THE TARES AND THE WHEAT (Mt 13:24-30; 36-43)

INTRODUCTION: I want to start off this morning by asking a couple of questions.
--"If you find a soft, smelly, rotting potato in a bag with ***good*** potatoes, do you leave the ***rotten*** one in with the ***good*** ones in hopes that the ***good*** ones will make the ***rotten*** one good? ***No!*** It doesn't work that way, does it?
--The same thing ***with apples***, right? Regardless of what the Osmonds sang "back in the day," "one bad apple ***does spoil*** the whole bunch…girl!"
--So what do you do with the ***rotting potato*** and bad apple to stop them from contaminating the rest? You ***get rid of them***, right?
--But what about "bad" ***people?*** Do you "get rid of them" so they don't corrupt the "good" people? At one point, ***James and John*** must have thought that that was what they were supposed to do! You don't need to turn there, but in Luke 9 we read the account of Jesus and the disciples entering a village of the Samaritans on their way to Jerusalem. Samaritans ***were not hospitable*** to the Jews—especially the ones traveling to Jerusalem! So the people of this particular Samaritan village ***did not welcome Jesus*** or offer any kind of food or refreshments to Him and His disciples as they were passing through.

James' and John's response? Luke 9:54 "And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, **wilt thou that we command fire** to come down from heaven, and **consume them**, even as Elias did?"

I chuckle to myself nearly every time I think about this. James and John are with Jesus, the All-Powerful One and they—the helpless ones—think they need to "***help***" Jesus! Their zeal is obviously commendable, but do they have ***the ability***—or authority—to "command fire to come down from heaven!"

Obviously not! Jesus' response to them? Luke 9:55-56 "But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. **56** For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."

This morning, we are going to go back to looking at the ***parables of Jesus***. Please take your Bibles and turn once again to Matthew 13 and follow along as I read verses 24-30.

Did Jesus tell this parable to correct James' and John's desire to "get rid of bad people?" Possibly—but we don't know for sure! But we do know this: Jesus' explanation of the parable shows that "good" and "bad" people will ***remain mixed together*** until the end of the world!

As we get started here this morning, I want to mention that I'll be using ***the same three*** main points that I did while preaching on the parable of the sower: the illustration, the explanation, and the application.

1. The illustration of the tares and wheat (vss 24-30)
Vs 24 "Another parable put He forth unto them…"
--What's a parable? Here again are some definitions I've given you in the past. ***It means to*** "place one thing by the side of something else to make a comparison." ***In its simplest form,*** it is an "earthly illustration—or story—with a ***spiritual*** meaning."
--Who's giving this illustration? ***Jesus***, right?
And since it's fairly easy to understand the picture that Jesus is painting for us, I'm just going to point out the key components in the verses I just read before going on to the explanation.
--***What*** are the key components?
--In vs 24, we see… A. A man who sowed good seed in his field
--In vs 25, we have… B. An enemy of the man who sows tares in the same field
--I found it interesting to learn that the English word "tares" is used in the King James Bible ***eight*** times—all in ***this chapter***—and all in connection with ***this parable***. But ***what is*** a "tare"—besides a rip in your clothing?
--It is sometimes translated "darnel," but most often it is translated "weeds."
--Here's a **quote** from the Topical Lexicon in Biblehub (Strong's 2215) that I found quite helpful.

"The term designates a **poisonous look-alike grain** that ancient farmers dreaded.

Its early growth is nearly indistinguishable from wheat, but as the heads mature the kernels darken, become lighter in weight, and can **cause dizziness or nausea** if ground into flour. **Roman law actually forbade the malicious sowing of such weeds in an enemy's field**, underscoring the realism of Jesus' imagery."

--In vs 28, we see… C. The servants who want to get rid of the tares in the field

--And in vs 30, we have…D. The statement to let both grow together until harvest time

Next, let's consider… ***2. The explanation of the tares and wheat (vss 36-43)***

Similar to the parable of the sower, ***Jesus Himself*** gives us the explanation—the interpretation—of the ***spiritual truth*** that He was teaching through the illustration He had given. In some ways, ***it's similar*** to the parable of the sower. There is a sower…and seed is sown…and plants come up…and there are obstacles to the growth of the seed or plant.

