

Tares Among Wheat

Radio sermon

(Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43)

The text of my sermon today is taken from Matthew 13. I want to look with you at the parable of the wheat and the tares. Let's begin reading with Jesus' explanation of the parable in verse 37:

Matthew 13:37-43 *(37) ...He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; (38) The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; (39) The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. (40) As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. (41) The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; (42) And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

I've entitled this message, "**Tares among Wheat**".

There are at least four lessons taught in this scripture. And I have one question.

1. First, There is one Sower. He is the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. There is one field, it is the field of this world.
 - b. There is one good seed, the children of the kingdom of God.
 - c. The seed is His and the field is His, and He will not fail to bring all of His wheat into His barn.
2. Second, There is one enemy who plants bad seed in that field. It is the devil.
 - a. While men slept
3. Third, Christ alone separates the false from the true.
4. Fourth, Only children of God enter heaven.

In light of what Jesus said, I have a burning question: “How can I be planted by Christ? What must I do to be saved?!”

First, then, there is only one Sower

The One who sows the good seed is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Son of man and He is the Son of God. He is all good. All that He does is good. He owns the field. His seed is only good seed. He plants His people. His people are the true Church, His body. The Body of Christ has pure seed in it; there is no mixture. But throughout time, there is a visible church in this world. The visible church has both good and bad seed. Yet, here is our comfort, “*The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his*” (2 Tim. 2:19). Without fail, the Lord Jesus Christ will bring all of His wheat into His barn. He will save everyone He has planted. Not one will be lost.

Question: how does Christ plant His people in this world?

Answer: Two things are required.

- First, He must make them holy before God. Christ made His people holy by His death on the cross.
- Second, He must give birth to them by His Spirit. In this spiritual birth, Christ gives His people a holy nature. In that nature, they believe the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and they truly love God.

Jesus said He planted His people by His death on the cross. He said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*” (John 12:24). Christ is the corn of wheat who fell into the ground. By His death, He brings forth fruit. That fruit is the wheat, all of His people, who are planted in His kingdom. By His death on the cross, Christ made His people holy. Because they are holy, they are planted in God’s kingdom as children. The Bible says that God the Father adopted His sons by choosing them in Christ before the world began. God the Father says of all of His children, He has “*chosen us in [Christ] him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated*”

us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph. 1:4-5). God the Father planted His people in Christ to be His sons when He chose them in eternal election. This is adoption: to chose, to place among the children. And it is Christ, who by His death on the cross, made all God's children holy and blameless.

All that God required from His people, He put into the hands of Christ to fulfill for them. The Lord Jesus bore the sins of His people and purged them from their sins. *"When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high"* (Heb. 1:3). When Jesus cried from the cross, *"It is finished!"*, all of the sins of all of His people were removed from them. God gave His adopted sons to Christ so that all He did would be done in their name. Because Christ's death was obedience to God, therefore, by His death He established their everlasting righteousness. 2 Cor. 5:21 says it very succinctly: *"He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). Therefore, by His death, Christ made all of God's sons holy. By His one offering of Himself to God, on that one day, He sanctified -- made holy -- all of His people. *"By the which will we are sanctified [made holy to God] by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all"* (Heb. 10:10). One Sower, One offering, the obedience of One, made all of God's adopted sons holy. This is the good news of the Gospel! God planted His sons by choosing them in Christ, and Christ planted them by making them holy and without blame before God.

Isaiah 53 also establishes this fact. In Isaiah 53 God prophesied that Christ would substitute Himself for His people. All of the sin that His people committed was charged to Christ. And all of the suffering and obedience of Christ was made theirs. The result of His substitution pleased God! Because of His success, God says in Isaiah 53:10 that *"He shall see His seed...and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand"* (Isa. 53:10). Because Christ made atonement in one day: *"On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD"* (Lev. 16:30), because by His atonement all of the sins of all of His people were removed from them, and they were made holy before God, therefore, there can be no failure. Thus it is

prophesied, “*He shall see His seed.*” By His success, all of His people will be “planted” as the children of God without fail.

And the second way in which Jesus plants His people is by their spiritual resurrection. Having forgiven His people from all their sins, He raises them from spiritual death to spiritual life. Colossians 2:13 says, “*You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened [made alive] together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses*” (Col. 2:13). It is because we are forgiven in the death of Christ that we are raised to life in the new birth. Because Christ redeemed His people, God sends His Spirit into their hearts to birth them as His sons. This is the second way in which God’s people are planted in His kingdom. The Spirit of God gives birth to all for whom Christ died because their sins are forgiven them in Christ (Eph. 4:32; Ex. 12:13). And when they are born of God, they look to Christ alone. They see what God says about Christ is true. They see that in Christ they are holy. Christ becomes the only object of their confidence. Seeing their sins are forgiven in Christ, they love Him (Luke 7:47). God sees them holy in Christ, and they come to God by faith in Christ. Thus, there is a mutual looking to Christ: God views His people in Christ, and God’s people look to Christ alone as all their standing, acceptance, justification and sanctification before God. The God-given faith of the new nature puts God’s children in harmony with the truth declared in the Gospel: that Christ is all (Col. 3:11)!

