

Just the other day I did a clean out of my email in box. It doesn't take long for 100s of emails to collect. I would say about 60% are probably replies of one or two words, like, thanks, got it, will do. 20% is probably junk, spam or photos from people. The remaining 20% are probably important.

Well, thankfully we have a "deleted items" section and to permanently delete something requires a multiple keystroke process. In my attempt at a clean out, after I thought I had carefully selected the emails to delete, I hit the delete button, - gone. Great! One job done.

That afternoon I needed to respond to a matter and guess what – no email. I had deleted an important email without realising it. Fortunately it was still in the deleted items box. But my attempt to do good, to purge the 'evil email weeds' that were choking my hard drive, I actually deleted some 'good email wheat'.

This is like the kingdom of Heaven that Jesus is talking about. A crop of wheat and a bunch of weeds and servants seeking permission to go and pull up those weeds. The land owner, whose name was Paul McCartney says no, *let it be, just let it be* - leave it alone, deal with the weeds later lest you might pull up the wheat also.

I reckon this parable of the wheat and the weeds can be subtitled, live and let live, as opposed to James Bond's movie soundtrack, and Paul McCartney's song, live and let die.

*When you were young
And your heart was an open book
You used to say live and let live
You know you did
But if this ever changin' world
In which we live in
Makes you give in and cry
Say.... live and let **die***

When you read this parable, it sort of sticks out, its not quite like the others, its not like the good old stories of the prodigal son, the lost sheep and coin all with happy endings. But this one is a bit gruesome, even a bit scary, its rated MA 15+ – words like burn, cut, harvest, furnace, gnashing of teeth.

Well, essentially its about Wheat and weeds growing together and I think it's a good analogy for the church and maybe MORE SO SOCIETY. I see stalks of wheat. Yet I also see weeds, dandelions, thistles, soursobs, 3 corner jacks. I see backstabbing ~~in the churches~~, criticism, over protective relationships, manipulation, power, cliques, jealousy, mistrust. How do the weeds like this get in? We just want to rip them out, but Jesus says live and let live!

The house down the street has put in a new lawn of turf squares, they watered it, it was green during summer when, all our lawns died off. It looked great. One day when walking I noticed in the fresh, lush green lawn – dandelions, weeds! Where did they come from, who put them in this nice new lawn.

What speaks strongly to me from the parable of the wheat and weeds is – let it be! Live and let live!

Remember, this is a parable of the kingdom of Heaven, and if we can't affect what goes on in heaven, then what can we relate this parable to? The church? Maybe Jesus is saying, it's not our job to be hacking or weeding. That is not our task, so... live and let live! And let it be!

Yet human nature falls into the temptation to weed. We don't want the poisonous infectious weeds, we want to purge the church, make it holy, to make room for the good wheat to flourish – not choked by the weedy actions of others. On the surface that seems a good motivation, but Jesus says, hang on! Don't! Don't weed!

He says don't because weeding is not our job. Our job is to be good wheat, not the gardener. Just get on with growing and growing together.

Jesus says don't weed because perhaps you will be mistaken. Some wheat and some weeds do look alike, especially in infancy and given that we are all something of a mixture of both wheat and weed, then the one whose job it is to weed, must be careful.

There is an amazing little thing in this passage that we don't often notice. It's at the start of the farmer's instruction: "Let the wheat and the weeds grow together." It is that word "let" or "permit" or "allow". The same Greek word also means "forgive". This is not just a passive ignoring of the problem, hoping it will go away.

Rather, it's an active naming it and forgiving of it. We are not called to pretend that the wheat and the weeds are no different. That is irresponsible. We are not called to refrain from calling for repentance and change. That is not the gospel

What we are called to refrain from, is attacking what we think might be weeds.

We need to stop thinking we are the 'good seed' and that others are 'weeds'. That is judgment! We might all be wheat, yet we might all be weeds. Our calling is to turn this around and be a church, that by the grace and love of God, lives and let lives. That doesn't mean simply anything goes, or lack of discipline and challenging wrong or hurtful behaviour.

It means, don't treat people as weeds, don't exclude, don't gossip, betray, compare, don't bitch. In other words stop weeding. STOP WEEDING! Every time we criticise, we weed. Every time we back stab or fail to forgive, we weed. Every time we exclude, we weed. Every time we look at skin colour or religious or gender preference, we weed.

It is **not** a call for us, as the people of God, the church, to start pulling weeds! It is Jesus who says it's up to God and God's harvesters to do the work. God might be more patient than we might ever be, and there is always a chance that a weed might turn into a wheat somewhere along the way.

Perhaps the intention of this parable is not to reassure Christians that they are wheat, but to warn each of us that we must make the status of being wheat real in our daily living as followers of Jesus, to act like good seed.

We are to be a church full of wheat and weeds, for it is God's church. We are God's church. We are all and each, here, not because of any goodness of ours, but because of the love of God in

Christ Jesus. We are to act like Christ and forgive, serve, and sow seeds of the kingdom. Forgive, love and tolerate! Let our only experience of evil or violence be in suffering it, and not inflicting it.

Boss, you planted good seed didn't you? Where then did the weeds come from? In this parable we might be expecting advice on how to get rid of the problem, but that is not what we get it.

Instead we are told that we had better learn to live with the problem or we might end up becoming the problem. Stop weeding! Live and let live!, Let it be!

Lord, help us to stop weeding.

Lord help me to stop weeding.

Lord forgive us for treating others as weeds.

Lord forgive me for treating others as weeds.

Teach us your ways!

Teach me your ways!

Amen!