

THE SETTING. Jesus is still speaking to the crowds (Matthew 13:18-23 is an parenthesis).

The Parable of the Sower made perfect sense; there was nothing fanciful about it. This parable quickly introduces unexpected elements.

THE PARABLE

MATTHEW 13:24-30

The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. The landowner is at work in his own field. He sows only good seed in it. He sows the seed in order to receive a specific harvest; a grain of wheat will not raise corn or soybeans or chickens. It will produce wheat.

But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. This is a strange thing to happen; it would have to be an enemy that would do something like this.

THE TARES

The word “tares” is *zizanon*, darnel. It is also called *poison darnel* because it can be infected with a fungus that causes those who eat it to feel nauseas, and can even be fatal. It is a very real plant that is indistinguishable from wheat for most of its life cycle; it’s only when the

grain ripens that it becomes obvious; wheat is brown when it ripens, and darnel is black.

THE ENEMY

Let's understand that the field does not belong to the enemy; he is a trespasser. He comes in the night, while others are sleeping, which makes him a coward. He is an enemy, which makes malice and wickedness his motivation. He hates the landowner so much that he is willing to exert time and effort just to ruin the landowner's crop.

WEEDS CAN'T HIDE FOREVER

But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. All the time the crop was growing it appeared that everything was fine; in fact, it might have seemed that the crop was much more abundant than usual, since a larger number of plants were growing than the landowner sowed. Then the heads of grain began to appear, and the slaves of the landowner realized that all was not well.

FAITHFUL SERVANTS CARE ABOUT THE MASTER'S FIELD

The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' They know their master; they know that he sowed good seed in his field. They know

that tares have grown up among the wheat, and they are truly confused.

THE LANDOWNER IS NEVER CONFUSED

And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ This was no mistake on his part. He chose his seed carefully and well. He sowed it himself, ensuring the best possible crop. An enemy – someone who was hostile to him – trespassed on his property and went to great effort to ruin his crop.

GOOD INTENTIONS DON’T MAKE GOOD PLANS

The slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ That makes sense; remove the enemy’s influence as soon as possible. They were faithful slaves; they were willing to do what it took to protect their master’s interests.

NOBODY CARES LIKE THE LANDOWNER

But he said, ‘No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. They wouldn’t harm the good crop deliberately, but they simply don’t have the ability to deal with the situation at that point.

THE LANDOWNER HAS A PLAN

Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.' ” The wheat is the desired crop; that's what the landowner planted and wants to harvest. The darnel is useless, and will be destroyed. The landowner's concern is not the darnel but the wheat. So, rather than trying to clear the land before the harvest, the landowner will allow both to grow together, and then have the harvesters first gather the darnel, and then gather the wheat.

In that day the wheat was cut down with a sickle, a long-bladed cutter. The landowner doesn't want to mix up any darnel with the wheat, and so he will instruct the harvesters to cut the stalks of darnel, binding them together in bundles to burn. They weren't concerned with preserving the darnel, since it was useless. Then his harvesters will come back through for the wheat, cutting it down as normal, gathering the sheaves in the barn ready for threshing.

Before we look at Jesus' explanation of this parable, let's think about what we know about the landowner and the enemy.

- The landowner has **a good purpose** in planting good seed in his field.
 - On the other hand, the enemy has **an evil purpose** in planting zizanion in the landowner's field; he works directly against

everything the landowner does.

- He **cares** about his crop and his field.
 - The enemy shows nothing but **contempt** for the landowner, his field, and his crop.
- His seed is **good seed**; it's exactly what he wants for a good crop.
 - But what the enemy sows is **worthless and useless seed**; it is fit only to be burned.
- His answer to the enemy's sabotage is **wise** and calm; there is no panic.
 - The enemy's actions are **foolish** and bizarre; he goes through a lot of effort for nothing but to vent his hatred.
- The **success** of his work is clear; he knows his work through and through.
 - The enemy's work is an **utter failure**; his goal is to disrupt the landowner's crop, and he fails; not to mention that he himself can gain nothing from this act of sabotage.
- His efforts are going to produce an **abundant, luxurious, valuable crop**.
 - The seed the enemy sows is going to be treated like the **rubbish** that it is.

So in the end, the purpose of the landowner is not hindered in the least. The sowing of the darnel pollutes the field, but it does not harm the wheat. The enemy's efforts are shown to be futile; he is unable to prevent the landowner from having his full harvest of wheat. What's more, since the

field is not his, he doesn't even receive whatever benefit would come from the darnel; instead, the weeds are destroyed by the landowner while the enemy stands there powerless.

THE EXPLANATION

MATTHEW 13:36-43

As before, the explanation is only given to the disciples. This time they ask Jesus to explain His meaning to them. First He defines the characters in the parable; there are several.

The sower of the good seed is the Son of Man, Jesus Himself.

The field in which He sows the good seed is the created universe, specifically the earth. All of creation belongs to the Creator; every last atom of it. Everything in creation belongs to the Creator, including the entire demonic realm. It is all God's property, His to do with as He pleases.

