

LIII. Matthew in Biblical Perspective  
The Kingdom of God and the Word of God  
“The Parable of the Wheat and Weeds—Kingdom Mission Focus”  
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43  
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June 21, 2015 – Morning Sermon

We are in Matthew 13, on the second of the seven Kingdom parables. We finished the parable of the sower and now we're at the parable of the wheat and weeds or tares or the darnel or even more precisely the bearded darnel. Matthew 13:24-30 says *[24] He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, [25] but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. [26] So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. [27] And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ [28] He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ [29] But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. [30] Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

I want to moment pastorally and personally in which this will relate to the sermon. Perhaps like me you were grieved like others as another account of violence appeared in our country in the past few days. This last week in Charleston, South Carolina, there was a very clear act of racial terror. The thought of someone sitting in a Bible study with prayer and singing for over an hour, all the while contemplating what would be done and then the senseless violence took place. Senseless is the perfect word in describing this because sin never makes sense. Now families have lost loved ones, a church has lost their pastor and a community has lost a leader. My heart was grieved over this. It was rather personal to me because it was a place where I spent part of my childhood, not far from where this all happened. It's also a special place to me. It's a beautiful city. It has some wonderful PCA churches there and some other wonderful evangelical churches throughout the community.

It's amazing what is going on there for the work of the Gospel in the city of Charleston. In fact, Briarwood has just planted a church there within the last two years. John Payne is the pastor there and I had the privilege to disciple John when he first came to Christ Covenant, Charlotte, North Carolina. It was great to see him and other evangelical churches step into this situation and minister in this. I was actually there this past Christmas to do a conference for them and all of that just sort of flooded me as I saw this unfold on television this past week.

My heart was overwhelmed with this picture of this beautiful city – fire, looting, gangs, rampaging and burning as this act of racial violence happened thinking of how this city would be in turmoil over this, but it didn't happen. Instead we have witnessed the restraining grace of God for a number of reasons. One is that this ought to be for all of

us, a living lesson of the importance of leadership, but more importantly, a living lesson of Christ honoring leadership that ceases the moment for Christ and not for self. So instead of the decent of the cultural parasites and speculators who take such moments to advance their own causes, reputations and industries of self-promotion, other leaders stepped up immediately. These were leaders and Christians from the other evangelical churches but the African American church in particular and preeminently within moments nine pastors had surrounded that worship center where this had taken place and began to call upon the Lord. Then came testimony after testimony and witness after witness, where the moment became Christ honoring, instead of a self-promoting or self-pitying moment, that put the hand of grace, both redeeming and common grace with restraining effects in the community.

This became a platform where people began to witness to the saving grace of Christ. A young man who lost his mother in this, spoke of all that God blessed him with, how she raised him and now he plays baseball in college. The baseball team came around him kneeling in prayer. At a hearing where we see children, brother and sisters and fathers and mothers step up and look at the perpetrator of violence say “I forgive you. I want you to know Jesus. I will not let evil overcome that which is good. I will not let hate and evil destroy that which is glorious, truthful and loving.”

It certainly was done perfectly but it was done notably. The comparison was unmissed and that’s why you ended up with news reporters outside churches weeping because they couldn’t explain it. That’s why there was no room for the self-promoters because the moment had been filled with Christ promoters. I believe there are many reasons why that happened but one reason is in the text that we look at today. I hope you will see it and I hope you will join me in giving thanks to God that we had believers who believed it and implemented the principle that comes out of this parable. Then we need to continue to pray for the peace of the Lord to be on those who lost so much and for the Lord to take that which was meant for evil and turn it into good even as we’re seeing Him do it right now to go way beyond even what we’re looking at now.

Let’s look at the text but before we do that we’re in the middle of sermons where we are looking at seven parables out of the 32 parables Jesus taught. These seven parables are about the Kingdom of God in particular. We have already looked at the first parable which we took six studies to cover and now we’ll take the remaining six and cover one per study. So we are in the parable ministry of Christ.

