

ARTICLE FOR COUNTRY GAZETTE

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By Rev. Carol Mariano

Orting United Methodist Church

Harry Potter...The Lord of the Rings...Star Wars...

Our children seem to be hooked on these stories and others like them that pit good against evil in a grand scheme. Well, they are simply following our lead. We live in a world of violence. We live in a world of fear and violence where we only paint in black and white. When my sister was four years old, a neighbor boy accidentally shot her in the foot with a BB gun. Luckily her shoe prevented severe injury. She came into the house crying, "Mommy, I'm not the bad guy." Even a four year old knows that it is okay to shoot bad guys. Video games reinforce that and take it to new depths. Worst of all we live in a world of illusion that we have created for ourselves, believing we have the power to control and, yes, even root out evil by using violence.

Our world is really no different that the world Jesus lived in more than 2000 years ago when Jesus told the parable of the wheat and the weeds. He said good seeds and bad seeds have been sown in the same field and we should let the weeds and the wheat grow up together, because if you try to remove the weeds, you will uproot the wheat. Now you might think that just doesn't make good sense. No farmer or gardener who knows even the basics would let the weeds grow. That is a plan for disaster. The weeds will take over. This is clear to me as I look at the weeds growing tall in my front yard.

But Jesus also tells stories of people who are sure they are wheat being rejected as weeds, while those thought to be weeds are accepted by Christ as his own. I am reminded of this rephrasing of an old saying, *There's so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, sometimes it's hard to say which one of us, ought to reform the rest of us.*

This parable is not about weeds in our garden, but about people in the world. We can see the weeds growing here as the evils of the world. We are tempted to be about the work of rooting them out. But we may do more harm than good. The weeds look very much like the wheat, and we may unintentionally do more harm than we know.

The history of God's people is a history of good people weeding too zealously. They stoned the prophets, crusaded through the Holy Lands, coerced tortured confessions of heresy during the Inquisition, burned so-called witches, presumed that God favors those with white skin, or those who are male, or those who live the way we do.

Weeding is tricky business. The parable tells us that it is God who should sort out the good from the bad. It is not up to us to attempt to weed out those we think are not fit for God's kingdom. The judgement is in God's hands and will be done with righteousness and mercy.

Yes, we should protect ourselves against evil. Yes, we should teach our children the difference between right and wrong, but let us put the weeding in God's hands. And let us teach our children to value those different from themselves and to practice tolerance.