

“THE PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND THE WEEDS.”

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Scripture Texts: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Introduction.

We all have different tolerance levels for different things. Some of us are able to tolerate high levels of pain, others not so much. Some of us are gluten tolerate, some gluten intolerant.

Some of us do better than others with lack of sleep. Some of us are perfectionists and can't tolerate things that are out of order or messed up. Some of us tolerate crowds or lines better than others. Some of us are very disappointed with life, with the gap between what we hoped for and what we have.

The parable of the wheat and the weeds says we are going to have to develop a certain kind of tolerance in a world full of lots of sin and evil, full of disappointment and disillusionment, to deal with the dissonance of life.

If God is good and loving, why is there evil? Why doesn't everyone who hears the gospel believe? Why does the church struggle in this world? Why is there conflict and discord in churches and denominations?

As great a man as John the Baptist got disillusioned about Jesus. When Jesus didn't seem to be moving very quickly to exercise His power and judgment he questioned Jesus. "Are you the one or is there another one coming?"

We get impatient with hurdles, obstacle, interruptions, setbacks, delays, and slow progress.

This parable says the kingdom of God is present and real and growing. But the parable also says that it's not going to happen the way some of us think or hope.

This parable is going to take a bit of explaining. We would do well to follow the example of the disciples and seek to understand the words of Jesus.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

We will consider this parable under three headings, *sowing, growing and reaping*.

Sowing.

The *sower* is the Son of God, Jesus who came to preach the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus didn't just sow once, He continually sows.

Pastors and teachers and Christian witnesses are all instruments in God's hand for sowing good seed. The success is Christ's and Christ's alone. He's always the sower and He's always sowing.

The *seed* the sower sows is the children of God, the elect from every tribe, tongue, language and people all over the world. The seed is scattered all over the field.

The *field* is the world over which God rules and reigns and in which He sows the seed of the gospel. The kingdom is not the church, it's broader than the church. The kingdom is about God and about God's rule, wherever His power and authority are exercised.

The kingdom creates the church. As people enter God's kingdom they are joined to the church. The kingdom is expanded through preaching and missions and evangelism.

There is an *enemy* who sows bad seed, who is the devil. He is the arch enemy of all that is good and godly. He sows in malice and hatred, intent to kill, devour and destroy.

Satan is sowing his seed everywhere and he is sowing all the time. In some places there is almost total weeds and no wheat.

The seed he sows is called Tares or *Darnel*. This isn't just any old weed, this is something that looks like real grain and is hard to distinguish from grain until it's full grown.

It resembles wheat so much it's sometimes called "false wheat." Satan is a deceiver, a liar. Every truth has a counterfeit. Jesus said, "you will know them by their fruit."

An example is religion that looks the same, is external and formal, but the form of godliness without the power. Hypocrites have the same appearance without any real change of heart.

The servants ask a very modern question. If God is good then why is there evil? Where did the weeds come from? How did they get into God's field? Why is there evil is probably the most asked question in Christianity. Close to this is why are there so many hypocrites in the church?

God's answer is simple, four words. "An enemy did this." God is good and loving and powerful and caring, and God has very evil enemies. God is not the source, but He allows it and He permits it to continue. He rules it and overrules it. But an enemy did this.

Their first question is a theological question, why is there evil? Their second question is an ethical question, what should we do about evil?

Jesus' answer seems weak, it sounds like a compromise, or worse, giving up. Jesus is saying as plainly as possible that good and evil will always be found mixed in God's kingdom and even in the church until the end of the age.

Jesus dispossesses us of any naïve notion that there is a perfect, happy church. In this place there are believers and unbelievers, converted and unconverted, godly and ungodly, children of God and children of the devil.

The purest church is an impure mixture of faithful saints and hypocrites. Every church that has ever existed or will ever exist, even where the preaching is Biblical and faithful, every church will be a mix of wheat and weeds. There has never been a church of just wheat.

Is there a garden anywhere in which there are no weeds at all? Satan has sown his bad seed in every single wheat field. When people say the church is full of hypocrites, we can't deny it. Jesus said it and reality bears it out.

Jesus was burdened to warn us again and again that not all who are in the church are a part of His church. Today it's the opposite. Today we are eager to assure everyone that everything is OK, you're OK, I'm OK, we're all OK. Even when there are little or no signs of spiritual life or faith or faithfulness, we are quick to say God loves you and He will be nice to you.

Jesus warned against false assurance, false security and safety, the false notion that the path is easy and broad and almost everyone is on it.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Growing.

After the sowing, comes the growing.

By their fruit you shall know them. Over time you will be able to see a family resemblance, you will know whose child each one is. The good seed will show itself to be the children of God. The bad seed will show that its father is the devil.

The good seed is growing, the bad seed is growing. Evil is growing. Jesus said it would so there should be no surprise that it is.