Why are we in the parable ministry of Christ? We are told in Matthew 13 that Jesus’ parable ministry is there for three reasons. The parable ministry of Jesus not only reveals that He is the Messiah (reason 1), but also reveals the spiritual disposition of the hearer (reason 2) and then accelerates it (reason 3). Psalm 78:1-6 prophesied that the Messiah would teach in parables. The parables expose those who have ears to hear and those who do not. If they have ears to hear then it becomes life unto life and a hunger to know more. If they don’t have ears to hear it becomes death unto death and a dismissal of the truth of God with no time for it whatsoever. The sovereign hand of God’s grace uses the parables for His purposes even as Christ is affirmed as the Messiah, using and teaching through parables.

These seven parables are very specific about the Kingdom of God. Why is this important? Jesus is speaking in two directions with these seven parables about the Kingdom of God. Number one, He is speaking to His Jewish listeners. Number two, He

is speaking to all who are going to come after Him. Up until this time the Kingdom of God had been entrusted to the nation of Israel. After this time the Kingdom of God is going to be entrusted to the church of Jesus Christ, to be taken to all the kingdoms of this world. So it is very important for us to understand what we need to know about the Kingdom of God.

Why did the Jewish listeners need to understand it? These were those who said God was going to give them a kingdom and so the Kingdom had been entrusted to them. As this happened they then had seen the hand of God. They had been taken into Egypt for 430 years for two reasons. One, is that they were going to be brought out and be given the Promised Land and two, they would be God's instrument to bring judgment upon the idolatry and paganism of the six Canaanite nations that were in that land. So when He brought them out He used them first to bring judgment against Egypt, secondly to bring judgment upon the Canaanites, their idolatry and their paganism to give them the Promised Land and hundreds of years later they are under the oppressive boot of Rome.

Jesus comes preaching telling people He is the Messiah. He is the King and the Kingdom of God is near to you. We're ready so repeat Egypt, repeat the Canaanites for it's time to bring judgment upon those who would stand against you. Jesus is about to tell them 'no' for the Kingdom is going to be entrusted to the church and its task is not to bring judgment but to continue what I did when I came into this world. Jesus says I didn't come to bring judgment but to bear judgment and the Kingdom is to take that Gospel to all the world telling them there is a Savior who bears your judgment and a warning that He is coming again to bring judgment. In so instructing their Jewish listeners He is also laying the ground work for us for from His ascension until He returns, what is our job? So He is already teaching us about the Kingdom.

He has already taught us how we get into the Kingdom through the parable of the sower. There is a sower, seed, soils and sowing. The good seed of the Kingdom is being sowed and yet the hearers are receiving it. Remember that a parable has many implications but one lesson. The lesson of the parable of the sower is the fate of the seed (the Gospel message) is determined by the condition of the soil (the disposition of the heart). There were three kinds of unbelieving hearts and there was one believing heart. We know the believing from the unbelieving because those who have saving faith in Christ will bear fruit. Three soils – rocky, thorny, hard – did not have fruit. Only one soil had fruit, some thirty, some sixty and some hundred fold. The good ground had a root, a shoot and therefore it would bear fruit. Why could it do that? It was because the power of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God that was brought to them by the people of God had gone and changed the hearts (disposition) by breaking down the hard ground, breaking up the rocky soil and rooting out the thorns so that a root and a shoot could be established and bear fruit, some thirty, some sixty and some a hundred fold. Thereby they glorify God and manifest that you're a follower of Christ.

That fruit would be worship, evangelism, discipleship, encouragement, loving one another, etc. That fruit would not be conversion for that is God's fruit and not our fruit. Our fruit is manifesting the glory of God in whether we eat, drink or whatsoever we do. That fruit bears out who is the Kingdom of God. So you not only know how you get into the Kingdom but you know who is in the Kingdom. The fruit bearing doesn't put you in the Kingdom but it evidences that you're in the Kingdom because the Savior by His grace changed your heart and put you into the Kingdom. Now what is going to happen in the

Kingdom until the King returns? That is the second parable that we'll look at in this study. The Gospel of the Kingdom is going to go to all the world so in this parable we're going to look at the ingredients, interpretation and the implications based upon the takeaway of the parable.