The good seed are the sons of the Kingdom: faithful saints during the Old Testament period, and born-again Christians during the church age. The means by which the good seed is planted is through the preaching of the Gospel. Every person is born a child of wrath; no one is naturally born a child of God. That is the only way to become a child of God. Sons of the Kingdom are born again into the Kingdom of God, predestined by God's love to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the

kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:4-6).

The tares are the sons of the evil one, the children of wrath. There are only two kinds of person: sons of the Kingdom, and sons of the evil one. Every human being is born as a child of wrath, which a nature that is hostile to God and spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1-3). It is by the mercy and grace of God that some who are born as evil seed are reborn through the Savior to be good seed. It is all His doing, and nothing that we accomplish.

The enemy who sows the evil seed is the devil. This doesn't mean that Satan has any creative power at all, but that because of Adam's sin, every human being is naturally born as a child of the devil. The Lord Jesus said to a group of unbelieving Jews, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father" (John 8:44); "He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God" (John 8:47).

You know, it's a mark of our sin nature that we naturally assume that everything is about us. The trouble in the world is about us. Everything God does is about us. Salvation is only about us. The truth is that everything is about God. His eternal purpose is to reveal and magnify His own glory, putting His own nature on full display. The salvation of sinners is at the heart of His purpose; mankind is not an afterthought. But at the same time, mankind is not the center of God's purposes: His own glory is.

Satan thought that he could destroy God's glory by tempting mankind, made in the image of God, to sin against God, and therefore earn God's wrath. What better revenge could the devil have, then to put God in the position of having to destroy the only creatures made in His own image! But Satan couldn't begin to comprehend that his actions had actually be decreed by God. Not only would his efforts fail at spoiling God's work, he is actually an instrument in God's hands for God's glory. His very existence depends on the Lord Jesus keeping him in existence. The devil and his angels are always completely under the control of the Creator God; on the day of judgment, God will exercise that control and cast Satan and his demons into the lake of fire, where they will be tormented for all eternity.

The harvest is the end of the age. In the parable, the landowner is in no great hurry to remove the weeds from the wheat field. When the harvest time comes, that's when the weeds will be gathered up and burned.

The same is true in the world of men. The Lord is in no hurry to remove the wicked from the world. Their presence doesn't hinder His work in saving sinners; in fact, they are the sinners that He is saving. Think about that, if you will. Satan has done everything he can to destroy and disrupt God's good purpose, but God's good purpose is to save those whom Satan has sought to destroy.

God is certainly willing to make His wrath known, but is nevertheless

patient toward vessels of wrath, prepared for destruction. From them He makes vessels of mercy, prepared for glory.

In the fullness of time the harvest – the day of judgment – will arrive. It seems so far off, although every day it's one day closer. But one day it will be upon us. The weeds will be separated from the wheat. The goats will be separated from the sheep. The Lord Jesus will separate them, welcoming His sheep into the kingdom of God, and casting the goats into eternal torment.

This process of separation will be perfect and flawless. Not a single Christian will get lost in the confusion, and end up in hell. Not a single unbeliever will sneak past the Lord into eternal life. You see, Jesus has a job to do, one assigned to Him by God the Father, and He will do His job with divine perfection. Listen to Jesus:

John 6:37-40 (LSB) - All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. Now this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

BRINGING IT HOME

PERSONALIZATION

I never read these sorts of passages without feeling the weight of them, the importance of them. I know my own guilt. I know my own sin. If I ever had to earn God's pleasure, I would fail. If I had to earn my own salvation, I would fail. I know that I am powerless and helpless. Words like these make me somber, a little grim, a little solemn.

At the same time, I find tremendous peace in passages like this. The bad news is as bad as it can be, and that makes the good news as good as it can be. It's not just what I do that offends God, but who I am, who I was born to be. God didn't set His love upon me because I deserved it, or because I was better, or because I did something; He set His love upon me because it pleased Him to love me. And His love is so great that when He loves a person to salvation, that person WILL be saved through Jesus Christ. Jesus doesn't just make salvation available; He made it actual. His death doesn't make salvation possible; His death saves sinner.

Romans 5:6-9 (LSB) - For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man, though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

And so, I can't lose that salvation. The Father gave me to Jesus to save – I know that because the Spirit of God has given me faith in Jesus Christ alone. Jesus has a job to do, and He will not fail.

If the Spirit of God has given you faith in Jesus Christ, then He will save you to the uttermost. He doesn't tease us with partial faith. He doesn't play games, promising one thing and delivering another. He makes no mistakes. God's glory is being manifested by saving sinners; He doesn't take that lightly.

APPROPRIATION

If you know Jesus Christ, then you can have the fullness of peace, confident that Jesus has done, is doing, and will do everything necessary to bring you safely home to heaven.

We are surrounded by those who are dead in sin, separated from their Creator, and facing eternal judgment. We are powerless to change them from weeds to wheat, but their Creator can recreate them. We can speak the Gospel to them, and we should. But we should also recognize we are helpless to make them see their need for a Savior and Jesus' ability to save those who trust Him. They don't have that ability on their own. A natural person does not accept the depths of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them (First Corinthians 2:14). So we must pray for them, giving it all over into the hands of God.