

The Parable of The Weeds

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Those of you I don't know, my name is Dave. I'm one of Shoreline's pastors. and it's my privilege this morning as we return to the book of Matthew to walk with Christ together.

Friends, will you open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 13 where Jesus has been giving a series of parables. This week we are going to see the parable of the wheat and the weeds or the wheat and the tares that King James has put it.

And will you pray with me? Lord, you are so good that you have not left us on our own.

You sent your Son to us and you have given us your Spirit in us and you have given us your Word for us.

And Lord, will you accomplish your purposes in this parable today? Will you give us eyes to see and ears to hear so that you might be glorified in us, that your people might be built up and comfort in us, and Father, that this great message of salvation might go to the ends of the earth.

[1:27] We pray that with a great hope and expectation in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Jesus has been giving a series of parables.

These are earthly stories with a spiritual meaning. I've heard it said. And today, we're going to come to chapter 13, verse 24.

And then, Jesus is going to explain the parable later in the chapter. We're going to have both the parable and its explanation today.

Jesus said, 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 seeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.

[2:32] 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 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.

Every law tells a story. That's because laws are mostly reactive. Something bad happens and we say, Oh, we can't have that happening anymore.

And so we pass a law that prohibits it. So behind every law, there is a story. Try and guess what the story is behind this law.

[3:42] In the town of Wells, Maine, it is illegal to post advertisements on someone's tombstone. Try and guess the story behind this.

While I was a cadet at the Coast Guard Academy, a new regulation was written. And I know the story well because I know the characters.

Cadets are prohibited from repelling off Coast Guard Academy buildings. That particular story also added crossbows to the list of prohibited firearms on base.

Every law tells a story. Now, why does that matter today? Rome was the occupying ruler over Israel when Jesus told this parable.

parable. And there was a Roman law that addressed this exact situation. One historian explains, Roman law dealt specifically with the crime of sowing darnel, that's the weed in question here, in a wheat field as an act of revenge.

[5:06] And so this parable that Jesus preached is not some fanciful thing that he pulled out of thin air. This is an idea, this idea that an enemy would ruin a rival's crop with weeds is actually something that happened in the ancient world and something that his hearers would actually understand.

And it's not just mischief or vandalism or a practical joke. It's about survival. If the weeds choked out the grain and your crop was ruined, so too is your family.

You could starve. You might have to sell your land just to survive. And in an agrarian society, without land, how could you support yourself? So in telling this parable, Jesus' hearers would understand that this is a real-life kind of situation and they would understand it to be serious.

But what does he mean by the story? What are we to understand from it? Well, his disciples had that same exact question.

So in verse 36, they asked him. 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.

[6:24] And Jesus really is the preacher's best friend here. Just let me tell you that. There's no guessing, right? He explains every bit of it. Fantastic. Verse 37, 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 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are the angels. What we see here is an interplay between two main actors.

One is the son of man, verse 37, and the other is his enemy, the devil, verse 39. Now that title, Son of Man, might not mean that much to us in the 21st century.

It was so far removed from this time and place, but the disciples knew what it meant. His hearers knew what it meant. It's not just a label. It's a royal badge.

[7:29] The name above all names. The prophet Daniel, centuries before Christ, was ushered in a vision into the throne room of God.

And here in Daniel chapter 7 is what he saw. I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man.

And he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him, and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom, one that shall not be destroyed. Son of man is not a title of humility.

Jesus here announces his glory. In naming himself the son of man, Jesus declares that his is a universal dominion, one that he will exercise over the entire field.

[8:37] His is an everlasting glory that all peoples, nations, and languages will serve him, from him, and through him, and to him are all things.

To him be glory forever. Amen. And set apart and against him is his enemy, the devil.

He is set opposed to the son of man and his people. He is called the evil one here, and in this parable, he is shown to be real. He is shown to be active.

He is shown to be spiteful, and he is shown to be powerful. So there are two great actors in this drama. The son of man and his enemy, and every seed that exists in the field, every person who has ever lived in this world belongs to one or the other.

There is no third option. You, and every person here today, and every child next door hearing the gospel, and every person you will ever meet belongs to one of these two kingdoms.

[10:07] And, since Satan did his work in Genesis chapter 3, and tempted our first parents to sin, every seed that has been planted first belongs to him.

After the fall, the world is naturally filled with weeds. Listen to David in Psalm 51. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

There are no exceptions. We are all born in the enemy's camp. For there to be any wheat in the field any longer, the master, the son of man, must intervene.

What happens if he doesn't? verse 40. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it 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.

[11:28] In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Judgment awaits all those who do not belong to the son of man.

Psalms 92 says, though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever.

But you, O Lord, are on high forever. For behold, your enemies, O Lord, for behold, your enemies shall perish. The penalty for standing opposed to God is a furnace.

