

**Sermon for July 20, 2014**  
**Matthew 13:24-30**

As I get older I find that my view on life is changing from one of everything being black and white to one where everything is shades of gray. Our lives are full of ambiguities just like we find in today's parable. One of life's ambiguities is that we can't always tell who is good and who is evil.

When I was younger I thought it was easy to tell the good from the bad. All you had to do was to compare people to the heroes we learned about in the Bible like Abraham, Moses and David in the Old Testament and Peter and Paul in the New Testament. These men were portrayed as great examples of the faith—which they are, but it wasn't until I grew up and really learned about their lives that I could see God's grace in their lives.

Let's start with Abraham. He was a pretty good liar and didn't really trust God's promises and yet God made him the father of a great nation; one that was to be more numerous than the stars in the sky or the sands of the desert. Then there was Moses. He was a murderer and yet God chose him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. And David; he was an adulterer and a murderer and yet God called him a man after God's own heart.

Now let's move onto the New Testament. Take Peter, Jesus called him Satan and a stumbling block. He deserted Jesus at his arrest, cut off the ear of the High Priest's slave and denied knowing Jesus three times. Yet this is the one whom Jesus called the rock and on whom Jesus built his church. Then there's Paul. When we first meet Paul he's called Saul and he's the Pharisee in charge of finding people who follow the Way. He first appears in Acts as the one who was

in charge of the stoning of Stephen. He is on his way to arrest more followers when God stops him and works through him to bring the Gospel message to the Gentiles. The letters of this sinner/saint to the Gentile churches makes up a lot of our New Testament.

The ambiguity in our lives isn't just in knowing the good and evil that lives in each of us—let alone in others, but also in the difficult choices that we make every day. These choices also aren't always black and white. Sometimes we make the right choice and sometimes we don't. Sometimes we don't know for months if the choice we made was the right one. But we still need to make them.

Do I take the job that offers more money, but gives me less time with my family or do I stay in the job I have with less money, but more time with my family? Do we take weekend trips that mean we aren't here to worship or do we stay home more weekends and build relationships with our church family? Do I take the chemotherapy that might prolong my life, but make me too sick to function or do I take the time I have and live it? Fill in your own scenario; I'm sure the list is endless.

The wonderful news in this parable is that whatever choice we make—whether it be right or wrong—God is there at the end to sort everything out! Yes we will make some wrong choices. Yes there will be hardships, but the great news is that we are not saved or condemned by the choices we make! We are justified by grace through faith!

Just as God continued to do a good work through Abraham, Moses, David, Peter and Paul; God continues to do a good work through us. God doesn't give

up on us and we shouldn't give up on each other. We are here each and every Sunday to be reminded how much God loves us whether we made the right choice or not. Take a few moments now to think and pray about the difficult choices you and those around you are facing this week.

Dear Lord, our lives are colored by ambiguity and we don't always know the right or best thing to do. But we do know that your love is guiding us and that you have called us to live as your people in the world. When we face hard choices, give us eyes to see the best path forward and the courage to follow it. When we make mistakes, forgive us. When we are hurt by our choices, comfort us. When we hurt others, help us to reach out to them in love. And above and beyond all these decisions, remind us that you still love us and call us back to this place that we may be forgiven, renewed, called, and sent forth once more as your beloved children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> David Lose, "Dear Partner in Preaching: On Wheat, Weeds and Ambiguity." July 14, 2014