

Gardening, I believe, is one of the most rewarding things you can do. Simply putting a seed in the soil, watering it, watching it grow and bear fruit is as if watching a miracle. It never ceases to amaze me that a seed no bigger than a pin head can grow a whole cabbage, or a full head of lettuce, or a stalk taller than most men. Now the weeds are a different story. Usually by this time of year I have camped just one too many times or taken too much time to go swimming etc. I usually have let the weeds overtake my garden, so I plow the rows in between and hope the neighbors don't mind my attempt at gardening. This year I had surgery and knew I wouldn't have the strength or ambition to till, plant or maintain a garden. Low and behold, my husband and my kiddos blessed me on Mother's Day by doing all of this for me. So I made an agreement with myself that for every fruit or veggie I pick, I will pick a weed. I wasn't going to spend hours in the garden; just a commitment to spend as much time weeding as I did harvesting- totally expecting the weeds to win yet another year. It started this spring with strawberries, blackberries, marionberries, then pole beans, then sugar snap peas, then squash and so on. I have always believed the weeds outnumbered the fruit- but I found out this year they don't. This is the first year ever I have completely enjoyed every aspect of gardening. I haven't mastered a weed free garden but a prettier, healthier one to say the least. When we take time daily to do a little, it adds up to a lot. I think we can apply this thought to every aspect of our life- the laundry, the dishes, the mail, and so on. A little each day will not be as overwhelming as leaving it all for next week. The bible speaks of weeds, and soil and seeds and it's often when I'm gardening I find myself thinking of the stories in the bible. I remember one year at vacation bible school, all the girls got a necklace with a mustard seed in it. I wore that necklace every day for a year and would just stop and stare at the seed in its tiny glass case, thinking of the story my teacher had told with such enthusiasm. The story that something so small and insignificant could grow to be so great captured my attention. I ended up giving it to a friend who found it just as fascinating as I did and shared the story with her. In a way, I planted a small seed.

In Matthew 13 we read the parable of the Sower, The Parable of the Weeds, The Parable of the Mustard Seed, and the Parable of the Yeast. Then Jesus comes to the disciples and explains their meaning.

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field." ³⁷ He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is

the world and the good seed are the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one,³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.⁴⁰ As the weeds are collected and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age.⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom everything that causes sin as well as all lawbreakers.⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The one who has ears had better listen! “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure, hidden in a field, that a person found and hid. Then because of joy he went and sold all that he had and bought that field.

⁴⁵ *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant searching for fine pearls.*

⁴⁶ *When he found a pearl of great value, he went out and sold everything he had and bought it.*

⁴⁷ *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea that caught all kinds of fish.⁴⁸ When it was full, they pulled it ashore, sat down, and put the good fish into containers and threw the bad away.⁴⁹ It will be this way at the end of the age. Angels will come and separate the evil from the righteous⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

⁵¹ *“Have you understood all these things?” They replied, “Yes.”⁵² Then he said to them, “Therefore every expert in the law who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his treasure what is new and old.”*

There are parts of this chapter that are a bit scary and yet, Jesus is telling the disciples that all those things that caused us to sin are going to be done away with. Jesus is telling us to choose life. He wants us to see the hope in a dying world; that perseverance will bring a treasure far more than we could ever imagine on this earth. We live in a society where the world seems to offer so much more. But Jesus is telling us that heaven is like a fine pearl, a treasure in a field that we would sell everything just to have it. Can we even fathom the treasure that waits for us, a treasure no amount of gold could ever buy? I'm sure if we could even glimpse into it all we would laugh at the struggles we face here on earth. The choices that are placed before us good or bad everyday would be nonsense. The things that happen all around us can be all consuming and disheartening, but it doesn't have to be. Hebrews 12 1-2 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us,² keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.*