

Along the Way August 9, 2019
The Thistle

Jesus told another parable. “God’s realm is like a farmer who planted good seed in her field. That night, while her farmhands were asleep, someone sowed thistles all through the wheat and slipped away before dawn. When the first green shoots appeared and the grain began to form, the thistles showed up, too.

“The farmhands came to the farmer and said, ‘Was that clean seed you planted? Where did these thistles come from?’

“She answered, ‘Some enemy did this.’

“The farmhands asked, ‘Should we weed out the thistles?’

“The farmer said, ‘No, if you weed the thistles, you’ll pull up the wheat, too. Let them grow together until harvest time.’” (Matthew 13:24-30a)

We have a thistle in our garden. It is at least 8 feet tall and has over 20 spiky purple flowers. It hurts my head and heart to see it. The farmer in me wants to take a machete and chop it down. I grew up thinking thistles were very, very bad. The beekeeper in me understands how necessary it is for pollinators.

Pollinators are essential to our environment and uniquely linked to our food supply. This “weed” is good for the bees. And so, I am trying to make peace with this tension—while also hearing Andrea’s admonition: “Don’t you dare chop down that thistle!”

In the parable of the weeds found in the gospel of Matthew, the thistles receive a temporary reprieve. According to the parable, it’s because if you pull them up, you will also take out some good plants. Okay, I can understand that, but you have consequences either way. With weeds taking space and nutrients, the harvest will be less.

And maybe that’s the point, it’s not about numbers or a bigger harvest. And it’s not my job to judge the worthiness of a plant. What I have noticed is that we have more bees and Monarch butterflies stopping by our garden. And that’s hopeful.

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