

Matthew 13:24–53

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[0:00] Matthew 13, 24 through 53. This is what God's word says. He put another parable before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then weeds also appeared.

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? 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? But he said, No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.

And at the 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. He put another parable before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.

[1:10] It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown, it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

And he told them another parable, The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened. All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables.

Indeed, he said nothing to them that was without parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, I will open my mouth in parables.

I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world. 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.

He answered, The one who sows the good seed is the son of man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one.

[2:08] And the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

The son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. He who has ears, let him hear. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad.

[3:08] So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all these things?

They said to him, Yes. Then he said to them, Therefore, every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.

And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning and welcome. And as you're finding your way into your seats, I've been told that Joe and Cassidy have entered into the house of worship today with their little one, Nadia. And if I'm not mistaken, is this first time for little Nadia in the house of the Lord? Second time. Okay, she's going to get her second sermon this morning. [4 : 12] But also that Olivia and Hartson Fillmore, who this little one entered into the world on this Wednesday, that they're here as well with the little one.

Where are you? Yeah, there you are, hiding in the back where you can get out. Well, these two young mothers, as you have given life into the world, I pray that spiritual life would be granted to many who are here today. In reading the parable of the wheat and the weeds over and over again this week, I couldn't help but be reminded of both of my grandmothers. My grandma Helm spent almost all of her 90-plus years in central Illinois, a farming community. And she and my grandfather lived in the small town, in fact, on a red brick street, but they owned land outside that people farmed on their behalf. All of it corn or soybean. She then knew the annual rituals and rhythms of planting seed in the spring in hopes of a harvest in the fall. [5 : 37] It was the summer, or spring, I should say, of 1999 that my grandma Helm passed away. But before she left this world for the next, my dad, her son, whispered into her ear, Mom, I've received word from the farmhands in Tuscola.

All your seed is in the ground. She couldn't speak, but her lips moved in her own crooked, smiling kind of way, indicating that she had heard. She left this world in the springtime, having planted seed, waiting for a harvest. What was it? I hope you have your Bible in front of you. What was it that Jesus said about this new year in which growing things begin? Quote, verse 24, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. And again, in the explanation of the parable, verses 37 and 38, the one who sows the good seed is the son of man, the field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom.

[7 : 00] My grandma on my mother's side also knew a little bit about farming. She lived for a short while in the 1930s amid the orange groves in Southern California.

That said, Grandma Morkin, unlike Grandma Helm, never stayed in one place for very long at all. Her husband and she, they were missionaries. They traveled the world. They lived and dwelt in what for me are far off distant places. The jungles of Sumatra, the great city of Shanghai, the lauded environment of Hong Kong. This is where they lived out their lives. She, too, though, knew the rhythms of planting the seed of the kingdom of heaven in the soil of any dear soul who would listen to her tell them about Jesus, all in hopes of a great harvest.

My grandma Morkin had a saying, I'll never forget it. David, wherever there's a lot of wheat, there's a lot of chaff. What was it that Jesus said in verse 25?

[8 : 18] But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And again, in his explanation of the text, you can see it there for yourself, verses 38 and 39.

The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. Yeah, my grandmas, the strong women who were forbearers of my own faith, have continually come to mind this week.

So I've thought about seed going into the ground, and weeds arising in their midst, and the joy and the hope of a spiritual harvest.

The world we dwell in, according to the parables which we have heard, has two kingdoms. There are competing kings for your life and mine.

These kings are at war, even now, wrestling over our souls, trying to fashion two very different kinds of subjects, the end of which, some will be bound for heaven, and the others will be bound for hell.

[9 : 55] This, according to Jesus, both produce and the problem coexist for a time in the same field. But don't miss the important point of emphasis.

The force of these stories comes at the close of each. And here it is, things will not always be this way.

Yeah, let's take a look at that. There's going to be a harvest. There's going to be a separation. There's going to be an end of the age.

I don't know how many people have told you that. The world will not always be as it is today. The curtain will fall. Not just on your life, but on human history.