Is that just a symbol? Probably it is. A symbol for something far worse. Hell is real.

What we do know is that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And that's actually very instructive. It tells us a lot about hell. And friends, this is an uncomfortable truth.

[12:43] One that is not fun for us to talk about and contemplate. But it is important that we do. Hell is real. For everyone who does not repent and believe, who bears their own guilt on their own shoulders, the Bible says that they will, Revelation 14, drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb, and the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night.

That is the punishment that brings the weeping. The gnashing of the teeth, though, is something different. Gnashing of teeth is the clenched jaw of hatred.

See, the weeds remain weeds. even in hell, sons of the evil one, opposed to God. Their torment makes them weep, but not repent. Throughout Scripture, gnashing of teeth is associated with hatred.

Job 16, he has hated me, he has gnashed his teeth at me, my adversary sharpens his eyes against me. Hell will be filled with people who still hate God.

The Lutheran scholar Richard Lenski reminds us that these images of a furnace and weeping and gnashing, he says, point to some doom so intolerable that the Son of God came down from heaven and tasted the bitterness of death that he might deliver us from ever knowing the anguish which is bound up in these terrible words.

[15:03] Hallelujah. What does that mean? That means God knows what our sins deserve, unending hellfire, and how does he feel about it?

He does not wish that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance, 2 Peter 3, 9, so he took action. God the Son took on a human nature, Son of Man, so that he, as a man, could drink the cup of wrath reserved for men, for all who are found in him.

so friends, if you do not know this Savior, if you do not belong to the Son of Man, know that he came to die on a cross under God's curse to bear exactly this wrath in your place, and that if you turn in repentance and faith, the Holy Spirit will knit you to him so that you will be saved by his atoning death.

I pray that if anyone here today is separated from Christ, you would see in him today a great Savior who loves to the uttermost. The great Puritan Jonathan Edwards asked, who can conceive of the rage of those flames?

Omnipotence, that is God's all-powerful nature, omnipotence will exert itself in fury at the damned. But how great is the other side of that coin?

[17:03] Because omnipotence will exert itself in blessing to those who are found in Christ Jesus our Lord. As intensely as the Father blesses the Son, he blesses those who are joined to the Son and co-heirs with him.

And that is where Jesus ends the parable, where he wants our attention to rest. And I think it is the very reason he told this parable. Verse 43. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. I think Christians, in general, including myself, are marked by far too low a view of our salvation.

We think of our heavenly reward as kind of like a really great vacation or like a good retirement. We get on a plane or a bus at one stop and then get off at the next and find, oh, it's nice here.

That is not the picture that Jesus paints for us. Yes, heaven is beautiful, and at the end of the age when the Lord renews all things, the new earth that will be our home, will be a great utopia.

[18:33] But we aren't just off to a better place. Two things stand out in verse 43. First, he says it is the kingdom of their father.

We will live in his kingdom of perfect peace, and we will have the all satisfying God, the God who wrought this redemption on our behalf, as father.

father. The great gift of heaven is this. God is there, and he loves us as a father. And second, and I think this is his main point, he says, we will shine like the sun.

We won't just relocate to a nice place. That's not what salvation is. the journey will transform us.

Last week, Randy Matthews was home from missions and talked to us about the glory of the Lord.

[19:41] when we see him with unveiled face, when we see his glory, we will be changed by it, by him.

We all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another.

This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. What is in view here, when Jesus says that we will shine like the sun, is the doctrine called glorification.

That is the moment where Hebrews 12 explains that God will perfect us finally and completely. John Piper in his book Future Grace put it like this, being glorified means coming to the final, everlasting experience of seeing God work everything together for our good.

It is our final likeness to Christ, which brings him glory, being the firstborn among many brethren, and brings us unspeakable joy.

[21:09] the long fight of putting sin to death will be over. The battle against sorrow and worries will be forever done.

We won't worry about it anymore. the work that God began in us when he gave us new birth and continues in us to will and to work all throughout our lives.

He will complete to the uttermost when he gathers us into his house and greets us there on that day. I think there's a record I've never quoted two Lutheran scholars in one sermon before.

Heinrich Schmid put it this way. They will be clothed with ineffable honor, splendor, and glory, and therefore with divine light, luster, and brilliancy.

he will perfect our souls, our very spirits, our inmost parts. But it extends past that and pertains to our bodies as well.

[22:33] On the great day, the day of the harvest, as Jesus puts it here in this parable, the Lord will raise the dead. Those who belong to him, he will remake our physical bodies into perfect bodies.

Philippians 3 says, our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

When the harvest is ripe, the Son of Man will perfect both his people's bodies and our spirits. And this language, shine like the sun, may not just be a metaphor.

Luminance may be a literal feature of our renewed bodies. In Exodus, when Moses goes before the Lord and is actually in his immediate manifest presence, something happens to him.

