I have a garden where I live. I have never had a garden of my own and always wanted to, I am enjoying my garden. And over the last few years I have been experimenting with different species, some of which fail and some succeeded. Having had a garden and experienced a bit about gardening, I now have a new appreciation or understanding of the story of the parable of the wheat and the weed in Chapter 13 of the gospel of Matthew.

The story goes... A sower planted good seeds of wheat in his field but as they grew, it became clear that somehow someone had maliciously sawn weeds and they were growing together with the wheat. This was not part of his plan, and his dreams about a great harvest have become just that a dream. He could have let his servants who were confident that they could rip out the weeds there and then, but the sower knows that to tear out the tare now could ruin the maturing wheat as well. So at the end he decides to leave the weeds with the wheat allowing the to grow together until the day that all of them will be harvested where they will sort out weeds.

They say this story was meant to be read as an allegory. Later Jesus explains it but ‘only’ to his disciples, and there is element of hiddenness as if this is the secret of the kingdom of God that only those who have ears will hear.

Without understanding the meaning of the symbolisms in the story, we can easily misread this parable. As Martin Luther, the reformer of faith warns us in his commentary of this parable; that we should read it in its context, which means we need also to read later in the same chapter, where Jesus interprets the parable. However, it is also important to note that for many, this is a parable that help us interpret the role of Pharisees and the teachers of the law how they confused his teaching and interrupted his ministry. Though Jesus recognized them for who they were and what they were doing, they were still in the mix. They were still part of the audience sitting among the crowd who heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Looking at this from our context, this story poses us a few problems. Firstly, this story suggests to us that there will be the time when things will be sorted out.
The weed from the wheat, the bad from the good, the true believer from the false and so on... the story suggests to us that there will be a day of judgment and redemption.

Secondly, it suggests to us that our God is like the sower who rather than sorting out evil, sorting out and destroy the weeds he will allow the ambiguity of the wheat and the weed to exist side by side growing in the same field. Therefore, thirdly, the story suggests to us that we do live in the world of ambiguity of good and the evil, because God allows it.

The problem of evil has taken many to lose their faith. They could not understand or accept such a world or such a God who allows the ambiguity of the good and the evil. There is no doubt that God who knows everything and everyone as Psalm 139 says. And so consider how God could possibly sustain this world of the good and the evil, wheat and weed to grow together. How can God who is alive and active and powerful and good allow the evil to exist in our world? How can he let the evil continue?

There are so much evil in the world. Thinking just about what happened in the world this week, the conflict in Ukraine that took down that Malaysian Airline, the violence and devastation caused by the violence in Gaza, and so on, do they not cause us to wonder? Does it not cause us to think deeper about the problems of evil in our world?

And yet, I think that if we begin to hear and learn more about the story and history behind all these conflicts, we soon understand the complexities of the issues in these conflicts and the problems. At the same time seeing what happened in all these conflicts we know how dangerous and destructive some of our judgmental and hasty decision we might have come to, can be.

Sometimes things are not what they seem.

There was a documentary I saw about two people who are the most unlikely people who could come together to reconcile. One of them was a commander of ANC-African National Congress and the other was a mother of a young woman who was killed by the ANC members in the conflict in South Africa. As we can imagine this was difficult yet most profoundly powerful things that could ever happened. They said it took them a long time, but when finally they came together, sitting together and began to talk to each other, they soon came to realize that there are deeper truth and bigger issues than just simply what
they have experienced. They said after all the tears and feelings expressed, hearing each other’s story, they could see that the things that they saw as evil is no longer the evil that they were dealing with, that the forgiveness and reconciliation was only possible through the willingness to listen and understand and open to the possibility to find hope and peace. At the end, they decided to work for peace and forgiveness rather than retribution. And so they started to work for the reconciliation of other people caught in between these conflicts.

But the conflicts and problems do not only exist out there. There is within us the same ambiguity and conflict. Paul in Romans 7 says that the ambiguity exists even in us. He says, “I know that nothing good lives in me that am in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do. No, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing.”

Most of us will agree with Paul, this seems to be a human condition. (Does it mean that God allows it?)

Paul however then suggests that perhaps the only way to save ourselves from all these is to be born a new through Christ Jesus and live in the Spirit to grow and mature in our faith. Notice, how he did not suggest that we could do something about evil; somehow the evil should be ripped out of us. He said rather we are to grow in our relationship with God. We are to grow in goodness stronger when the evil grows within us.

We all know the question, how can God allow this world of ambiguity of good and evil, is it because somehow He can help us to grow using the evil to make us good. Is God somehow powerless to do anything about the evil, because he bound by the law of the ‘free will’ which he gave to us in the beginning and he is powerless to change.

No, there is no doubt that our God is indeed God who has power to destroy the evil, even here and now, he does not depend on what we understand to be what he set out in the beginning. Such ideas boxed God to be a machine with no feelings and no creativity. But, our God is God who loves, who changes his mind. He is compassionate, forgiving and patient. God can pull out the evil once and for all. But God waits, for the good to grow, for the good seeds to grow and bear fruit, God does not want the good to be ruined, so he plans carefully of the plan to judge and to redeem the world, all in good time.
As someone said, “God’s plan was that for the sake of this hurting and impatient world, that he would send Jesus Christ, his son, to bring them into the realm of God, (the kingdom of God) and so through him and his Spirit, the kingdom of God will come to be realized here as well as in heaven.”

