

Week 18  
January 18, 2009

**Good Seed, Bad Seed**  
*Matthew 13:24-30*

1. Read Matthew 13:24-30.
2. What is the good seed? What is the bad seed?
3. Who are the landowner, his enemy, the servants and the harvesters?
4. The bad seed is spread “while the servants slept.” Any thoughts or implications of that statement?
5. The owner (God or Jesus) tells the servants (us) not to separate or pull out the weeds, but rather to let the wheat and weeds grow up together. Why?

6. When you read this, do you tend to think of “weeds” (evil or untruth or people under their influence) growing up in the midst of the church, or growing up amidst the surrounding culture? Why?
  
7. Why does God leave judging and harvesting to other beings than us? Why is this hard for us? We are forever tilting toward toothless libertinism or angry conservatism. Why is the middle ground so hard to hold?
  
8. What is the difference between judgment on the one hand and a caring confrontation or intervention on the other? Is there a difference between judgment and discernment?
  
9. Why do you think Christians are alarmed by evils in the surrounding world, when it is neither new nor unexpected? Are you alarmed? What are the types of evil that grieve you or provoke you into being an advocate?
  
10. Should non-Christians be held to the same standards as Christians? Should we hope for a civil society that embraces our Christ-invoked ethic?

11. Assuming that a nation “of the people, by the people and for the people” grants us the shared rule of our country, what are the areas of advocacy or responsibility that you take seriously? How do you find your voice?
12. If love is our motive and guide for reaching and helping the world, why does the world so often feel like churches are unloving and angry and judgmental? Are they accurate, or are they just persecuting the church the way Jesus said they would?

For the hardcore group:

*Keith has been using the phrase “poodles guarding the fortress” on three separate occasions during this series. He seems to be saying “we Christians are too often defending God instead of reflecting God; upholding God’s righteous standard amidst people who hardly know him, instead of radiating God’s love.” How does this land with you? Are you concerned that God needs defending? Have you seen cases where a defense of God has been influential or transformative in a life or community? Tell the story.*

*For centuries, Christians have spoken about the balancing attributes of “truth and grace.” People talk as if truth is always hard and grace is always soft, or that grace is not itself truth. Some talk about churches that are “more truth-based” as being more legalistic and Bible-based and “grace-based churches as being more liberal and less Bible-based.” Are truth and grace actually balancing opposites? How so or why not? Is there a better way to describe the need to uphold God’s standards for human conduct while reflecting God’s commitment to grace and mercy?*