



Matthew 13:36–43

36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

37 He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the

age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

Reflection

After preaching to the crowds on the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee Jesus now

retires for the evening, most likely back to Peter and Andrew's house in Capernaum. To the crowds, Jesus had only spoken in parables. Privately, he had explained the parable of the sower to his disciples, which is perhaps why they approach him so eagerly in our passage today for an explanation of the parable of the weeds.

Jesus doesn't disappoint them but before we look at his response, let's read the parable again from Matthew 13:24–30:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also

appeared. 27 “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’ 28 “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied. “The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ 29 “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

In verses 37–39 of today’s passage Jesus first tells his disciples who and what the key elements of his parable represent.

He then goes on to explain to them what this parable reveals about the kingdom of heaven. Let's work through Jesus' explanation now.

According to Jesus, he's the one who sows the seed. The term he uses for himself is the one he favours throughout the gospels. Jesus refers to himself as 'the Son of Man.' Jesus takes this term from prophecy about himself in Daniel 7:13–14 which sets the end-times tone for the remainder of his explanation. Daniel 7:13–14 is a very important passage for understanding how Jesus sees himself bringing in the kingdom of God, it says,

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of

heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.'

Now, as you can imagine, this was a favourite text for the Jewish people of Jesus' day, who read into it Israel's soon-to-come victory over the nations, and in particular over the Roman empire who were currently occupying their land. But as we saw a couple of days ago when we first looked at this parable, it is not a parable of immediacy but of patience. Nevertheless, Jesus' emphasis in his explanation is on the cer-

tainty of these end times when the Son of Man's authority and glory and sovereign power will be most visibly exercised. He will send his angels to weed everything out of his kingdom that causes sin and all who do evil. Their fate will be terrible; they'll be judged, found wanting, and cast into a blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This picture of hell, 'where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth', is used five times by Matthew in his gospel. I always find these words deeply disturbing in the way that they so succinctly capture the misery of torment combined with such hostility, anger and hatred that is still so wilfully directed at God. Even then, there's no hint of repentance, just a defiant shaking of the fists in rage towards God. This picture of depravity disturbs and upsets me when-

ever I read it.

But the fate of Satan and unrepentant sinners is not the emphasis of this parable. Its emphasis is found in where it ends. Verse 43,

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

The great harvest on Judgement Day is not an end but a beginning. There is resurrection here. There is a new heavens and new earth here. There is a world set right for all eternity in which the righteous will dwell. Made in the image of our Father we will reflect his glory and shine brighter than the sun. Patience will be rewarded. The daily struggle that members of the

kingdom of God face in this world is worth it. History is moving inexorably forward to this day. The kingdom of God has dawned in our world, the sun is rising and one day soon the righteous everywhere will shine like the sun. On that day our world will be remade, purged forever of Satan, sin and death, and we will all worship our glorious Father forever, gathered together around his throne of grace.

This parable also reminds us that the kingdom of God is bigger than just the church. The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, who has been given all authority, glory and sovereign power. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. The kingdom of God is bigger

than simply the church, it extends to the whole of the created order. Jesus rules and reigns over all, the entire cosmos, the entire physical realm, the entire spiritual realm, over the very fabric of the universe itself – in everything and over everything he has the supremacy.

Think

Take what time remains this morning before you head out into your busy day to raise your vision of Jesus Christ to the heights he deserves. He's right now ruling and reigning over all things. 'It is finished', the battle against Satan, sin and death is long won. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead; it's a fait accompli. Right now, amidst whatever toils and struggles and entanglements

you may find yourself in within this fallen world, no matter how it may feel or seem, Christ reigns, and what he has in store for you is beyond imagining. At the resurrection of the dead you will shine in glory alongside him in our world remade and perfected. On that day and forevermore every tainted echo and hint of good and beauty that can be found in our world will be fully realised, fully manifested as God always intended it to be, as unchanging and eternal as we are. See today and every day through this vision; because this is the reality for those who have put their faith in Christ.

Pray

But as you bask in his glory, pray also to the Lord of the harvest, that he might spare

the weeds. It's why he's waiting, why he's graciously holding off, why he stays his righteous hand of judgment and watches on in pain as his people suffer in this world. Share his love of the lost, pray for them, and pray for opportunities to sow the message of the kingdom into their lives as he has so graciously done in ours.