So what are the ingredients of the parable? Number one, there is good seed that becomes wheat. Number two, the good seed is scattered by a sower. There is a sower of the good seed that becomes wheat. Number three, there is a field and the good seed sowed throughout the entire field by the sower. Number four, there is an enemy who is also a sower, who comes in while the servants of the sower are sleeping. Number five, this enemy comes in and produces bad seed that becomes tares. I love the English Standard Version but this is one place I'd disagree with the translation because it's not just weeds that he sows. It is a very specific kind of weed. It's a *zizanium* (weed) in the Greek. It is translated in the older versions of the Bible as tares or darnel or bearded darnel.

What is bearded darnel? It is a very specific Greek word that refers to a weed that looks just like wheat but it doesn't have the fruit of wheat. It does have a beard of a fungus that is poisonous. It does have something that looks like fruit but it actually has a beard that looks like fruit that is a poisonous fungus where if you eat enough of it you'll die. I can tell you that is what is being indicated in the text but what is being described in those days would have been done by some people. Here is a man who makes money every year as he plants and harvests his field and some men out of envy would take this bearded darnel and at night go sow it into the field so that when it was harvested it would ruin the crop and no longer would it be of much financial gain. This is like a little bit of agriculture terrorism that is going on. So this bearded darnel has a death giving fungus instead of wheat that is a life giving fruit.

So there is this bad seed, this darnel that gets sown in the field and the servants say 'we know our master didn't sow that, for he only sows good seed.' So they go to the master and say 'what happened?' and the answer was 'the enemy/adversary sowed it while you were sleeping.' The point isn't so much that they were sleeping because one has to sleep but the point is the stealth of the enemy would come when you wouldn't expect him and would sow it. The servants would then say 'let's go root it up' and the master says 'right hearted but wrong-headed.' It's a good ideal but a bad idea because if you do it, the nature of this stuff is to intertwine with the wheat and if you root it up then you'll root up the wheat. So don't root it up but wait for the harvest for we'll get everything up at the harvest. I have some specially trained people called the reapers and they know the difference between the darnel and the wheat so that when we pull it all up to bring it in they'll be able to separate the tares from the wheat. The tares will then burn and the good stuff will be put in the barn for us to enjoy as we preserve it. So those are the ingredients of the parable.

What is the interpretation of the parable? Jesus taught two more parables and then He went into a house. When we started with the parable of the sower Jesus left the house and went out in the boat and taught them the parables. Now He has finished teaching in parables, gone up the seaside and He is back at the house. A few weeks ago I was in Israel and saw the foundation of this house in the ruins of Capernaum for it's still there. It was known as the house of Jesus at Capernaum and likely it was the house of Peter's mother-in-law. So much went on at that house that it is known as 'the house.' Matthew 13:1 says [1] *That same day Jesus went out of **the house** and sat beside the sea.*

The disciples ask Jesus why He teaches in parables and He explains it to them. Then they ask Him about this parable of the tares. Here is Jesus' interpretation. Matthew 13:36-43 says [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 of the field."* [37] *He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. [38] The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, [39] and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. [40] Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. [41] The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, [42] and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [43] Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.*

The good seed or the wheat are the sons of the Kingdom. Why would I not be politically correct and say 'sons and daughters' of the Kingdom here? I'm not going to be politically correct because I want to be theologically correct which is better for you. In the Hebrew world and life view 'son' is not merely descriptive but it is a statement of office. Who inherited everything from the father? It was the son. So you and I are not sons and daughters but all of us, male and female, have the rights of inheritance in Christ. We are all sons of the Kingdom, by the grace of God and for the glory of God. That is the good wheat.

The sower is the Son of Man. Here Jesus uses again the title of Messiah from Daniel and this is the title He uses three times, more than any other title to refer to Himself – the Son of Man.

Thirdly, what is the field? The field is the world. It is not just the nation of Israel. The Kingdom is to go to all the world and therefore the Gospel of the Kingdom is to go to all the world because out of every tribe and nation will come the sons of the Kingdom from the nations of the world.