Exodus chapter 34, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.

[24:06] Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone and they were afraid to come near him. So Moses called out to them and he put a veil over his face.

Friends, this is what this passage means. These are the symbols, these are the players, these are the outcomes. That's what the passage means and like I said, Jesus is the preacher's best friend.

He gives us the answer key here and explains the parable, but our work is not done. We don't just close the book and walk away having been given this information. It's not enough to know what each of the symbols mean, not enough to dig into those meanings and get some of the details out of it like we've just done.

Jesus didn't give us this parable simply to inform us. He gave it to accomplish a goal beyond that. What effect did he intend with this parable? What did he want to do among his people by telling? [25:27] Did he give it evangelistically? In part, I think. He gave the parable to the masters, but then you see in verse 36 that the explanation comes in private to those who already trust in him.

Well, then, did he give it to his followers as instructions? I think not. Look back at the parable. Who acts? A master and an enemy.

Not the crops. The crops don't do anything in this. Are there any commands that I can see? If it's not mainly evangelistic, and if it's not instructions, then why is he telling us this?

What is his point? What is his purpose? Jesus gave this to his people as a comfort.

We live in a painful and confusing world. Because wheat stands among weeds. There is sin and sickness.

[26:38] There's war and poverty. There is exploitation and there is disaster. We live in a world that has not yet been redeemed. And because the master is patiently waiting for the harvest, harvest, it sometimes feels as if he's inactive and that he doesn't care and that he's not in control.

When the weeds run wild, it doesn't feel like the wheat is being cared for. And that feeling, I think, is why Jesus gave us this parable.

The wheat and the weeds grow side by side. In agricultural terms, weeds soak up nutrients and moisture that starve the crop.

Weeds choke out wheat, damaging some and killing others prematurely. And the scary thing is that Darnell, which is the weed that is probably in view here, looked just like wheat until the time of the harvest.

The whole time they're growing, they look identical until the time of the harvest. Which is why it's sometimes hard to know if someone is good, seed, or bad. Which is why evil people who do not know Christ can do horrible things in his name, but no matter what happens.

[28:10] No matter what happens globally, Christians in northern Nigeria being killed or driven off their land, Christian churches being bombed in Sri Lanka this last Easter Sunday, new waves of government persecution in China not seen at a scale like this since Mao's revolution.

And whether persecution, reaches our doors in the United States, probably not in violence in our lifetime, but possibly in civil penalties, no matter what happens in our personal lives, personal conflict, and personal tragedy, and personal confusion, and personal anguish, no matter what happens, our Lord sees and knows, and with a wisdom we do not possess, chooses to delay, but he will bring the victory.

This is my father's world. Oh, let me never forget that though the wrong seems oft so strong, he is the ruler yet.

this parable makes us a people of hope. Not hope like, I hope it all works out, but hope like, I have a sure and certain hope and expectation in the son of man who has already defeated the grave, that he will gather his people to himself and glorify us.

when Jesus explained the elements of the parable, he very noticeably doesn't interpret the discussion between the master and his servants in verses 28 and 29.

[30:07] This parable isn't about the here and the now. It's a parable about looking forward to the day of the harvest. He wants to lift our eyes up from our present circumstance and set our gaze on the glory that is stored up for us, which means that when the weeds press in, and when we walk through disappointment, and when we are wronged, and when we watch those we love walk through intolerable hardship, illness, and cruelty, and loss, us, when we begin to ask, does God see?

Does God care? Is God good? Is he even there? And if he's there, how could this be his plan?

When we begin to ask those questions, in every conflict, every pain, every discomfort that comes from sin and death and evil, it is not because God does not see.

The master has seen the weeds among the wheat. It is not because God doesn't care. He's protecting the good crop by delaying, not harming.

And it is not because God is not there. Here he is giving the parable. He has a great plan for his people.

[31:45] I have a counseling professor who put it like this. What is critical is that we don't give doubt the last word.

When life is hard and painful and confusing and futile, friends, Jesus says, look to heaven and the hope that is stored up for you there.

Not in a way that diminishes or dismisses present pain or trouble in any sense, but in a way that says, I have glory to share that you cannot yet comprehend.

Right? be just saying, we trust you, we trust you, your ways are so much higher than our own.

Jesus says that we will shine, not like something shiny here on earth and chrome plated, but like the sun.

Can you bear to look at the sun? the glory he will unfold among his people is past our knowing.

[33:10] So even in the midst of profound suffering, we can look forward to a monumental redemption that out shines and out lasts all our pains and sorrows.

Not only does this parable give us hope, it also gives us rest. This parable isn't about what you and I accomplish.

The weight of the kingdom doesn't rest on our shoulders. The wheat does not win the day. The master does.