The Second lesson in this parable is this: there is an enemy who plants bad seed in the Lord’s field.

- There is a true Church, and there is a visible church. The true Church contains only good seed, the children of God, the Body of Christ.
- But while we are in this world, there is also a visible church. The visible church always contains both good and bad together. And Jesus says that it will be this way until the end of time. The best preacher and the purest doctrine will not make the visible church pure in this world. You will never find a church made up of only true believers. (recording time: 10:49)

- If the Gospel of Jesus Christ is not preached where you go to church, you are not even part of a visible church. But even where the Gospel is preached, there will a visible church that contains both good and bad seed.
- The parable is clear. Christ plants all of the good seed. The devil plants all of the bad seed. Good seed are the children of God. Bad seed are those who profess to know God, but in heart deny Him.
- But why does God save His people and leave them in a congregation made up of both God's children and the devil's children? Why doesn't He make it obvious who is and who is not His own, and simply remove the bad?
 - First, because it is Christ's Church; He acts according to His will; His ways are not our ways. The world and the salvation of His people are in the hand of our Lord Jesus Christ. We must ever remember this: the Church is Christ's Church. It belongs to Him. He plants His people in it. He gives the increase. He alone knows who are His. The Gospel ministry produces fruit according to His will. Those who preach the Gospel are His servants. We must never think to attract attention to ourselves. All glory belongs to Christ. Knowing we are in the hand and at the mercy of God drives us to Christ. As the poor leper in Matthew 8:2, "*Lord, if thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!*"
 - The second reason there is a mixture in the church throughout time is that: God waits to bring judgment on the wicked. God waited in the days of Noah. In His long-suffering, He gave men time to repent before He brought the flood on the earth (1 Pet. 3:20). He waited in the days of Abraham to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah until their sin was grievous and the cry of it came up to Him (Gen. 18:20-21). God waited over 450 years between His promise to Abraham and the time He destroyed the Amorites and other nations in the land of Canaan. God waited in the days of Christ until the unbelieving part of the nation of Israel filled up the measure of their sins before He destroyed them in 70 A.D. (Matt. 23:32). This waiting by God shows three things. First, it shows God's longsuffering with men before He brings judgment. Second, it shows that men will not repent unless God grants them repentance unto life by His sovereign mercy (Acts 5:31; 2 Tim.

2:25). If any are changed in their mind to believe Christ, it is God who gives them that repentance. And third, it shows that God leaves men to fill up the measure of their sins, which He allows them to commit before He brings judgment on them. Men treasure up judgment against themselves, in opposition to their own salvation (Rom. 2:5). Even though God gives men much time to repent, they will not repent unless God intervenes in sovereign mercy to rescue them from their own wickedness and self-destruction. God waits to judge the wicked. Meanwhile, Isaiah 3:10 says that it shall go well for the righteous. Not those who think themselves righteous, but those who God sees as righteous in Christ. Those whom He persuades that Christ is their only righteousness (Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 10:3-4).

"The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:15-18). Do you cry? In the face of the enemy of your own sinful nature, do you cry? In your utter weakness against the enemy, do you cry. And do you with the Psalmist cry, LORD, *"Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation"* (Ps. 35:3)!? O gracious sovereign Savior! Tell me in my conscience -- give me this faith to believe that you are all my salvation!

- Third, God leaves a mixture of believers and unbelievers in the visible church because He will reveal the sons of God as a single body in Christ. God will not make His sons known until He makes all of them known together, at once. Not until the Church is complete will the true Church be revealed. Not until all of Christ's redeemed sheep are safely folded and the last redeemed child of God is born into the kingdom, only then will the end come. It was only after Noah entered the ark that the flood was poured out on the world. It was only after God removed Lot from Sodom that God poured out His fire upon that city. And it is only when God has gathered His adopted, redeemed sons into His Church by raising them to life in the new birth that He

will reveal them to this universe. When that occurs, it will be in total. *“When the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, then all Israel shall be saved”* (Rom. 11:25)! All will receive their inheritance together when the sons of God are unveiled to this universe. Those who have gone before, who have died in faith, will not be made perfect without us who remain until the coming of the Lord. Hebrews 11:39 says *“These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect”* (Heb. 11:39-40).

