

When I was five or six years old, Mum would make us weed our ginormous vegie garden with her. It was never a fun exercise because no matter where I weeded, Mum was always looking over my shoulder, making sure I didn't pull out any of the vegetables – which, at that time, I was convinced nobody should have to eat anyway. Better to leave the weeds in the ground and pull them all out at the same time, right?

That was my thinking, but this is also something of the imagery in today's Gospel – wheat and weeds coexisting together in our lives as the Kingdom of Heaven takes root. There are several ways to interpret the parable. Today, I'd like to offer a perspective which invites us to consider the weeds in our own lives and what God wants to do with them.

Firstly, the darnel named in the Gospel is a poisonous grass known as 'mimic weed' because when it's young, it closely resembles wheat. *"Do you want us to get rid of the darnel,"* the owner is asked. *"No,"* he wisely responds, *"because you might pull up the wheat as well."* And so, we get to the point of the Gospel straight away. The Kingdom of Heaven, as it grows within us, is not yet a finished work because God desires to heal and transform us into true images of Jesus. What does that look like or sound like?

Well, one of the gifts – or wheat – God has given me is the ability to cast vision and encourage people toward positive change. At the same time, I also experience anxiety when **my** emotions rise in difficult conversations, or when I perceive that a person is unhappy with me. This anxiety inhibits my capacity to **listen** dispassionately, **think** and **respond** effectively, and **do** what needs to be done. It's something in my life that needs more of God's healing. Yet God isn't asking us simply to tolerate our weaknesses, ignore them, or rip them out by force. He invites us to place them in **His** hands so that He can redeem them. Whatever our particular **struggles** may be – whether anxiety, pride,

resentment, fear, impatience, or something else – God desires to meet us there.

Those who patiently surrender their weeds to God's healing often find that, what was once their greatest **weakness** becomes their greatest source of **virtue**. God does so much more than **remove** our weaknesses; He transforms them. The person who has **known** fear and anxiety, for example, can become deeply compassionate. The person who has struggled with forgiveness can become merciful. The person who has been healed can become a source of healing for others. Our weaknesses become sources of grace because Jesus has become our model of holiness.

One of the signs of growing closer to Jesus is that we become increasingly aware of our need for His grace. Rather than becoming fixated on our faults, we learn to recognise them honestly while trusting more deeply in God's mercy. The saints were often the people most conscious of their own weaknesses – not because they were worse than everyone else, but because they had allowed the healing love of Jesus to penetrate more deeply into their hearts. When someone says, *"I don't really have any sins,"* it may be that they simply haven't yet looked at themselves through the **eyes** of Jesus' love and truth. The closer we draw to Him, the more we recognise both the beauty He has planted within us **and** the areas still awaiting His healing.

The good news of today's Gospel is that God isn't discouraged by the weeds in our lives but sees them more clearly than we do. He doesn't walk away from us, condemn us, or give up on us. Instead, He patiently continues His work of redemption though **our** "yeses" to His grace. The danger is not that we **have** weeds but pretending they are **not there**. The saints were not people with **out** weeds, but they were conscious of them and handed them over to Jesus. And so perhaps the question we can take home today is not, *"What **are** my weeds?"* but rather, *"What am I still **refusing** to surrender to the Saviour?"* Because in the hands of Jesus, surrendered **weeds** become **wheat** in the Kingdom of Heaven.