But there are significant ***differences***, too. Here there is ***no soil type*** mentioned—and there are ***two sowings*** instead of one. And here the ***obstacle for growth*** is not the soil type, but ***bad*** seed that is sown by the owner's enemy in the same place ***good*** seed was sown. Another difference—at least in my opinion—is that the ***interpretation*** of this parable is easier to understand than the parable of the sower. In the parable of the sower, there ***isn't a unanimous consensus*** regarding which of the ***four soil-types*** represent saved people—and which do not. But in this parable, there is very little disagreement on who the ***good*** and ***bad*** seed is.

Another difference is this: this parable teaches ***the very sobering truth*** about a ***future judgment***—and what happens to those who ***die unforgiven***. We'll talk about that more when we get to verses 40-42.

Before that, though, notice what it says in verses 36 and 37. We are going to stick with the same sub-points "A" through "D" that I just gave you in the illustration.

A. The "man" who sowed good seed in His field

We have ***three*** things that we need to consider under this heading—the man, the seed, and the field.

1) The "man" is Jesus!

--***How*** do we know that the man is ***Jesus?*** Because in vs 37, Jesus says: "He that soweth good seed is the **Son of man**." ***Who*** is the Son of man? Pretty safe to say it is Jesus because He called Himself that nearly 80 times!

--***Why*** did Jesus refer to Himself as "the Son of man"? Some could argue that if Jesus was the son of ***a man***, He had a ***human*** father! And if he ***had a human father***, then He wasn't ***born of a virgin*** like Isaiah prophesied He would be—and like the angel Gabriel told Mary He would be.

--But He doesn't call Himself ***a son*** of a man—He calls Himself ***the*** Son of man!

--And ***the*** Son of man is what the ***coming Messiah*** was called in the book of Daniel!

Daniel 7:13-14 "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like **the Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the **Ancient of days**, and they brought Him [the Son of man] near before Him [the Ancient of days]. **14** And there was given Him [the Son of man] dominion, and glory, **and a kingdom**, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: **His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away**, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

So ***the*** Son of man is the One that "came with the clouds of heaven" to the Ancient of days and was given an ***everlasting kingdom***. And in Matthew 26, verses 63-65, Jesus tells the high priest that He is the One who will be coming "in the clouds of heaven"—stating that He was the Messiah—and the Son of man that Daniel wrote about! So the sower ***is Jesus!***

2) The field is the world! We see that in the beginning of vs 38, don't we?

The word "world" comes from the Greek word "kosmos," but in this context it does not mean the definition I gave you a couple of weeks ago: the "organized system of fallen humanity that operates in opposition to God." Here it means simply "the inhabitants of the earth; the human race" (Biblehub.com; Strong's 2889).

3) The good seed are the children of the kingdom. We see that in vs 38 as well. But ***which*** kingdom? The **earthly kingdom** of the Jews? No; it's the kingdom ***of God***—also called the kingdom ***of heaven***. We see that back in verse 24 when Jesus began to teach the parable. ***What*** is the kingdom ***of heaven?*** In this context, it refers to a ***spiritual kingdom*** where Christ rules in the hearts of those who belong to God.

In other words, it is an ***invisible*** kingdom that ***only true, born-again believers*** belong to.

--But ***in what sense*** does Jesus "***sow***"—plant or place—God's children in the field of the world? **MacArthur** put it like this: "The Lord plants His people in the world as His witnesses, to grow and become fruitful plants of righteousness.... Christians are not left in the world by accident but are placed here on divine assignment from their Lord." (https://www.preceptaustin.org/matthew-13-commentary#13:38)
--That truth should both ***excite*** us and ***challenge*** us. We should be ***excited*** because ***we are*** where we are because ***God has placed us*** where we are! Stated another way, we have been "divinely planted" by God!
The ***challenge***, though, is this: "Are ***we doing*** what ***God wants us to be doing*** in the place He has planted us?"