Fourthly, who is it that sows the bad seed? It is the enemy, Satan. Jesus identifies him. Satan is the adversary. Five, what does the adversary sow? He sows look-a-like churchianity instead of the good seed of Christianity. He sows death giving churchianity instead of life giving Christianity. He sows man made imitation religions of God given religion.

Six, what is the harvest? The harvest is the close of the age. That is the judgment when Jesus comes again. Jesus has created and designed angels to engage in the harvest at the end of the age. Out of this Kingdom that has gone throughout all the world He will bring forth all of humanity. The wheat will be gathered into the barn and the tares will be cast into the fiery furnace. Again that is language out of the book of Daniel. Remember the fiery furnace? That becomes Jesus' description of hell and the tares will be cast into hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth but the others will be brought into a new heavens and a new earth with the Lord. They will be sons of the Kingdom wrapped in the righteousness of Christ. They will shine forever and ever and ever with Him.

So what is the one singular lesson of this parable? Remember when the servants said 'we know you didn't plant these tares so do you want us to go and pull them all up?' The servants were right hearted but wrong-headed. As Christians we do a lot of wrong-headed stuff with right hearted motives. Jesus says that's not your job for the angels will

do that but the reason He tells them not to be an instrument of judgment as His church is because He wants them to be an instrument of salvation as His church. He tells us what not to do in order to keep us on message and on mission of what we're supposed to do and that is your takeaway.

The takeaway is Satan's scheme of imitation must be met by an unswerving commitment, by God's people to Gospel propagation and a future anticipation. This is the lesson of this parable and that's how meet Satan's scheme of imitation. I want to walk you through this takeaway by giving you some implications from this parable.

Implication number one is that you now have been taught from this parable another scheme of Satan against Christ, His glory and the Gospel. It is the scheme of imitation. So far from past studies I have shared with you two schemes of Satan and one is that he works by intimidation. He tries to stop the progress of the Gospel. Satan has been defeated at the cross but not destroyed. Satan has been bound so that he cannot stop the Gospel going to the nations but he is not inactive. He is still in opposition. He is constrained in his opposition but still active.

Satan uses three schemes. Two of them we have already studied. One is intimidation – whether it's a caliphate of Islam or the sword of atheistic government – he will do what he can to intimidate God's people into Gospel silence. His second scheme is infiltration where he sends false teachers and prophets into the church to pollute her doctrine, her ministry, her mission and her message. In this study you've learned a third scheme of Satan and that is imitation where he will imitate the Gospel church with a look-a-like church that denies the power of the Gospel. This is why abhor/hate theological liberalism. Theological liberalism is an imitation of Christianity. I'm not saying there aren't Christians who are in liberal churches and I'm not saying there are liberal churches who are faithful in liberal denominations but I hate theological liberalism because it has the same vocabulary as Christianity for deception but it denies the essentials and brings death and condemnation. It has just enough of the same vocabulary to inoculate people with liberalism churchianity so that they don't hear and don't come to Biblical Christianity. It is an imitation that has a fungus of death attached to it.

How am I supposed to respond to that? It is not my job to be the instrument of judgment upon it. I will expose it with true teaching. I will ask us to do what we're supposed to do so that we contend earnestly for the faith but we're not instruments of judgment to uproot them and bring the judgment of God upon them. That is God's business and He has a day fixed for when He is going to do it. This will take place at the close of the age and when that day comes God will be the Judge but that day is not now. By the way, the judgment is not us. We're not equipped for that for we don't know the hearts of men. You might think someone is a tare who is actually an immature Christian. We don't know the hearts of men.

Our job is to expose it with truth and propagate truth with a future anticipation of God making all things right and on that Day we'll enter into the glory of His presence. So we realize that there is another scheme of Satan that is exposed which is imitation and God will take care of everything on judgment day with His designed angels. That day is not now and the instruments of that judgment are not us. Thirdly, our mission until that day is sowing and that means evangelism. We are to be cultivating and that means disciple making. We are not harvesters for the Lord is the Harvester. The Lord will bring His sheaves home. The Lord is the One who came and sowed with weeping. The

Lord is the One who will bring the fruit of His work in with joy. In the meantime, we are His servants. We don't want to go to sleep. We want to be alert yet we're going to have to sleep and Satan is smarter than us.