God sows the seed. God makes the decision on when to harvest. God sends his angels for the harvest. God has his angels separate the harvest.

God is the one who takes them into his house. That is not to say that the Christian life is passive.

This is the same Jesus who preached the sermon on the mount and preached the missionary terms of restoring the whole world and accomplishing your salvation and your glorification and achieving perfect justice and making all things right.

[34:37] That burden does not rest on our shoulders. God will sovereignly bring his good plan to its end. It doesn't depend on us.

He is faithful and he is strong to save. God will set all things right and bring justice to the world. It does not finally depend on us.

God will take you to himself. It's not something that we achieve. It's not something that we can do anything about. It is something that he will sovereignly do.

So no matter what storms rage, wars and famine and plague and turmoil, the universe sets in your heavenly father's hands and the end is sure.

So we can rest because it is certain and it is glorious. John Calvin said, the infinite glory which is laid up for the sons of God so far exceeds all our senses that we cannot find words to express it.

[36:05] Which leans us finally to worship. I've been doing a lot of quoting today. We're going to end with one last quote.

The Baptist minister Benjamin Keech put it this way. This truth that we've been talking about today should teach all true believers to admire the special and distinguishing love and grace of God to them in Jesus Christ and to see they lie low at his foot and ascribe all the glory and praise to him alone.

So friends, let us do that. Will you pray with me? Lord, will you help us to recognize even in the midst of trouble and sorrow as we live out our days in this troubled world that you, the master, own the entire field, are sovereign over it and have a magnificent plan for our good and for your glory.

So Lord, will you make us a people of hope? Will you help us lift our gaze above our present circumstances to the glory that is waiting to be revealed both as a comfort and to diminish our love of this world and this life.

And Lord, will you help us to have rest, rest in view, knowing full well that you will accomplish your good purposes. Father, we ask all these things in the name of Jesus, who secures all these blessings and our future.

[38:15] We pray that in his name. Amen. Amen. We move now to a time of the Lord's supper.

our Lord gave the parable of the wheat and the weeds for our comfort and our encouragement. It points to that day when we will shine like the sun in the renewed kingdom of our Father.

And he gave us this celebration, the celebration of the Lord's supper also for our encouragement and our comfort. You see, it points to the cross and it also points, I'm going to share with you in a moment, that same day when we will shine like the sun.

First, it points to the cross, his body broken for us, his blood shed for us so that we might be forgiven. And that is the means, the way he rescues and redeems his people to bring them to his Father's kingdom so that we might shine like the sun as we gaze with eyes wide open at his brilliance.

In Matthew 26, when Jesus institutes the Lord's supper, he ends it with this.

[39:43] He says, I tell you, I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

The Lord's supper looks back on his great sacrifice for us and it points us forward in the same way the parable of the wheat and the weeds does to the glory of being forever united to our Lord and Savior on that great day.

So, Lord, to friends, if you belong to Christ, this celebration is for you.

If you have repented of your sins and believed on Christ, this is the sure testimony, just like the parable is, that your Father in heaven watches over you, has given his son for you, and has a future for you, that's not where you are today.

If you do not yet belong to this great God, don't receive these elements, they won't mean anything to you, but instead receive Christ. If you need to ask more questions about that or would like to talk more, I'll be up here.

[41:12] I would love very much to pray with you, to answer any questions you have. For all of us who have this great hope and expectation, friends, let us stand, let us take the elements, return to our seats, and we will celebrate together.

Let us wait a night. wait a night. Let us Let us wait a night. Let us wait a night. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Let us remember him together. Thank you.

[43:53] Thank you. Let us celebrate that together. and he took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them saying drink of it all of you for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins let us celebrate that together he concluded with these words I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day the day of the harvest when we will shine like the sun when I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom Lord we praise you we place our trust in you we look at what Christ has done to secure our hope and we hope in him and we believe you that you have glory in store for the ones you have made your own we wait on you and praise your name forever amen you'll stand with me

I'm seeing a classic here turn your eyes upon Jesus oh soul are you weary and troubled no light in the darkness you see there's light for a look at the Savior and life more abundant and free turn your eyes upon Jesus look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace through death into life everlasting he passed and we follow him there over us in no more half dominion for more more than conquerors we are so turn your eyes upon Jesus who will come in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace his word his word shall not fail you he promised believe him and all will be well then go to a world that is dying his perfect salvation to death and turn your eyes and turn your eyes and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace this we know and this we know we will see the end be run this we know we will see the victory come we hold on to every promise you ever made

Jesus you are unfailing this we know and this we know we will see the end be run this we know we will see the victory come yes we will we hold on to every promise you ever made Jesus you are unfailing amen remember today there is a time of fellowship at the Allen's house now to him who was able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy to the only God our savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory majesty dominion

and authority for all time now and forever amen go in peace and forever