How does this work? Paul helps us with this in Romans 8:11, “If the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who lives in you.” “You who receive the Spirit you have received the Spirit of Sonship and by him we cry Abba Father, that the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” “Therefore we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons and daughters, the redemption of our bodies.”

What this means is that the plan that God has for us, is for the good, the wheat, and that is for the good, the wheat to grow. What it means is that the wheat, which is the gospel of the kingdom of God in us are to grow so that we will be God’s sons and daughters, and therefore what God cares for in all these is for us to grow spiritually and for his people to grow into a mature and fruitful people of his kingdom and so the kingdom of God will be realized on earth (that is what Hebraic understanding of the kingdom of God was) as well as in heaven. And therefore, for this, He gave us Jesus, His only begotten son and He gave us the Holy Spirit through Jesus, so that we can grow in life and faith.

Yes, we live in a world of ambiguity of good and evil and yes God allows it, but God also is God who knows everything about us, who loves us and has the best intention for our lives. We read Psalm 139, a song of praise that reminds us about God who knows us, he knows when we sit down, when we rise up, and he knows our every thoughts. He also is present in all our ways. He knows what we said and will say. He knows what we did and what we will do. He is present everywhere in all our days; in our triumph and our failure, on the mountaintop and in the bottom of the pit. And that is our God who despite all our failings and shortcomings, yet still loves us and wants us to love him.

Though there is so much we don’t know. We don’t yet know the fulness of his plan for our lives and his love for us, we know that he is patient with us that he will wait for us to grow and mature as his sons and daughters. We long for that. That is our future yet to come. Paul says
that the whole creations groans as in the pains of childbirth and so as we ourselves wait eagerly for the day. And he says this is what it means to have hope of salvation (What it means to be in His kingdom).

So what does it all mean in our ‘real’ life? We might think about how this was more relevant for Paul and his readers in Rome. Because the context of the letter was where the people were tired of waiting and they were losing hope, for them declaring your faith drove them out of the synagogues, they were always looked at with suspicion of treason by the Roman authorities, the Jewish Christians were confused about where their Christian faith begun and their Jewish faith ends, the gentile Christians were confused about what it means to be a Christian and what is means to be Roman citizens declaring their allegiance to the empire. They were persecuted and confused. They were living in the world of ambiguity. Perhaps Paul needed to remind them of the hope, remind them of what they are supposed to wait eagerly for.

But we also live in the world of ambiguity and therefore conflict. And we know that we are also waiting for the reign of God with love and justice. But, through all these reflection and study, I wonder if it is also true that God also is the one who is waiting. God waits for us to grow maturely into the reality of being sons and daughters of the living God. We are but we are not there yet.

For example, they say that as a church we are in between places, a place of ambiguity, ‘liminal space’. We realize that the former days of Christendom have come to pass and we have not yet got to the future, the world yet to come. It is certainly an unsettling place. People talk about the former days of glory—what it used to be in the church where all our hundred seats were filled. Those days are gone. Though we do not know what our future ahead is like, but we know that at the end, we will know that plans that God has for us. And Jeremiah reminds us in chapter 29:1, that God knows what the plans are, and all we need to know is that it is for us to prosper, to give us a future filled with hope.

Patrick Wilson said, Jesus did not say that the kingdom was like a rock, fixed and solid and firm and unchanging. Jesus did not say that the kingdom was like a giant machine that you put some things in and you get something out and what you get out depends on what you put it. He said, it was like an enormous tree that grows out of a
tiny seed. That tree that grows so enormous that all the birds of the air can come and find shelter in its branches.

So what if we live in the time of liminal space, the mixed and in ambiguity of the wheat and the weed. Perhaps we were always meant to live in such a time. And perhaps what meant to happen is always that we will grow, that the kingdom of God will grow within us, and beyond us, and around us. Yes, though the evil will grow, but the good can and will grow stronger in us and through us and so we see that in our world that the good seeds that were sown in us through Christ Jesus will grow confidently and strongly until such a time when the fullness its time, that God’s kingdom will be realized in us.

The great thing about our God in all this is that for us to grow, God has given us his Spirit so through the power of the Holy Spirit we may have deepened understanding of his love and grown in our love for God and Jesus. That is what it meant to have the Spirit of God who helps us and intercedes for us. We have the promise which means we will always have the Spirit of God to help us until we, the time and the world matures into that which God has planed.

That is why we pray together and often, that is why we study the Bible together and often as the Holy Spirit leads us and guides us in order for us to grow and mature in faith. That is what happens in our lives, the Spirit inspires us to do the work of the gospel, our work of compassion and peace in our world. This is all part of not only us but the world becoming matures in its goodness; so that the kingdom of God will be realized on earth as well as in heaven.

Though we live in a world mixed reality of good and evil, the wheat and the weed, we are challenged by the evil that grow strong around us and confused and weary about the future yet to come, let us remember that we have our God who loves us, and let trust in God and his plan for our salvation. Though the ambiguity of this world may disappoint and confuse us. Let us continue to do good works and let us make every effort to grow in faith. And let us be confident and bold in our ministry of the gospel in our world. For we know by faith all that is the power of God working in us and in our world for the fulfillment of God’s salvation, as we wait with the whole creation for the day of may the blessing of God; Creator, sustainer and giver of life be with us all. Amen.