



Looking after the weeds!

Has anyone else's gardening skills improved during this quarantine like mine have?

I planted myself on my couch at the beginning of March and I've grown significantly since.

I didn't really like gardening at first

But then it started to grow on me

What water yields the most beautiful veggie garden?

Perspiration!

Q. How does your garden grow?

A. Only thyme will tell...

I am a terrible gardener.

It could be that I just don't care about it enough. Or that I have simply not taken the time to develop the skill. Or maybe I'm just never going to be good at it, because you see I often have a hard time telling the difference between the weeds and what's supposed to be growing there. Or maybe it's just that until I came to Christchurch, I had not been blessed with adequate garden space or adequate garden space with enough sunshine or adequate time at those times of the year when gardening needs to happen to bother to put the effort in.

Whatever the reason, I can't tell weeds from wheat or anything else for that matter. And if that is true when it comes to green growing things, for me this is all the more true among human beings. I can't tell

the "weed" from the "wheat."

Oh, it's not that I don't live in a world full of such categories and it's not that my mind doesn't still go there. I expect we all think in terms of insiders and outsiders, producers and those who simply consume, those who belong and those who don't. I have had plenty of times in my life when I've felt like a 'weed.' Just think in Junior school or not getting in the team or, even now, as I experienced a few years ago simply walking into a shop which was so 'high end' I just knew I didn't belong. I know what it is to feel like a 'weed' and I don't doubt I have made others to feel the same way. Only I've been wrong enough times --- especially when it comes to matters of faith --- that I am immensely grateful that I'm a terrible gardener.

However, one thing I have discovered is that what we may call a weed, others call a 'LIFE SAVER'.

An example of this is broom, or *Cytisus scoparius*, which grows abundantly in Scotland and is used in ornamental landscaping, sand dune stabilization, and wasteland reclamation. It was even used as a symbol of the Plantagenet kings. However, in Australia, New Zealand, and parts of North America, it is considered a pest species and often eradicated.

Why did Jesus use this parable?

Maybe because of the people he mixed with and the hope he had for them?

- 🌐 Do we live alongside people we find difficult? Are there colleagues in our workplaces who make life hard for us? (Or we, them?) This parable speaks to the idea that the good and wonderful signs of the kingdom of heaven often exist alongside negative and much darker aspects: the wheat grows intermingled with the weeds. While we remain here on earth we live in a very mixed economy. What do we live alongside that makes our kingdom life difficult? What or who are the weeds in our fields?
- It is interesting that the workers are told not to try to gather in the weeds, but to leave them until harvest, when they can be separated from the wheat. Jesus explains that this means that good and evil will coexist until the Son of Man intervenes at the end of the age. The parable is not suggesting that we should try to deal with the evil, but that we should wait for God. Do we truly believe that God has a plan for the difficulties we live with? What reassurance do we get from this parable? What is the message of hope here?
- It can be easy to overlook the 'wheat' around us and see only the 'weeds'. But the parable speaks of both growing. The wheat still bears grain even with the weeds surrounding it. Do you look for signs of the kingdom or concentrate on symptoms of evil? What signs of God's kingdom are in evidence where you are? There is a necessary tension within this parable, also reflected in Paul's words to the Romans – a sense of living in both the 'now' and 'not yet'. We have the first fruits but wait patiently for our full redemption.
- There's something more to come. The parable describes what God is going to do about the evil we live with in the future. How do we manage this tension today? What does it look like to live in both the 'now' and 'not yet'?
I've got something else to add. In our Prison we have the 'weeds' of society. So, should they be 'culled', uprooted, 'got rid of'?
Or are we called to be people of hope and trust that, at the end of it all, God will sort the 'REAL WEEDS' out.
Our God is a God of hope, redemption and restoration.
It may be that even the weeds find their place in his Kingdom!

Amen.