

The Wheat and the Tares

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

Introduction

Last week we started a new lesson series on the parables of Jesus.

Ask: Who remembers what a parable is?

It's a true-to-life story designed to teach a spiritual truth.

Jesus taught in parables because He wanted to challenge His followers to think deeply to learn the spiritual lessons He wanted them to learn about the kingdom of heaven.

Last week we learned about the *Parable of the Sower and the Seed*.

In that story we learned that Jesus is the “farmer” spreading the seed, or the Word of God, which lands in four different types of soils. The soils represented the ways different people react to hearing the Good News that Jesus came and died for their sins. Some people had **hard hearts**, other people had **shallow hearts**, other people had **thorny hearts**. They received the word gladly, but they became entangled in the cares of this world, still other people had **good-soil hearts** that allowed the word of God to take root which caused them to grow spiritually.

This week we're going to learn another story Jesus told using farming terms. This week's parable is called *The Wheat and the Tares*. Some people call it the *Parable of the Weeds*.

Ask: How many of you get weeds in your garden? Do you like pulling them out? (No! Me either!!)

Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference between the plants you want growing in your garden and the weeds, isn't it?

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 NKJ)*

Lesson

So, let's read Jesus' story about the *Wheat and the Tares*.

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.*

Jesus told this story so that people could learn more about the kingdom of heaven. And it is written down in our bibles so that you and I can learn more about it, too.

Ask: Last week in the Parable of the Sower and the Seed...

- Who was the **farmer**? (The Lord)
- What was the **seed**? (The Word of God)
- What was the **field**? (The hearts of people)
- Who was the **enemy**? (Satan)

This week we have a few more terms to learn.

Ask: Do you know where the **Kingdom of Heaven** is – is it someplace far off?

No, it's right here among us. We joined God's kingdom the moment we put our trust in Jesus as our Savior. Jesus' kingdom is right inside of our own hearts. We believers make up the kingdom of heaven!

Another term we need to learn more about is this word “**weeds**.”

The “**weeds**” in this story are the seeds of **tares**. Tares are a type of weed that looks just like wheat.

If you were to read verse 25 in the New King James translation, it would say, “*while men slept, his enemy came and sowed **tares** among the wheat and went his way.*”

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, on the other hand, 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.

So, the weeds look like good seed, but they aren’t! They are tares. And, they can be deadly!

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 followers, they were wondering why He was telling them stories about farming. But Jesus wanted His disciples to understand the deeper meaning of His story. So, He explained it to them.

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

Matthew 13:36-39 Follow along as I read...

*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.*

Some of the terms are a little different than last week so let’s go through this verse by verse:

Using the *Keys to Understanding Jesus’ Parable of the Wheat and the Tares* worksheet write in the answers as we discuss the following. Note that *the one who sows the good seeds* is the Farmer.]

- 1) Who does the “**farmer**” represent in this story? (The Son of Man; the Lord, vs 37.)
- 2) What does the “**field**” represent? (The world, the hearts of all the people in the world, vs 38.)
- 3) What do the “**good seeds**” stand for? (The sons of the kingdom; believers; the good-soil person who allowed the seed to take root in their hearts, vs 38.)
- 4) What do the “**weeds**” represent in this story? (The sons of the evil one; unbelievers, vs 38, and, those who sin and break the law, vs 41.)
- 5) Who was the “**enemy**” who sowed the weeds into the field, or world? (The devil, vs 39)
- 6) What is the “**harvest**”? (The end of the age, when Jesus comes back to judge the world, vs 39.)
- 7) Who are the “**reapers**” (or harvesters)? (Angels, vs 39.)

Matthew 13:40-43 Let's continue, follow along as I read...

"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!"

The Spiritual Truths

Let's dive in and see what spiritual truths Jesus is trying to teach His disciples...

Ask: At the end of the age; that is at the end of time, Jesus is coming back to judge people. What's going to happen to the tares, these "good seed look-a-likes"; the sons of the evil one?

They will be gathered and burned with fire. (See verse 40.)

Ask: What's it like in the fiery furnace where the weeds get thrown?

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (See verse 42.)

Ask: What happens to the good seed; that is, "the righteous"?

Verse 43 says, they will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom; verse 30 says they will be put into the barn. Both of those verses are speaking of heaven!

Ask: Why didn't the farmer want the servants to pick the weeds?

Vs. 28-29 tells us that Jesus is 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.

Ask: The farmer wanted to wait to separate the wheat from the tares until everything was gathered in at harvest time. What does that tell you about God?

He wants all men to have every opportunity to turn to the truth about Him. This tells me He is patient.

Ask: What two types of people did you learn about in this story?

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? Some people who look like true believers may not be.

Ask: What is one good way to tell a true believer from an unbeliever?

Only good seed produces good fruit in their lives. 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.

Ask: When did the enemy sow the tares in among the wheat?

While his men were sleeping. (See verse 25.)

Ask: What does it mean to be spiritually asleep?

To be ignorant of the Word of God; to not understand the truth about the kingdom of God.

Ask: Why must you be spiritual awake? What can happen if you are spiritually asleep?

You need to be spiritually awake or you'll find yourself spiritually dead. If you are spiritually asleep, people who look just like Christians can come into your life and trick you into believing lies about God. You've got to know the Lord and what His Word says!

Ask: What happens when unbelievers are allowed to teach others in our churches?

They can deceive you into thinking wrong things about the Lord. (Refer to today's verse.)

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.

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

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

GAME CENTER

Wheat and Tare Game

Divide the children into two teams: boys against girls, for example. For every correct answer to one of the following questions, a child can pick up a playing card with a picture of wheat on the front. On the backs of some of the cards, write the word "Zonk" and on the rest of the cards, write point values. The "Zonk" cards are the "birds" and are worth nothing. Keep track of each team's points.

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

1. What is the main point of the Parable of the Sower and the Seed? (There are four different reactions people have to the Gospel.)
2. What is the main point of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares? (There is going to be a day of judgement and it will not be good for those who have not put their trust in Jesus.)
3. What two groups of people does the Parable of the Wheat and Tares tell us about? (Believers and unbelievers)
4. What is the "end of the age" referring to? (At the end of time, Jesus will judge every person that ever lived on earth.)
5. What is going to happen to the unbelievers at the end of the age? (They will be thrown into the lake of fire.)
6. Why is it important for the angels to sort out the good from the bad seed? (People can not tell the difference. Only God can see the heart of man.)
7. What does the fact that the farmer wanted to wait to separate the wheat from the tares until everything was gathered in at harvest time tell you about God? (He is gracious and long suffering. He wanted to give every unbeliever time to change their mind.)
8. What is one good way to tell a true believer from an unbeliever? (You will know them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:16a NKJ)
9. When did the enemy sow the tares in among the wheat? (While the men were sleeping.)
10. Why must you be spiritual awake? What can happen if you are spiritually asleep? (If you are spiritually asleep, people who look just like Christians can come into your life.)
11. What can happen if an unbeliever is allowed to teach in our church? (They can deceive you into thinking wrong things about the Lord.)
12. How can you be sure you are not tricked by an unbeliever into believing something false about God? (Know the Word of God; know the truth.)

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