



## Matthew 13:24-43

**24** Jesus put a parable before the crowds, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. **25** While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel all among the wheat, and made off. **26** When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. **27** The owner's servants went to him and said, "Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field? If so, where does the darnel come from?" **28** "Some enemy has done this," he answered. And the servants said, "Do you want us to go and weed it out?" **29** But he said, "No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. **30** Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First, collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn."

Other readings: Wisdom 12:13,16-19 Psalm 85 (86) Romans 8:26-27

Once again we have an extensive reading from Matthew chapter 13, in which the evangelist has gathered together the parables of Jesus. Only the first section, containing the parable of the darnel in the field, is given above. In the more extended reading provided in the lectionary this parable is followed by the parable of the mustard seed, the parable of the yeast, and then Jesus' explanation of the parable of the darnel.

Darnel is a particularly troublesome kind of weed which resembles wheat. It can be easily understood why the land-owner instructs the labourers to remove the weed only at harvest-time, for to pull it out beforehand would probably uproot the wheat and thus destroy the crop. All this has implications for the lesson of the parable.

The kingdom of heaven on earth survives in the midst of a world which is tarnished by sin in its many forms. Christians have to work out how to cope and not collude with the reality of sin all around them. The parable also teaches that the time of the harvest will one day come, when God will take to himself those who have sought him by pursuing what is good and true, by living in faith, hope and love.

Matthew frequently speaks of the judgement to come. He gives a dramatic description of the Last Judgement in chapter 25 of his gospel. The wicked are consigned to the fires of hell, just as in this parable fire destroys the darnel. The fire should be understood as an image of the terrible pain that the loss of God involves. God does not inflict dreadful punishments on sinners, but those who reject what is good and true shut themselves off from the love of God and bring on themselves the terrible pain of the loss of God.

*How do I cope with the evil I see around me?*

*Do I have the patience to wait for God's purposes to be fulfilled?*

*We pray for constancy in seeking what is good.*

*We pray for a true understanding of the forbearance of God.*