- In the fourth place, Christ leaves tares among the wheat because He will show Himself strong on behalf of His people. Though the enemy intended evil by sowing tares among the wheat, and though we might think it best that evil be immediately eradicated from the Church and from ourselves, it is Christ’s way of refining His people through trials, through heresies, and through persecution and affliction. Great evil drives the child of God to Christ for great deliverance. This crying in trouble, and God’s deliverance from it, brings glory to Christ for His salvation. *“Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me”* (Ps. 50:15). Remember the church at Galatia? False brethren had crept in unawares. As a result, God more clearly revealed the Gospel of His grace to us by the letter Paul sent to them. In spite of the evil intent of the enemy, we now clearly see that salvation is all of grace. And so it is with all NT epistles. Which epistle of the NT was not written to correct an error or to fend off the attacks of the enemy? And what of the nearly 2,000 years of Israel’s history?! These scriptures are written for our learning (Rom. 15:4), to drive us to Christ with greater purpose to be found in Him alone, just as Noah entered the ark ahead of the flood of God’s judgment. The mixture of tares and wheat while we are in this world causes us to hold more firmly to the Gospel of Christ. The enemy always intends evil for Christ and His people. But our Lord proves His wisdom to be unmatched for that fiend. He always proves Himself strong for His own, who put their trust in Him. Christ uses the very evil intent and

works of the wicked as means in the salvation of His people. Our Lord Jesus chose Judas to be His disciple, knowing that He was a son of perdition. Yet He did it so that the scripture might be fulfilled. That scripture said that by the hand of Judas Christ would be betrayed and in His betrayal, would save His people by His own death at the hands of those to whom Judas betrayed Him! Remember Joseph? His brethren meant evil against him, but God meant it for good (Gen. 50:20). God used their evil against Joseph to save their lives! Just so, the world crucified the Lord of glory, but God used that heinously evil act to save His people, to destroy the works of the devil, and to glorify all of His perfections: His sovereignty, His wisdom, His power, His faithfulness, His justice, His grace and His love to His people! “*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out*” (Rom. 11:33)!

- In the end, Christ will send His angels to separate and remove the wicked from the just. Angels are servants to the children of God, the heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14).
- Though there is an enemy, Christ will save His own. He will bring all of His people to heaven. And this is our salvation and comfort, that Christ is able, and actually does save to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25)! “*If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life*” (Rom. 5:10)! Amazing grace!! We have no power against our sin, against our enemy, against the justice of God, against the hell we deserve. But Christ does. And that is good news to this sinner! By His almighty grace, we are made the very sons of God!

The Third lesson in the parable of the wheat and tares is that Christ alone is able and has authority to separate false brethren from true believers.

- Men see only outwardly. They judge by appearance. Men chose Saul and rejected David. Men approved Judas who was a thief. Would men have rejected the thief on the cross? Men admire Pharisees, but cast out Publicans. Men condemn an adulteress while they clear themselves. Men love Esau's venison, but despise Jacob for his insatiable thirst to have the promise of eternal inheritance in Christ! But God sees what man does not. He sees His own purpose of grace. He sees the sacrifice and obedience of His Son. And He looks upon Him for His people. He receives them in Christ and He receives them as Him (Ex. 12:13; Eph. 4:32; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:19). He gives them eternal life because of the righteousness of His Son (Gal. 2:21; 3:21). He saves the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). He preserves the weakest of saints. He will not quench a smoking flax; He will not break a bruised reed (Matt. 12:20). Not a hoof shall be left behind (Ex. 10:26). He will have all of His sheep (Jn. 10:16).
- He will separate the wicked from the just in His own time, at the end of the world.
- Truly, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knows them that are His (2 Tim. 2:19). He knows His sheep and they know Him. He calls them. They hear His voice, and they follow Him (Jn 10:27).

This parable clearly teaches that there is no such thing as universal salvation.

- Some will be saved. Some will be lost.
- Not everyone is a child of God.

The fourth lesson taught in this parable is that only the children of God enter heaven.

- We do not make ourselves children of God. We are not children of God by our physical birth. We are not children of God by our will or our decision. We are not made God's sons by the intentions of others. You are not a child of God because you were in a "covenant family;" the so-called covenant family is a man-made entity.

God alone makes men His children. He makes them His own by His choice, by Christ's redemption and by the almighty operation of His Spirit. *"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"* (John 1:12-13).

Finally, I have a burning question: How can I be planted by Christ? What must I do to be saved?

How can I know if I have been planted as good seed in the kingdom of heaven by the Lord Jesus Christ? I do not want to be a tare! I want to be wheat. I want Christ to plant me. I want to be a child of God. Do you? If you do, you may cry with the Philippian jailor, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?!"*

Jesus told Nicodemus that unless he was born again, he could not see or enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus asked, *"How can these things be"* (John 3:9)?! He was perplexed and frustrated! Jesus said that he could not enter unless he was born of God, but he did not understand; he could not make it happen! He saw his utter helplessness. Then Jesus answered his question:

"No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:13-15).

What does this teach us?! It teaches us that the Lord of glory must come from heaven. He must bear the sin and curse of God in the place of His people. It tells us that all who are bitten by the sentence of God's judgment against their sin must look to Christ alone. It tells us that all who look to Christ, have eternal life. They have been born of God. It tells us that the result of the new birth is looking to Christ as everything in my salvation. It tells us that our salvation is entirely the work of God! He chooses His own sons. Christ came from heaven and took their curse. God's Spirit gives birth to the redeemed. And these look to Christ crucified! Are you born again? Have you looked to Christ? Are you looking to Him now? May Christ so plant you and me in His kingdom! "*As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him*" (Col. 2:6).