And on that day, there will be a separation. The wheat, stored, ready to enter into the storehouse of God's family.

[11:04] And the weeds, or the fish as it were, and the last one, thrown into the fire.

Can I show you this? The stated emphasis on the end of the age comes repeatedly in the text. You might actually say that the end of the age is what actually frames the structure of the material that was read for you.

First in the parable itself, look at it, verse 30. Let them both grow together until the harvest.

And at the 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. Then again in the explanation, look at verse 39.

The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

[12:09] They will gather out of this kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

He who has ears, let him hear. Not only the parable and the explanation put the focus of the story on the harvest and the separation that is coming, but even in the story of nets and a catch of fish. Look at verses 48 and 49. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age, the angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace and in that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Three stories framing the beginning and the end of the middle of our reading all with an emphasis that things will not always be as they are.

This competing world of kingdoms will come to an end and on that day, you and I will head to one eternal destiny or the other.

[13:29] Jesus then, by telling the stories in this way, wants you to know this morning by way of certainty that a day of harvest is coming when his kingdom will be fully consummated and his enemies will be plucked up and thrown out forevermore.

The inbreaking of heaven is to be intermingled for a time with the kingdom from hell. But the kingdom of hell will have futility in their attempts to establish an everlasting dominion over what God has planned.

Allow the weight of that to fall on you this morning. The world will not always be two kingdoms. When the reapers come, a great and eternal separation will be made.

And as many who repent and believe in the gospel in this life will be gathered in as God's people forevermore. And as many who do not repent and believe the gospel in this life will be separated from him forevermore.

they will be like chaff. They will be like desiccated sticks. They will be like dried weeds. They will smell like dead fish. They will be tossed into an everlasting fire.

[14:48] They will be thrown out. Hell will be their abode. Entrance into heaven will not be granted. They will be eternally away from the love of God, the glories of Christ, the fellowship of the saints.

while those who do accept Christ to be ruler over their life, well, entrance will be given. Heaven will be yours.

Could I say anything more serious than that this morning? I don't think so. These are not my words. This is the stories of Jesus.

The parables are meant to arrest the mind of the hearer. And yet, and with this, my sermon turns, the text is arranged in such a way as to say much more.

The text, which is structured to reveal an emphasis on the great harvest and separation, is inserted with two sets of small stories that we ought to sit down on for a few minutes and take a look at.

[16:08] Can I show you these hopeful rays within that first ten minutes of message? Can I let you see the sunlight that comes through, the horrifying picture of that parable that actually brings

comfort and joy?

Can I give you tidings in the midst of what I've already said of tidings of comfort and joy? I hope you want some.

Following the parable, we get two short stories in 31 through 33, a mustard seed and leaven.

Following the explanation of the parable, we get two more short stories on treasure in a field and a merchant with his pearl.

And finally, following the story of the fish and the net, we get a story of one who is like a master in his house who brings out treasures both new and old.

That is the organization of the material that's before us today. And if you have a Bible in front of you, you can actually see it all in front of you. It'll be a little harder on your phones because phones only allow you to see scripture text that's passing by.

[17:23] But Bibles in your hand allow you to see in one glance the parable of the weeds and two stories of comfort. The explanation of the parable and two stories of joy.

The net and its harvest and a word to those who serve him. I find it wonderful and beautiful.

I want to put those short stories before you today. I want you to taste and see that the Lord is good.

I want you to know that the rule of Jesus over your life isn't merely to be given to you for fear of the day of harvest but because of all that is good and the benefits that will be yours.

First, it's the good news of comfort. Take a look at those two little stories after the parable. The kingdom of heaven verse 31 is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It's the smallest of all the seeds but when it is grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. He told them another parable.

[18:32] The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened. Two stories fundamentally for his followers that will comfort them given the fact that they know they live in a world with competing kingdoms.

What is he saying by these stories? The mustard seed. While the kingdom of heaven is small in stature now it will be widespread by the time he actually puts down the curtain on this world.

