

# The Parable of the Wheat and Tares

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by S. Michael Durham  
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I'm going to do this somewhat unconventional. We're going to read verses 36-43 first and then we will take what we read in verses 36-43 and superimpose it on verses 24-30. You may have no idea what that means, but you'll understand why we're doing it.

## Matthew 13:36-43

*Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." 37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

## Matthew 13:24-30

*Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."'*

Here you have it, the parable and its interpretation altogether. This is a most important parable. In fact, this entire chapter is most important because it is a chapter Matthew dedicates to an explanation of the kingdom of God. In fact, you will find in this chapter that Jesus taught eight separate parables, all dealing with different aspects of the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, which are the same.

## **I. What is the Kingdom of Heaven?**

## **A. What the Kingdom Is Not.**

Let me begin with what it isn't. It is not the church. Yet, sadly, so many have said the kingdom is the church, the people of God. This wrong understanding of the kingdom has created great confusion in God's people. It's one of the reasons I think the church is hampered in her efforts as ambassadors of the King.

Where did we get this idea that the church is the kingdom? Where does this come from? Where is the fountainhead of this polluting stream?

I say it goes back all the way to Rome. That Italian capital city is still plaguing us to this day. Some of the traditions and doctrines and traditions that came out of the Roman Empire and out of the Roman church has polluted even Baptist churches, even us to some degree. We carry traditions that did not begin with Scripture but with Roman Catholics and Catholicism.

For example, when Constantine, the Roman emperor, decided to legalize Christianity and make it the official religion of the Roman Empire, everybody instantaneously became a Christian. If you were a Roman citizen you were therefore a Christian and there's where we have the beginning of baptizing of babies. Immediately after birth, not only were they baptized as citizens of the Roman Empire but citizens in the kingdom of God. It was one in the same thing.

Then came some godly men, great men of God, whom we respect to this day, like Augustine. "He went so far as to say that a mixture of good and evil in the church is a necessary 'sign' of the church" (Matthew 13:37, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*). He believed Jesus was saying, "Not only do you have saved people in the church but you have unsaved and this is one of the signs of the church."

And, of course, years later one of the great reformers, John Calvin, whom we respect highly, said the world was merely a figure of speech for the church. He said this parable of the kingdom was about the church. He advocated Jesus was saying that the kingdom will have regenerate and un-regenerate members and it is not a pure church.

Beloved, one of the distinctions of evangelical New Testament Christianity is that a local church is to be comprised only of regenerate, saved, members. Now, as much as we know, believe, and strive for that, there will be people who come into our ranks as members who are not truly regenerate. We don't know that at the time, of course. They give us some evidence of having been truly saved but their heart has not been born again. We cannot do much about that; it's just going to happen. But to open the doors of church membership to those who do not testify to the regenerating work of God and say that is a sign of a true church, I say, anathema! That is not biblical. I don't care if it's John Calvin. If any man, whether it be Martyn Lloyd-Jones or Charles Spurgeon say something not Scriptural, we cannot accept it!

We know it's not the church because Jesus did not define it as the church but as the world. Look at verse 38. He says the field is, not the church, but the world and the good seeds are the sons

of the kingdom. Jesus does not define the field as the church but as the world. It's not a figure of speech for the church. If the church is Jesus' meaning and I'm wrong and Calvin is right, then the call of Jesus for purity in the church in Matthew 18 is a contradiction. In Matthew 18, Jesus says if one of you sin and do not repent, and a brother confronts you and you still don't repent, then two more confront you and you still do not repent, that you are to be presented before the church. And if you still don't repent before the church the church has one decision and one decision only and that is to expel such an unrepentant person because the church is to be comprised of people who are repenters. Not perfect people but repenters. His point is that the church is to be made up of true Christians and not some mix collaboration.

If Jesus is calling for a church of repenters, pure people who are truly regenerate, yet say in our text that the world is the church and should use the word *kingdom* and *church* synonymously, well then He's contradicting Himself.

We know that's not the case. Jesus never contradicted Himself, nor does the Scripture contradict itself. The kingdom is not the church. The church is part of the kingdom, it's in the kingdom, but the kingdom of God is much greater than even His bride, the church.

Well, what is it then, if it isn't the church?

## **B. What the Kingdom Is.**

Think about this with me. What is a kingdom? What makes up a kingdom? A kingdom is the rule and influence of a king. To the extent of his rule and influence is the extent of his kingdom. In other words, where you have the king, you have the kingdom. What is the kingdom of God? It is the kingdom of our blessed Savior and as far as His rule and reign and influence reach, there's His kingdom! I suggest to you that His kingdom is universal. He rules and reigns over all He has made. Do not the Scriptures say this? He rules and reigns over His entire kingdom.

