Encouragement When Frustrated with Weeds
Matthew 13:24-30 and 36-43

You may have heard of something called the Protestant Work Ethic. This emphasizes that hard work, discipline & frugality lead to success in this world and these things are a person’s calling. The term came from a German sociologist Max Weber in his 1904 book “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” where he studied the phenomenal economic growth, social mobility, and cultural change that accompanied the Protestant Reformation. He said Protestants worked harder because of their faith beliefs, thus making more money. But because of their moral scruples they also spent less on worldly pleasures. This gave them money which they saved, put in banks, and invested. Webber went so far as to credit the Reformation for the rise of capitalism. That is, the Protestants transformed their money into capital, thus creating capitalism. Usually, he said, religion is otherworldly. But the Reformation doctrine of vocation taught that religion is to be lived out in this world.

Now Max Weber was not a theologian and definitely misinterpreted why the Protestant Reformation, in particular their view of vocation, had such a dramatic effect on how people saw their work. First, Weber wrongly believed that the early Protestants worked so hard because they wanted to build up evidence of their salvation. But the early Protestants knew better than anyone that their salvation had nothing to do with their works, or their work, they trusted in the grace of God through Christ alone. Second, Weber wrongly assumed the early Protestants were ascetics – people who renounce worldly goods and live on as little as possible. Actually that was what the medieval Catholics believed which the Protestants were reacting against. Medieval Catholicism taught that spiritual perfection is found in celibacy, poverty, and the monastic withdrawal from the world – like a monk or nun. Despite the “puritan” stereotype, early Protestants were not particularly ascetic.

But Weber did rightly see the transforming power of the reformers view of vocation – or what God is calling us to right now. The reformers said the Bible shows we have calling from God in how we work, our responsibilities in our family, and how we treat other people & participation in our community in addition to spiritual activities like church, daily devotions and prayer. In other words, there is a spiritual dimension to family life, productive work and cultural engagement, not just things done at church. Church was still essential in the reformers eyes, but so were how we lived the other 6 days – because vocation is NOT about what we DO, but what God does through us. As Martin Luther said, “God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does.” So the cook is the same as a King if they both seek to glorify God, work hard, help others and let God work through them in their position. In receiving a righteousness that is not on the basis of what we do, but Jesus did, we are free to serve our neighbor and benefit our community. Justification by faith changes everything. So hard work, discipline in life and thrift in spending came out of Biblical faith. Sudden those in the reformation saw God as a part of every part of their life and they wanted to bring God into every area.

Living God’s way always brings extra blessings. But what happens when those blessings are messed up, hindered, delayed, or don’t seem to come as we think they should. We can work...
hard, be disciplined in how we live life and thrifty yet not go forward financially or job status because obstacles arise. We can pray hard, be devoted to serving at church and regularly read the Bible but still have lots of problems and sickness come into our lives. Those obstacles, problems, sicknesses and broken relationships are like weeds to a farmer. So let’s look at how Jesus encourages us in these times through the parable of the wheat and the weeds. The “weeds of life” refer those things that frustrate, slow down, and hinder the results of our effort towards something good. “Weeds” turn positive expectation to discouragement. “Weeds” are frustrating obstacles or people.

PROPOSITION: Jesus reminds us that major opposition and obstacles will frustrate our spiritual efforts & expectations, but every true believer will be safely gathered into heaven and life truly will become good.

I. Excited expectations: better days ahead

   Let’s try to picture the scene here and then how it looks in our lives.

   A. High expectations

      READ v 24. We are told here that the “kingdom of heaven” is like a farmer who is planting their crops. The “kingdom of heaven” is similar to the “Kingdom of God” which refers to God’s rule and reign. God is sovereign over the universe, yet when we look around us that sovereignty is being challenged by satan & the demonic, worldly culture and our own sinful nature. But when we come to Jesus in repentance and faith, we give God control of our life. We are part of the Kingdom of Heaven. When a farmer is planting their crops they have high expectations. The farmer is expecting a good harvest – they are excited for the future.

   B. Motivated to put in lots of sacrifice and effort “sowed good seed”

      Those positive expectations of a good harvest, motivate the farmer to put in a lot of time, effort and sacrifice to get the ground ready for planting the seed. Plus here we see the farmer sowed “good seed”. He wasn’t cheap, he didn’t go for discounted seed – he planted good seed. Leisa & I always had a garden even though just a tiny portion of our yard had enough sun – but when the time & effort we were putting into became more than the yield we were getting out of it, we lost the drive to put time into planting & caring for the garden. High expectations motivate sacrifice and effort.

   C. Jesus Christ is working in the world now

      Now in this parable we are not the farmer, Jesus is. READ v 37-38a. The Son of Man is a term for the Messiah or Christ in the Old Testament. Jesus applies it to Himself in the gospels. The field is the whole world. So Jesus Christ is working right now all over the world – to do what?