Next, let's consider… B. The enemy of the man who sows tares in the same field
Here we have ***two*** things we need to consider: who is the ***enemy***—and who are the ***tares?***
1) The enemy is the devil! We see that plainly stated by Jesus in the beginning of vs 39. And it's certainly not a "news-flash" that the devil and Jesus are enemies!
2) The tares are the children of the devil! Notice what it says at the end of vs 38 "but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*;" Although the word "one" (after "wicked") is ***italicized***—meaning it was ***added by*** the translators—it was a ***good*** addition. ***Why?*** Because it clarifies and emphasizes that the tares are the children of ***one*** wicked ***being*** in particular—the ***devil*** himself! And we know that because that's what verse 39 says: "**The enemy** that sowed them is **the devil**."
--So who—and what—are ***children*** of the devil? The children of the devil are not the ***physical offspring of the devil***—just like the children of the kingdom are not the ***physical offspring of God.*** Jesus is talking in ***spiritual terms*** and the ***children*** represent people—regardless ***of their age***—who "take after" their ***spiritual*** father.
--How many spiritual ***fathers*** are there? ***Two!*** God and the devil!
--What do we have ***to do*** to become a member of ***God's*** spiritual family? What did Jesus tell Nicodemus?
John 3:3 "Except a man be born again, he cannot **see the kingdom of God**."
--So you have to be ***born again*** to become a member of God's family—and a child of the kingdom.
--But what about ***becoming a member*** of Satan's spiritual family? Stated another way, what do you ***need to do*** to become a child ***of the devil?***
--Do you have to do ***extremely evil things***—like kill someone—in order to be in the devil's spiritual family?
--Do you have to commit ***a certain number of sins***—like 1000—in order to be included in the devil's family?
--The answer is "***no***" to both questions! Jesus tells us in John 8:44 ***who the people are*** that have the devil as their father. ***Listen carefully.*** It was not addicts…or adulterers…or murderers…or thieves…or women of ill repute! It was ***religious*** people…who ***read the OT***…and ***tried to keep*** all of God's commandments! Yes; you heard me right—and I'm going to ***say it again***: Jesus told ***religious*** people…who ***read the OT***…and ***tried to keep*** all of God's commandments, that ***their father was the devil!***
--But ***why?*** Because if you read John 8 in its entirety, you'll notice that these "religious" people ***rejected*** what Jesus said! They refused to see their ***need for forgiveness***—and consequently they rejected their ***need for the Savior***. They were ***counting on themselves*** and their "commandment-keeping" ability to qualify themselves for membership in God's family.
--In Ephesians 2:2, Paul calls the devil "the prince of the power of the air" and goes on to say that the devil's spirit works in the children of disobedience.
--In Ephesians 2:3, Paul says that all believers—before they were saved—had that same spirit in the past!
--So to become a member of Satan's spiritual family, you don't ***have to do*** anything—you are ***born*** into it! And you'll ***remain*** in Satan's spiritual family—and ***die*** in Satan's spiritual family—unless you are ***born again!***
C. The servants who want to get rid of the tares in the field
--So who are the servants who want to get rid of the tares?
--In vs 27, they are called "the servants of the householder"—the one who sowed "good seed" in His field.
--And since Jesus is the sower—and the good seed is the children of God's kingdom—the servants are servants of Jesus—the King of the kingdom! And what do God's servants sometimes want to do?
--Be like James and John and ***call down fire*** from heaven ***to consume*** the "bad" people, right?
--And if you ***know history***, that has happened in the past! Here's a quote from an ***on-line article*** entitled

"Christian Persecution: From Ancient Times to the Present Era."

"After the Reformation, **Catholic authorities** in countries such as Spain, Italy, and France sought to suppress Protestantism through legal measures, censorship, and violence. One of the most infamous episodes of persecution during this time was the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, in which thousands of French Huguenots (Protestants) were killed in a wave of Catholic mob violence.

Similarly, in Protestant-majority regions like England and the Netherlands, **Catholics faced repression**, including the destruction of monasteries, confiscation of property, and imprisonment. For instance, under Queen Elizabeth I, Catholics in England were considered traitors for remaining loyal to the Pope and were subjected to fines, imprisonment, and execution."
(https://ecspe.org/christian-persecution-from-ancient-times-to-the-present-era/)

The point, of course, is this: Muslims aren't the only ones who have killed Christians! "Christians"—I'm using the term loosely—have killed other "Christians"—in the name of trying to get rid of "bad" people. And let's not forget that from time to time, abortion doctors are murdered because so-called "good" people want to get rid of "bad" people!