In the parables of the kingdom, we see different aspects of said kingdom. For example, in the Parable of the Seed and the Sower found earlier in the chapter, the seed is defined in verse 19 not in the same way as it is in our parable. In our parable, the good seed is the loyal subjects of the king, the sons of the kingdom, but the seed in the parable of the Seed and the Sower is the word or the message of the kingdom.

Let me give you another example of what we're trying to explain here.

In verse 44, the kingdom is not explained in this parable as the field but as a treasure buried in a field. Do you see the difference? In each parable Jesus is giving you a different perspective, aspect, or understanding of the kingdom. If you take the parables and try to make the symbols work the same in each parable, you're going to be greatly confused.

All our Lord is doing is giving us different nuances that give us a better understanding of the kingdom. In our parable the kingdom extends as far as the rule of the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes the world, even though most of the world is in rebellion to its King. That doesn't mean the King and His kingdom is not the world. The universe and the world in it belongs to Him.

When Jesus left this earth and commissioned His apostles He said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." When we think of the kingdom of God we normally think of it in an eschatological way—future tense—that the kingdom of God is going to come to the earth, and it is! It is! But Jesus, in our text, says the kingdom is already here. There is a *now but not yet* tension in the New Testament. One of the reasons the kingdom is so difficult to understand is because we can't see it right now. In its current condition, it's invisible, it rules in the hearts of men and women. But that doesn't mean the King is not on His throne and ruling! The Bible teaches in a sovereign God who has all authority and all power. God has the power to enforce His authority at any moment at any time. It doesn't matter what some tyrant may do. He can only do as much as the sovereign God allows him to, and when that man's will comes up to the perimeters of God's eternal destination and plan, that man will lose. He cannot precede any further. We see this in human history and we see it in our own lives.

The Bible declares that God rules over all His creation, and all principalities and powers have already been placed under the authority of Christ. We are not losing, friends! The kingdom of God is not receding or taking a back seat, no, we're advancing. The kingdom of God is here now and our King is winning! He's already won.

I love how R.C. Sproul says it in his book *Chosen by God*. Sproul says,

*"If there is one single molecule in this universe running around loose, totally free of God's sovereignty, then we have no guarantee that a single promise of God will ever be fulfilled. Perhaps that one maverick molecule will lay waste all the grand and glorious plans that God has made and promised to us."*

If there was a molecule that was so small a microscope couldn't see it but it's nonetheless there, and it's able to do anything without God's permission or superintendence then God is no longer God but that molecule is. Don't tell me the kingdom is just the church. It's far greater than the church. This "sovereign" United States has only a degree of sovereignty. It's not absolute because the King of the universe is the only absolute sovereign ruler.

The kingdom is not the church; the kingdom is the rule and influence of the King. Wherever His rule and influence is, there is His kingdom. You might ask, "Why then does Jesus say to Nicodemus, 'You must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God'? According to you Nicodemus is already in the kingdom?" Yes he is under the rule and reign of God, but he's not a loyal subject. He's a seditious rebel. In that aspect he's not observing the authority of the King, but that doesn't mean he's not under the King's rule. If you want to be in the kingdom as the sons of the kingdom

you have to believe in the King and pledge your allegiance to Him and follow Him. The dear sinner friend you're praying for, he's in the kingdom of God—but not like you—in the sense that you love your King and what to do His will. And God's will *will* be done on heaven and on earth.

### **C. Our Gospel is About the Kingdom and not About the Church.**

This is where the church and the kingdom being synonymous is confusing people and has done something to us that has been absolutely injurious. This has hurt and harmed us. Let me establish this. I did this on Tuesday night at the prayer meeting before we prayed, but let me do this again for those of you who weren't there. I want to trace through the Gospels and the book of Acts. What is this Gospel and what is it about?

When John the Baptist came on the scene in Matthew 3:2 the Bible says his very first sermon was,

*“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”*

It's *at hand* meaning *it's near*.

In Matthew 4:17, after Jesus had been baptized and anointed, He comes on the scene and what does He say? He preaches the exact same message as John the Baptist.

*“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”*

He didn't say the kingdom of heaven is *going to appear*, it's not *someday* happening, He said it's already here. That's what *at hand* means. It's at your hand, it's right there. When the Pharisees asked the Lord to show them the kingdom, He said the kingdom doesn't come with manifestation. Meaning it's not visible except in the hearts of men, but it's *here*. He established the fact that it's already here.

In Matthew 4:23 Jesus begins His ministry. These are the words Matthew used to describe that ministry,

*“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (not the church), and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.”*

There you see the demonstrative presentation and the doctrinal proclamation. He did both. But it's the Gospel of the *kingdom*. You say, “What's the big deal?” You'll see in just a moment.