Don't despise the day of small beginnings. While the mustard seed is insignificant in one sense it will one day blossom into this tree that's larger than all the plants.

And he needs to say this because he's just said you live in a world that weeds are trying to choke out all the wheat and discouragement is at every turn.

Men and women like weeds in our midst robbing the wheat of unhindered growth doing their best to choke out the faith of others.

[19:48] I've seen it. I've seen the effects of it. I've seen weeds actually take people down and strangle the life of the gospel just as we saw last week.

Weeds actually suffocate the life out of others. I've seen people that confess Christ and then one day didn't confess them at all and I've been left wondering were they wheat to begin with or were they just weeds that looked like wheat?

I mean I don't know if you're a gardener I'm not but there are plenty of times I look out in my backyard and I say to myself look at all that beautiful growth look at all that wonderful planting and my wife will look at me with a knowledge of what's there and not there and say all that which you claim to like should be cleared out because it's all weeds and I'm like really that's weeds?

Yes those are weeds always been weeds always been weeds and I've walked around people I've spent decades in life with spiritual journeys wondering if wheat was rising up in my midst only to find out one day that it was just another weed trying to choke out what God was doing in the world weeds in the field you know what they're like?

They're like the squirrels in my wife's hanging planter I'm not a squirrel fan I wasn't all that disappointed when the feral cat in the backyard collected one last week that's just to get your attention again I know some of you left me we have a hanging planter that's beautiful flowering over the edge and the squirrels somehow find their way into that and they just dig around and root around and where there were three plantings there are now two and where the soil was undisturbed and life was emerging they're just wreaking havoc then they lay down they have the audacity to lay down just underneath it and tuck their whole tail back over them like a cover of contentedness destruction stealing the beauty of flowering plants but what Jesus says is take comfort it will not always be this way that's made me this week come to the realization that there will not be squirrels

in heaven but look how far reaching that seed will go even while it doesn't grow unchallenged or unhindered by the time we actually arrive at the day when the curtain falls the mess of the world in which we now live and the competing kingdoms that are in play and the number of people whose spiritual lives seem to be choked out and the questioning in your own heart if you are a follower what's really getting done when I'm working in the harvest field the answer is well it may not look like much but by the time you arrive and he puts the whole thing together it's going to be widespread or like leaven just a little bit of leaven it's insignificant in nature but you put it in the flour bowl and you leave it over a period of time and it actually is going to take the whole thing where you can bake good bread sourdough or otherwise and that's what the kingdom is going to be like it's insignificant now it's like a woman who put some leaven in and kind of hid it and it's quiet and you don't know it's there but when it comes time for baking when it comes time for eating it just multiplies the leaven has worked its way all the way out to the edge of the flour bowl and that's what [24 : 06] Jesus is saying I know that the weeds are in the midst of the wheat field I know that where there's a lot of wheat there's a lot of chaff but don't be discouraged oh follower of Jesus don't be in a sense limited to your depressed state about what is God doing in the world because when it's all done when we're standing there in his presence it's going to be multi-ethnic it's going to be cross-cultural it's going to be widespread it's going to be universally displayed the scripture says it's going to be people from every tribe every language every tongue all of them are going to be there and you're going to say to yourself what in the world was God doing and Jesus wants you to see it now he knows you need that comfort now he knows that the gospel is going from the rural farmlands of the

Midwest where English is the spoken language to the remote regions at least from my vantage point where the languages of the world are waiting take comfort oh follower of Jesus but not only that if you're if you're not a follower of Jesus this passage ought to encourage you take a look at the layer that follows the layer of stories that follows the explanation the other set of two the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field which a man found and covered up then it is joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys the field again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had bought it's not only comfort in the midst of competing kingdoms but there is great joy to be had in giving your life to the son of man

I mean I'm not a baker but I was thinking this week again about this passage and its completeness and I'm looking at it and I'm going it's kind of like a three layer cake it's got the cake tin of the parable it's got the cake tin a separate cake of the explanation and then it's got the cake tin of the net and they're all doing the same thing telling you it's not always going to be this way but in between them all in between them all in between those cakes is the frosting in the middle the separating movements of the text he says yeah there are wheat and weeds but let me tell you it's going to be widespread and far reaching but then having explained it he goes well let me tell you something else it's going to be of matchless worth and of incomparable value can you taste that today can you taste that can you taste and see that the

