

# The Wheat and the Tares

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

## Introduction

Who remembers what a parable is? It's a true-to-life short story that is designed to teach a truth. Jesus taught in parables because He wanted His followers to learn to listen with their spiritual ears; that is, with their hearts. This is a deeper kind of listening; the kind that gives spiritual insight and understanding.

Today we're going to learn a parable about the wheat and the tares.

## Opening Prayer

Father, we want to learn as much as we can about Your kingdom. We love You and want to please You in everything we do. Open our spiritual ears this morning so that we might listen with our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## Memory Verse

*Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.  
(Matthew 7:15-16a)*

## Lesson

Parables teach us about God and His kingdom. They explain what the kingdom is really like. Do you know where the kingdom of God is? Is it someplace far off? No, it's right here among us. It's not another geographic location, it's a spiritual realm where God rules and where we share in His eternal life. We join God's kingdom when we trust in Jesus as our Savior.

Matthew 13:24-25

*Here is another story Jesus told: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. (25) But that night as the*

*workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away.*

Tares are a type of weed that looks just like wheat.

Matthew 13:26-30

*When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. (27) "The farmer's workers went to him and said, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?' (28) "An enemy has done this!" the farmer exclaimed. "Should we pull out the weeds?" they asked. (29) "No," he replied, 'you'll uproot the wheat if you do. (30) Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.'"*

When Jesus told these stories to His disciples, they were wondering why He was telling them stories about farming.

Let's read Jesus' explanation of this parable...

Matthew 13:36-43

*Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, "Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field." (37) Jesus replied, "The **Son of Man is the farmer** who plants the good seed. (38) The field is the world, and the **good seed represents the people of the Kingdom**. The **weeds are the people who belong to the evil one**. (39) The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels. (40) "Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. (41) The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. (42) And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!"*

[Teacher, use the following discussion questions to help the children dig out the spiritual lessons in this parable...]

- In this parable, Who is the farmer? (The Lord, vs 37)
- What are the "good seeds"? (They are the true believers, vs 38.)
- What are the "weeds"? (They are the unbelievers, vs 38.)

As I told you earlier, tares are a certain type of weed that looks almost the same as wheat. While they are growing, you can barely tell the difference between wheat and tares until it's time to harvest them and they start to bear fruit. The tares do not develop heads like wheat does. You can grind the wheat heads into flour and make bread. And, as you know, bread brings nourishment and life to people. Tares are actually poisonous. If you eat tares it makes you sleepy, nauseous, and can cause you to go into convulsions, and even cause both man and animals to die.

What does this tell you about the kingdom of God? In this world there are people who are true believers and some that look just like true believers, but they're not. It's almost impossible for us to tell them apart sometimes, isn't it? But, those who believe become more Christ like as they mature. They bring spiritual nourishment to others by telling them the truth about God's wonderful plan of salvation. Unbelievers can bring spiritual death to people by their false teachings about God's kingdom.

When did the enemy sow the tares in among the wheat? (While men slept, vs 25.)

What spiritual lesson can you learn from this fact? (If you are spiritually asleep, people who look just like Christians can come into your life.) What does it mean to be spiritually asleep? (To be ignorant of the Word of God, the truth about the kingdom of God)

What happens when unbelievers are allowed to flourish in our churches? (If you don't know the Word of God, if you don't know the truth about God's plan of salvation, false teachers can lead you to believe lies about God's kingdom. They can deceive you into thinking wrong things about the Lord.)

You need to be spiritually awake or you'll find yourself spiritually dead. Know what God's Word says!

- What did the weeds do in last week's parable? (They choked out the truth about God.)

- Why didn't the owner want the servants to pick the weeds? (Vs. 28-29 tells us that He's going to have the angels determine who's a good seed and who's a tare. Because we can't see into other people's hearts, we can't be positive who's a true believer. Only God can judge a man's heart rightly.)
- Why did the sower want to wait to separate the wheat from the tares until everything was gathered in at harvest time? (He wants all men to have every opportunity to turn to the truth about Him.)
- What's going to happen to the tares, the "good seed look-a-likes", at harvest time? (They will be cast into the furnace of fire where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.)
- What does it say about the good seed, the true believers? (They will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.)
- What are the spiritual lessons we can learn from this parable?
  - Some people who look like true believers may not be.
  - Only good seed produces good fruit in their lives.
  - It's not up to us to judge other people's hearts, God will do that.

## CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we want to be good seed. We want to be the kind of people that bring life to others. Help us to bend our hearts towards You, Lord, so that our lives bear fruit unto You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### CRAFT CORNER

### GAME CENTER

Have the children work on the *Getting Rid of Weeds* worksheet or send it home as a “take home” paper.

Or, use the following questions in another game of your choice:

#### **Review questions:**

1. What is a parable? (A true-to-life short story designed to teach a truth)
2. Why did Jesus teach in parables? (Jesus wanted His followers to learn to listen with their spiritual ears; that is with their hearts.)
3. What is a tare? (A type of weed that looks just like wheat)
4. Who does the “farmer” represent in this story? (The Son of Man; the Lord, vs 37.)
5. What does the “field” represent? (The world, vs 38.)
6. What do the good seeds stand for? (The people of the kingdom; believers, like you and me — we’re the good seed, vs 38.)
7. What do the “weeds” represent in this story? (The people who belong to the evil one; unbelievers, vs 38, and also, those who offend the Lord and practice lawlessness, vs 41.)
8. Who was the enemy who sowed the weeds into the field, or world? (The devil, vs 39)
9. What is the “harvest”? (The end of the world, when Jesus comes back, vs 39.)
10. Who are the “harvesters”? (Angels, vs 39.)
11. At the end of the world, what do the harvesters do with the weeds? (They are gathered and burned in the fire, vs 40.)
12. What’s it like in the fiery furnace where the weeds get thrown? (There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, vs 42.)
13. What happens to the good seed; “the righteous”? (They will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom, vs 43.)
14. What spiritual truth did you learn from this parable? (Some people who look like true believers may not be; only good seed produce fruit in their lives; it’s not up to us to judge other people’s hearts, God will do that.)

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