   D. Growing fruitful disciples

      Raise a bountiful harvest – bring forth something eternally valuable from this broken world. READ v 38. The field is the world and the seed isn’t the gospel but it is the
redeemed – the people who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven. The seeds are the people who hear the gospel and respond positively to Jesus. So Jesus is constantly raising up new believers who will grow spiritually and produce more wheat (fruit) in the future. That’s great. **Who isn’t willing to put in a lot of time and effort into something that will bring a great result?**

II. Deep discouragement: we work hard & don’t skimp but major hindrances arise

Unfortunately, this life rarely matches up to our high expectations. Instead problems, opposition and obstacles arise and that is when frustration and discouragement enters in. The whole reason we need encouragement is because we become discouraged.

A. Enemies secretly trying to ruin

**Matt 13:25; Eph 6:12**

**READ v 25.** Jesus has enemies which are trying to ruin His good work. Sometimes enemies attack in a very outward, visible, and antagonistic ways. But here, the enemy is trying to destroy Jesus’ work very secretly by purposely putting weeds in the field.

B. Major disappointment & frustration un-expectantly arises (darnel)

**Matt 13:26-28**

**READ v 26-27.** Did you notice that phrase “formed heads”. In the parable, the servants, who are regularly working the farmer’s fields, don’t notice any problems until the time that **the heads on the wheat** are formed. So I thought it would be wise to go learn something about wheat. And as best as I could tell, the heads of wheat are formed around the 50th day or almost 2 months after the planting (**if you are interested, wheat is harvested around the 93rd day**). If they could not tell the difference between the wheat and the weeds until the wheat heads were formed, than the weeds being spoken of here had to look similar to the wheat for 50 days of growth! Older English Bible translations use the word “tares” here, most newer translations use “weeds” like the NIV, but a couple versions use the word “darnel”. I had never heard of that word. So I did what most Americans do today – I googled it. And what I found was fascinating – and very helpful to understand the encouragement Jesus gives us.

Darnel (or cockle) usually grows in the same production zones as wheat and was a serious problem weed until modern day when our sorting machines can now accurately separate the darnel from the wheat. The similarity between these two plants is so great that in some regions, darnel is referred to as "false wheat". It can not be distinguished until the ears of the wheat begin to appear. Then the darnel ears don’t droop like wheat, they don’t twist like wheat and when they dry they are black instead of brown. To make it worse, darnel is not neutral but it is actually poisonous, that is it is ‘harmful’.

Wow, imagine how the farmer and his helpers felt. Imagine the scene. They had spent over 3 months preparing the ground then planting, then watching more than 45 days of growth. All that time they get more and more excited about how great the harvest will be. Then all of a sudden they see that a lot of what they thought was wheat is actually this weed which will spoil the crop if it is not separated out – and separating out the...
darnel is going to take a lot of extra work. Can you feel the frustration, dejection, and sadness. They are deeply discouraged. We face this in many areas ...

- In families, parents put their heart and soul into raising their children in the ways of Jesus and then see indications that they aren’t growing into maturity but headed the wrong way. We get discouraged.
- In the church, we see growth in peoples’ lives as they share with others, take bold steps of faith and slow love for others. But then these problems arise in the church that we don’t think should happen. We get discouraged.
- In our communities or country, we see Jesus doing positive things, but then it seems like injustice, unfairness or falsehood arises even more. We lose our expectations of some great step forward in the future and get discouraged.

In all these situations the Christians have worked hard, done everything right and put God first, but then things go really wrong.

C. The devil is working to destroy

Matt 13:39; Jn 10:10

So the first question that comes up is **“how did this happen?”** Clearly here it is not because the farmer, servants or new Christians have done anything wrong! They didn’t buy cheap seed; they didn’t skimp on the preparation and the wheat is growing. The farmer, Jesus here, knew right away, **“an enemy did this.”** Look over to v 39.

READ. The enemy is the devil or satan.

D. Works through those who look similar/good

Matt 13:38

READ v 38. In this parable, wheat represents true followers of Christ, while the darnel or weeds represent those who look similar but are actually the false followers – they are really just living for themselves, which is following the devil’s way. Remember this is NOT devil worship, but outwardly looking like they are following God when they are actually disobeying God, not selflessly serving, not maturing spiritually – rather, in time, they will bring a kind of spiritual poison to those around them. We sometimes forget that the demonic intentionally work through those that look similar to believers or morally good people.

So, we get discouraged as we see our culture moving farther and farther from God’s way when they seem like nice people. We get frustrated with conflicts in the local church – isn’t everyone a Christian? We get discouraged seeing other Christians not being concerned for holiness or sharing Jesus’ good news with others. These reactions all come because we have forgotten Jesus’ truth here – both the false wheat and true wheat grow together for a time even in the Kingdom of heaven! We will have both false teachers and true teachers in the church & Christian media. False discipleship and true discipleship may appear to be the same, but as Jesus said in Matt 7:16 ‘you will know them by their fruits’. How many times have you become discouraged with people, family, church, work, community, or the world because the problems that come up make your life so much harder! We unconsciously believe only good seed was sown, so when we see the weeds discouragement & frustration definitely arise!
III. Bright days will come and last!