Lord is good this man is walking amidst the field and he comes upon a treasure now I don't know much about the ancient world but evidently somebody buried some money thinking he had had a hiding place and forgotten it or left it or lost it and put a little bit away and he had hidden it and some guy that doesn't even know what he's doing walking through a field stumbles upon it sees the value of it sees the matchless worth of it he's he's amazed he can't believe it this is this is more money than you'll ever find in your bathroom wall when you take it apart to redo it and all of a sudden he sees this this gift this treasure this financial reward and what does he do he buries it again probably better than the way in which he found it and he goes down to the county registry and he finds out who owns that little piece of land anyway and they go well that's owned by so and so oh really hey do you think you might be interested in selling that sure there's nothing good

I'm not growing anything in it people are just walking through it I'd be glad to sell it to you great I'd be glad to buy it in fact look at his willingness to buy it a man in his joy goes and sells all that he had to buy it it wasn't something that he could just kind of get out on his monthly income no he looked at the price it took everything he had and he said well what's in the field is like way beyond this I mean the return on investment isn't even something to consider this is like printing money this ain't bitcoin this is real the kingdom of heaven is real and the kingdom of heaven is of matchless worth and so when you live in this field this world and you're wondering do I open up my life like soil to receive

[29 : 31] Jesus or or shouldn't I just do what I want to do all along the way the story here is to say don't forfeit the great joy give yourself to Christ you're not actually forfeiting anything at all you're gonna you're gonna live forever more in the kingdom of heaven you're gonna have everything given to you you're gonna be in a place where evil doesn't have access you're gonna talk to him along the way look him in the eye you are and you're gonna look back on this moment and say I made the best investment in my life by giving up rule self-rule and giving myself to Jesus it is beyond all of your life's earnings it is beyond the value of all of the investments you could make it is more valuable than the immeasurable gains that some of you were birthed into they will all be as nothing so that the one here today who has nothing could have everything and the one here today who has everything might one day into eternity have nothing how can you lose says Jesus no wonder the man with great joy sold all that he had

I hope that some of you would think of doing that certainly before the curtain falls before history ends before the harvest is here before the end of the age draws near before you die without making a decision for in doing so you have decided not only that he says it's like a merchant in search of fine pearls who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had and he bought it I mean this isn't just some guy walking around a field coming on to something through his little metal detector no this is a merchant this is a businessman this is someone who actually deals in pearls this is someone who goes into Wabash as it were where all the diamond shops are this is someone who knows precious stones this is someone who knows the value of something and he's actually seeking it out and yet he came across one pearl that he had never seen the likes of before in fact this one pearl had greater value than all his pearls and he says well

I don't know if the guy knows what he's got in front of him but I'm going to give everything I've got to get that pearl I mean this is you know the guy that hit the jackpot on antique road show the guy that went into a garage and saw some painting and the owner didn't know what he had and the guy says how much you want for that he goes well you know it's going to be pretty expensive it cost me X he goes well I'll give you that in a minute and he buys it and he walks out with something that's of incomparable value can I tell you that today the kingdom of heaven is of incomparable value to anything you will have throughout all of life and the cumulative total of what you can put together in life of greater value than your car your apartment your home of greater value than all the money you spend on vacations or food of greater value than the buck ninety an hour you earned at your first job or the six figure number some of you might have in a present job in fact if you had a six figure number and you multiplied that over forty consecutive years and you invested it and even all the investments that came to return beyond all of that beyond all of that you would you would says Jesus bundle it all up and put your name on the line and sign it over for the pearl of great price the precious stone Jesus I mean think of it this week I had coffee with someone in our congregation here today it was a wonderful time remember last week we had the parable of the soils and I said you know if you're thinking about these things then let's keep talking and he said you know I listened to your sermon just been coming here for a short while I said oh you did yeah on the different soils the unyielding soil the unfit soil the untended soil the unimaginably fruitful soil I said yeah did you find yourself in any of those soils he goes oh yeah I'm in the rocky soil I'm the rocky soil