Notice the servants were focused on the weeds, Jesus focused on the wheat. Jesus shows His love for His children and desires that none be lost or destroyed. For the sake of His own, Jesus says, leave the weeds for now. Rather than endanger the sheep, Jesus protects the sheep.

We must be patient and not jump to too hasty of conclusions. If we are premature we may uproot the good with the bad. We see in war that trying to uproot evil results in innocent people also getting killed, whether drone attacks or even crazy reactions like the military court case in the news this week.

This is not to say that open sin should be allowed to continue in the church. When the weeds identify themselves as weeds they are to be dealt with. We are not forbidden to confront evil or to name heretics or to drive out false shepherds, we just can't kill them.

Why does God permit evil to continue and to grow? He has His purposes and reasons and all of them will glorify Him and His Son and His Word. The presence of good and evil mixed together in the earth does at least two things.

First, it tests and strengthens our faith. Christians who attend secular colleges often find their faith challenged and they grow stronger through the testing and defending of their faith. The presence of evil in our world doesn't let us coast or drift along or become complacent.

Second, the mixture also leaves the bad seed without excuse at the judgment. They saw the good seed, they heard the witness, they saw the fruit, the character, the truth. They saw the difference and chose to remain as they were. They will be without an answer on the day of judgment. Like the rich man in the Lazarus parable who didn't listen to Moses and the prophets.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Reaping.

After sowing and growing there is the inevitable harvest. It's unavoidable and inescapable.

At the end of time there will be a great consummation. The reapers will come sent by the Son of God and their work will be to separate the righteous from the unrighteous, the good and the evil. The evil will be marked for destruction and the good will be marked for glory. What we sow on earth, we reap in eternity.

All of the wickedness, all of the immorality that people say was fun or amusing or harmless, God will take with the upmost seriousness. That place of weeping and gnashing of teeth will be a place of regret and remorse and great anguish. Sin will be exposed for what it really is.

The depiction of *hell* is horrific, the metaphor of a fiery furnace is meant to give our finite minds just a brief glimpse of the horrors of the infinite misery. It won't be a party with a bunch of buddies. The eternal wrath of God should make us flee to Christ and urge all others to do the same.

Our finite minds cannot fully grasp the glories of an infinite heaven. What a contrast. How glorious heaven will be, no more sin, no evil, no hypocrisy, no temptations, no more weaknesses and infirmities. We will be made like Christ. Our sanctification will be perfect and complete.

We will be at home with our heavenly Father, showered with honor and glory. These words were spoken by Jesus for our benefit and for our joy. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Application and Conclusion.

First, remember the wheat and the weeds are not equal powers or forces. There are not two equal but opposite forces at work in the world.

God is God, He is Lord and King, He rules and overrules. Satan is a mere creature who only serves God's purposes for now and one day he will be decisively defeated. Be confident even in the face of the worst evil, that the Master is in complete control of every situation.

Second, we must not say Jesus is telling us just to ignore evil and leave it alone. Jesus isn't saying that we should be indulgent or bury our heads in the sand or wink at sin. Wolves in sheep's clothing must be exposed and resisted.

I Corinthians 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans.

Ephesians 5:11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

We are not called to attack the world and kill the weeds. We don't kill abortionist or pornographers. But we must pray against their work, and try every lawful means to stop them. We are called to be a righteous, godly influence. We are called to be salt and light.

We are good seed. We have a mission to bear good fruit. We have a mission field among all the bad seed. We have the authority of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. We have a deadline. Will you be an influence for good in our world? Will you be salt in a decaying world and light in a dark world? Will you curse the darkness or will you strike a match?

What can you and I do in our little corner of this great field we are in? Sow grace and see what God will cause to grow.

Third, Jesus warns us against being foolish or naïve in thinking there can be a perfect church. We are naïve if we are shocked by certain articles in the Banner or the news of evangelical leaders caving in on key issues.

Jesus said that the path would be through strife and scandal and conflict and trouble. We must be constantly on our guard that there is evil without and evil within. There are false preachers and false teachers, unbiblical books and TV programs that all seek to draw away the faithful.

We must stand firm, we must resist, we must admonish, rebuke and correct. We must not lose our voice and remain silent. But we also must not become discouraged or defeated or lose hope. We must remain patient and endeavor to persevere in these dark and confusing times.

This parable speaks to those of us who are tempted to leave a church because of the sinners or the hypocrites or the gossips. We can spend our lives going from church to church and we will never find one without sin and sinners.

We will be perpetually disappointed if we try to find a perfect church. There are weeds everywhere, including here.

Fourth, this parable speaks a word of warning to all the ungodly, worldly, careless, neglectful, self-absorbed, unbelievers. Let him who has ears to hear, hear and tremble. You will reap what you sow, repent and turn wholeheartedly to Jesus and sow righteousness.

Finally, this parable speaks to all believers to take comfort and not grow weary in well-doing. In due time you will reap a great reward of eternal glory and joy. In that day we will be ushered into a perfect church and a perfect communion of saints.

Colossians 3:1-4 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.