. They are people who have not had the Spirit yet draw them back to their heavenly Father.
  - c. So, if we were to cut ourselves off from whom we perceive to be the weeds, we would never be able to faithfully proclaim the gospel so that the work of redemption can be applied in the lives of those who aren't sons of Satan.
2. Jesus will deal with separating the wheat from the weeds, or, as he says elsewhere, the sheep from the goats. He will do it in his time, at the end of the age. While we often struggle through this age because of its trials and perils, we have great hope in knowing that at the end of the age, those of us who are wheat- sons of the kingdom- will be harvested and brought to God, and we will no longer have weeds strangling and choking us. We will be able to live free with our heavenly Father, thanks to his Son, our savior.