I'm not quite sure people haven't actually told me about God I said well would you like to move from rocky soil to good soil it's not it's not going to be based upon what you do I mean what you do isn't going to move you from one soil to the other the soil is what you want to receive can I tell you do you want to hear a little bit about what Jesus did rather than about what you do he said please tell me people haven't told me that in all my years we sat right there in robust coffee man looked to God and said dear dear Lord I know I'm a sinner I believe Jesus is the Savior and I want him in my soil hey are you kidding me this is a man that understood understands the incomparable value of becoming a Christian do you well from comfort and joy finally and I shut it down with calling that little last layer of frosting comes on in verses 51 and 52 have you understood all these things they said yes and he said to them therefore every scribe who has been trained in the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who brings out his treasure what is new and what is old this is the short story that follows the story of fishing and the nets it's no accident that Jesus would revert to a story on fishing and nets not here because when he met

[37 : 18] Peter and Andrew and James and John in chapter one they were mending their nets and he said you know why don't you guys leave this kind of work and I'm going to make you fishers of

men which was actually a fulfillment of Jeremiah 16 16 where God said there's a day coming where I will raise up fishers of men and I will be gathering people through their message and following those fishers of men well there will come hunters who will hunt everyone down until the day of judgment but here it is he moves in one sense mirroring for them what he fulfilled in verse 35 for himself Jesus came fulfilling scripture through parables and they are now going to go fulfilling scripture through their preaching I mean that's exactly the way it's laid out every scribe that is everyone who wants to begin to study the Bible everyone who wants to begin to live according to their understanding of the

Bible everyone who wants to begin to teach the Bible well they they have things at their disposal on the kingdom and Jesus is now already beginning to commission these out well if you understand it then go share it Christians then join the master of the house like one who is a master of a house hey let me put it to you this way Christ Church Chicago it's springtime I know you say it's summer but I'm telling you according to this text it's springtime it's time to get some seed in the ground and while from all appearances things look rough when you when you got to walk out your life there's disappointments at every turn while you're well aware of the weeds that keep impinging it will not always be this way you are to be in partnership with Jesus proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom with the comfort that it will be widespread and far reaching you are to do so and even today hopefully take on the joy of realizing it is of matchless worth it is of incomparable value the forgiveness of my sins by Jesus who died on the cross through faith appropriated in my life by the power of the word and the spirit that I have heard will allow me to enter into something that can never be measured and only through him is it given and only by his spirit does he gather I have to sit down my grandma Morkan passed away 16 years earlier than my grandma helm and we took sheaves of wheat at her funeral and that of my grandfather later and we placed these sheaves of wheat on their casket because the one who had always told me where there's a lot of wheat there's a lot of chaff had given her life to the hope of an eternal harvest and so we were we were aware that while weeping may endure for a night joy cometh in the morning and we emblematically put on display at the home going of one the end harvest of us all one day we too like her will enter into a kingdom moment and we will go to the left or to the right we will go in or be cast out all in accordance with what we did with Jesus if you need to give your life to Christ do it today don't wait this world's coming to an end God rest ye merry gentlemen let nothing you dismay this day remember Christ our savior was born on Christmas day to save us all from Satan's power when we had gone astray oh tidings of comfort and great joy tidings of comfort and great joy fear not then said the angel let nothing you affright this day is born a savior of a pure virgin bright to save all those who trust in him from Satan's power and might oh tidings of comfort and great joy oh tidings of comfort and great joy our heavenly father these bible readings on Sunday are captivating our minds and hearts these big stories on the end of the age beautifully layered with these little stories that encourage our lives help us to get the word out help us to get seed in the ground help us to not be discouraged when the weeds rise and bring us into your heavenly kingdom to your delight in Christ's name amen