So what do we do when Satan does his work and sows tares, that is false churchianity in place of Gospel Christianity? We commit ourselves to the mission. We are sending the Gospel to everyone throughout the world. It is everybody evangelizing everyone everywhere. That is what we're called to do until that day. That does not mean there is not a place for church discipline or exposing church doctrine but it does mean that what we stay focused on is that we don't implement judgment upon them but we communicate salvation to all of them. Why?

Now I'm quoting St. Augustine, for some of these tares may be wheat. There are some tares that will become wheat. Recently, in my office a man came to me in tears who had opposed our founding pastor when he stood for the truth and the man voted for his discipline, defrocking and for the rest of his judgment even when he was not there to bear witness for himself in the trial. He did it and 13 years later God brought him to saving faith in Christ. He went first to him and then to me and said 'please forgive me.' There are some tares that will become wheat so keep taking the Gospel to them. That is what those African American pastors in Charleston understood. Their job was not to be an instrument of judgment and that doesn't mean judgment won't be made upon racist, terrorism etc. but that is the state's job to bring judgment. Our job as the church is to proclaim the Gospel of salvation with evangelism and disciple making. That is the mission we're on, the message we bring and that's where we stay focused.

One more implication is while our immediate mission is glorious of bringing the Gospel of grace to all, our ultimate destination is indescribable. In agronomy tares don't become wheat but in the Kingdom tares become wheat. So our job is not to uproot them but to proclaim the Good News to all everywhere and judgment belongs to the Lord. He and the angels will do it but we are not. I love what I'm doing now but I can't wait until then. When I get to the new heavens and the new earth there are two things I'll never do again. One is that I won't sin and praise the Lord for that! Number two I won't evangelize because I won't need to evangelize there. So my mission until I get there is one kill sin in my life and two is to proclaim the Gospel to anybody and everybody and cultivate them with disciple making.

I will be doing a series on heaven this fall and I'm wondering how I'm going to do it because you can't describe it. It is just so overwhelming. Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it's recorded in God's Word, isn't Jesus my Lord. It is wonderful. It is indescribable. Between the ascension of Jesus and His coming there are two sowers, two seeds, and there are two crops. Notice that I have not said three. You are either one or the other. There are two kingdoms, one judgment and two destinations – heaven and hell. Hell where there is weeping of no hope and the gnashing of teeth in renewed rage against God (uncontrolled rage). That is what they did to Stephen when they stoned him, they gnashed their teeth upon him. There is no repentance in hell. The rich man didn't repent in hell. There will be the ever enduring of the unending for all eternity. In hell eyes will be opened but hearts will not be softened. They will only be hardened. I plead with you, don't go there. Go to Jesus for He has already been there for you. Come to Christ.

Those of you who have come to Christ, know that where we are going, let him who has eyes to see and ears to hear, hear it for it is indescribable. There is no sin, no

pain, and no sorrow but you wrapped in the perfect righteousness of Christ will shine forever. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word this Lord's Day. Thank You, Father, for the glorious truth of the Gospel. Father, I know Satan is an imitator and he has enough vocabulary to deceive but the essence is gone so it just brings condemnation. As we realize what Satan does, help us not to miss right hearted desires and make wrong-headed solutions. Thank You that these servants ask a question that gives to Jesus the focus for us to tell us that we would stay on mission – Gospel propagation and Gospel cultivation, evangelism and discipleship – throughout the whole world, we would stay on message giving only good seed and we would stay in ministry for we are the instruments of Gospel proclamation and You are the instrument of eternal judgment. Help us to bring the news that the One who is coming to bring judgment has already come to bear our judgment and now invites sons of the evil one to come as sons of the Kingdom through Christ the King. If you'd like to talk with someone about Christ please contact us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200. Oh that this gathering would be a gathering of wheat into the new heavens and the new earth and not one reading this will be absent for you have come to Christ, in Jesus' Name, Amen.