A. Forcing outward godliness early will actually hurt the godly. Matt 13:29-30
It is in these times that we really need encouragement and Jesus is giving it to us here. Look at v 43. READ. Incredibly great things are going to happen to those who are in the kingdom of God the Father – greater than you can imagine. BUT the path to that great result is going to look different than we planned. READ v 28b-30. The farmer's hired hands thought the way to the best result would be to take out the false wheat plants now – before they grew any more, damaged any other things or contaminated the harvest. They rightly understood there had to be a separation between the true and the false before the harvest can be thoroughly enjoyed and benefited from!

But Jesus said, “That’s not the best way – whatever temporary encouragement you experience will be far outdone by the damage it does to the good plants.” READ v 29-30a. If you try to separate the godly from the ungodly, the good from the bad at THIS time, but YOURSELVES – then it may uproot the good wheat – that is they will never mature and produce any spiritual fruit. They must grow together until the harvest – they be separated.

Three quick implications here …
1. This explains why God’s Kingdom can be at work in the world today without God wiping out all opposition. God’s goal is NOT to get rid of all the bad influences now, it is to mature believers. It won’t be like this in the millennium or New Heavens and Earth.
2. This explains why attempts to make a pure Christian society, hyper-separatistic church or perfect commune now will inevitably deteriorate. That is not God’s plan or what God is trying to do.
3. This is why FORCED GODLINESS now can actually hurt the godly! Forced godliness is where we demand everyone take on our Biblical values – but they will actually become like the weeds or darnel – looking like the wheat on the outside but actually being a harmful weed. We struggle with this in our country – how much do we push our values which will bring greater good and when do we step back because it is clear the group/country isn’t as committed to Jesus or a value of His as we thought?

B. God has a time & means for separation Matt 13:39-42 (2 Thes 1:7-10)
If it is difficult for the angels who can better see who the true and false believers are to pull out the weeds without up-rooting some of the wheat, we will be far more damaging and less effective at it. Jesus has a better plan – leave them alone. IN THE WORLD, let both Christians and non-Christians, both moral and immoral, both righteous and unrighteous live together. Let them grow together – the false getting more false and the true producing more good fruit. READ v 39-42. Then at the end of this age – when Jesus bodily returns to this earth, He will send out the angels to “weed out of the world everything that causes sin and all who do evil.” Jesus is
not saying here not to stand against injustice, publicly promote God’s values or let people do anything they want. That is all strongly addressed other places. But Jesus wants us to think different …

1. Stop complaining that others around you aren’t doing what God says or complaining how terrible it is to live with ‘weeds around’. Instead pour your heart into radically serving Jesus and bearing fruit yourself.

2. Stop blaming bad sources around family or friends for a person’s poor choices and focus instead on getting them to see their own sin & helping them become stronger spiritually. That is not saying one should not withdraw from bad influences – we are also not to put ourselves in temptation.

3. Focus on encouraging the good wheat – encouraging growth & spiritual fruit in the church and others, instead of focusing on the weeds. People often ask me, “Do you think that person is a Christian?” “I don’t know, that is for God to decide.” I probably should add, “Encourage and be encouraged by someone you know is a true Christian or by what you see Jesus doing.”

4. Stop carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders. Here it is Jesus’ job to plant good seed – raise up true believers and also to separate out the false from the true! God isn’t going to ask you “why didn’t you make your mom or your co-worker or your child or your friend a Christian?” That’s His job. Ours is to mature and produce spiritual fruit which comes from us simply sharing Jesus in the power of the HS and leaving the results to God.

C. God will bring ALL the good wheat into the barn Matt 13:30

Definitely be encouraged that God WILL BRING ALL the good wheat into the barn. READ v 30. God will bring ALL true believers into the millennium and heaven. I wish I had more time today because I LOVED a sermon I read this week by Charles Spurgeon on Feb 14, 1914. I read just a couple lines and this incredible encouragement filled my insides. Why did I miss this simple truth - Jesus is going to fill the barn with wheat. The devil will try to stop that but be totally unsuccessful. Every true believer will be brought into God’s presence regardless of the pressure around them, the confusion in them, the sin they struggle with or the side-tracks they take. EVERY ONE! None will be lost! In fact I will add, remember that God is asking us to go through the frustrations that come with the weeds not being destroyed right away SO THAT EVERY single redeemed people will not only be gathered into the barn, but they will have produced more positive results in their life and not given up.

D. The future will brighten and last Matt 13:43 (Dan 12:3)

That leaves us with v 43. READ. The kingdom of heaven is worth the cost of discipleship. What eternal peace, joy and wonder! We will be radiant and encouraged, and helpful as the sun shining today is for us! (cf. Dan. 12:3). Our future will not just get brighter, but it will also last – forever, and ever, and ever! So let’s look at life differently, based on what Jesus has, is and will do. When we are overwhelmed by the actions and opposition of non-Bible believers around us, see the importance of this time so others aren’t hurt, keep maturing and look forward to a perfect eternity!