That's not our place, though! And that brings us to…

D. The statement to let both grow together until harvest time

--I couldn't help but notice ***how concise*** Jesus' explanation was regarding the identity of the sower…and the field…and the good seed…and the tares…and the enemy who sowed the tares among the wheat.
--But that all changes when Jesus ***begins to explain*** what happens at ***harvest time!*** He slows down…and repeats what happens to the ***physical*** tares, then goes into detail about what happens to the children ***of the devil***—and the children ***of God***. First, let's notice…

1) The "harvest" is the end of the world. We see those ***exact words*** in the middle of vs 39**.** But what does Jesus ***mean by*** the end of the world—and ***when*** does that ***occur?*** We don't know—from this parable—because Jesus doesn't expand on that! But we know that the "end" of the world is ***judgment time*** because that is what Jesus emphasizes!

2) The reapers are angels. The reapers—the separators of God's children and the children of the devil—are ***not God's children*** in this current age. Jesus plainly states—in the end of vs 39—that angels are the reapers—and they will do the "reaping" when Jesus tells them to. Vs 41 "The Son of man shall send forth His angels…"

And it is not coincidental that in the book of Revelation, the word "angel" appears 72 times—nearly 50 times more than any other book in the Bible! ***Why?*** Because angels are God's agents in carrying out judgment!

3) The fate of the unsaved. Vs 40 "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of the world." ***Who*** are the tares? The children ***of the devil***, right?

Jesus gets even more specific in vs 41: "All things **that offend**, and them which **do iniquity**." In other words, sinners! ***What happens*** to sinners? Just like weeds, they are gathered up and ***burned in fire!*** Is that really what Jesus ***meant? Yes, it is***—and Jesus says it again in vss 41 and 42!

Barnes put it like this: "He [Jesus] would not talk of hell-fire which had no existence, nor would the Saviour of men hold out frightful images merely to terrify mankind. If *He* has spoken of hell, then there *is* a hell. If *He* meant to say that the wicked shall suffer, then they *will* suffer." (*Barnes' Notes – The Gospels*; pg 147).

Notice Jesus' closing words of the parable in the end of vs 43: "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Please, hear what Jesus is saying! Don't call the One whose name is the Truth a liar by saying there is no hell!

And don't believe for a minute that the One who left Heaven—and died in your place to pay the penalty you deserved—made a tragic mistake in dying to rescue you when there is nothing you needed to be rescued from! "Who hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

We also have in vs 43… **4) The future of the righteous**

--Vs 43 "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Isn't that great? Shining in brightness as radiant as the sun in a kingdom that will go on for ever and ever! We see similar words in Daniel 12:3.

Who are the righteous? Those who acknowledge that they are ***not*** righteous—and can ***never become righteous*** on their own—and who humbly turn to the Saviour for forgiveness and mercy. And in the words of Jesus Himself, "he that cometh to me I will in no wise [way] cast out." (John 6:37).

Lastly—and briefly—***3. The application of the tares and wheat***
Most of these we've touched on so I don't need to spend a lot of time on them.

A. It's not our place to "get rid of" the wicked!

--But you can—and should—vote out politicians that have an anti-God agenda!
--And you can—and should—part company with friends if they are a hindrance to you in trying to live for God.
--But we never should resort to physical violence to try to "get rid of" people that hate us. That's God's job, not ours! Vengeance is His—He will repay!

B. The children of the devil—and the children of God—will remain "mixed together" until the end of the world!

--That's not have a defeatist or fatalistic attitude—that is simply accepting what Jesus is teaching here in this parable!
--And you ***can't always tell them*** apart, can you? In other words, sometimes the children of the devil—and the children of God—look the same.
--And it should not be surprising that Satan—the great imitator—has his children planted ***in politics***—and ***in pulpits!*** The Bible warns us much about false teaching and teachers—and yet there are still a lot of Christians that fail to distinguish the false from the true!

Lastly, but most importantly… C. There are two types of people—and two eternal destinies
--That's what the parable is about, right? The children of the devil will endure **eternal punishment**; the children of God will enjoy ***eternal joy.***
--What about ***you?*** ***Which*** kingdom do you belong to? ***Whose*** child are you? Let's not forget that we all start out in Satan's spiritual family—but we don't have to ***stay in it!*** Although literal, physical weeds can never become wheat, ***the devil's children*** can become children of God! We can be born again…and delivered from the power of darkness…and translated (transferred) into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13).

So what would God have us do?

1. If you're not saved—if you've never seen yourself as a sinner in need of forgiveness—you need to humble yourself…and believe what Jesus says about hell…and come to Him for forgiveness.

2. But what about those of us that are children of the kingdom? What does God want us to do? Warn and woo and win others to Christ, right?