In Jesus' first, and probably most memorable sermon, He begins saying,

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*  
(Matthew 5:3)

The church is important. Don't misunderstand me. I don't need to prove it to you, I'm a churchman and you know it. In fact, I was recently criticized that I emphasize the church way too much and am leading in a way that places too much emphasis on the church. Well, I'll accept that criticism and I plead guilty. I won't resist that. I consent to that charge. I say we haven't put *enough* importance on the local church. The importance we've put on it is often wrong because we've made the church the kingdom and it's completely different.

When our Lord taught us to pray in Matthew 6:9-10, how did He teach us to pray?

*"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven."*

There it is. He doesn't pray for the advancement of *the church* nor does He teach you to pray for the advancement of the church.

That's a mind-blowing statement that has rocked my world this week. I said to the pastors on Thursday that it's like a jigsaw puzzle. You dump all the pieces out and you go through that arduous, difficult job of getting all the pieces out on the table and then you turn them over and then you segregate them by colors and shapes before you even put the thing together, *then* you start putting them together. For me, the kingdom of God has been like a jigsaw puzzle. I've had all the pieces I just didn't know where all the pieces went. God has helped me further the puzzle of the kingdom this week and it's this—I'm not here to preach and advance the church. I'm here to advance the kingdom as its ambassador.

He says in Matthew 6:33 there is to be one thing and only one thing predominantly in your life.

*"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

Right before Jesus ascended back to the Father, the Bible says that after His resurrection and during that forty day period, in Acts 1:3,

*"to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."*

Let's stop and talk and reason for a moment, shall we? Imagine Jesus. You know you're going back to the Father and your disciples are not going to see you anymore physically and you haven't taught on the church at all. You've only spoken of the church one time (Matthew 16), it was the only time you uttered the word *church*. So wouldn't you think that these men, who are going to be the foundational stones of the church, ought to know something about the church? Don't you think they needed some ecclesiology, a big word that says they needed to study the church and get some facts straight about it? But that's not what He does. He doesn't give one lesson on how the church is to be structured and how they're to do church planting. This is marvelous and amazing to me. All He continues to do is teach them more about the kingdom.



If you are to say, "That's just a Gospel-view because Jesus, as a Jew, and as the Jewish Messiah, was speaking of the kingdom of God in connection with Israel. The disciples saw that the kingdom of God was God ruling upon the earth through Israel." Oh my friends, the kingdom is much larger than Israel and if we're not careful, a dispensational view will creep in here. This is not dispensational, meaning God doing different things at different times. Dispensational thinking says that when Jesus was on this earth His primary mission, as He said, was to the house of Israel and He was there to reestablish the Davidic throne, ruling over Israel. But since the Jews rejected Jesus, God came up with *Plan B*, called the church. Now God is in the church age and is working in the church and isn't doing too much with Israel. Some suggest a different eschatology, an amillennial view that says Israel's chances are over completely and we are to forget about them, mark them off, be done with them because they rejected their Messiah and God has washed His hands of them and they will never come back into the equation. Now it's just the church and we're the kingdom of God and Jesus is our King. No, this is not dispensational nor is it amillennial.

In Acts 8 in the great Samaritan revival when Philip, just a deacon, goes down to Samaria, the Samaritans come to hear and many are converted, so much so that John and Peter feel a need to investigate. Notice what Philip preaches in Acts 8:12,

*"But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized."*

What did he preach? Did he preach about how to get into the church? How to be saved and brought into the membership of a church? No. He preached about how to be brought into the kingdom.

The book of Acts ends talking about Paul's ministry. The last two verses of Acts summarize his entire preaching ministry. He's under house arrest but he's allowed to have guests and the Bible says in Acts 28:30-31,

*"Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him."*

The Gospel of the apostles was the Gospel of the kingdom. They did not preach the church they preached the kingdom, and, beloved, that is our Gospel as well. We are not to welcome men into the church, we are to welcome men into the kingdom and thereby whenever they come into the kingdom they come into the church because the church is part of the kingdom but it's not the entirety of the kingdom. The kingdom is the blessed rule of our King over all things.

Because we have so confused the church with the kingdom we are church oriented not kingdom oriented. Look at the way we think. We think church growth. We think we've got to get these pews filled and it's our job to do that. I'm here to say to you it isn't your job to do that. When you folks, who are a part of the new church plant, go in a month or so and you go to Draffenville

and you open up the doors of a building and you start gathering and assembling there and calling yourselves Solid Rock Baptist Church it is not your task to build that church up, yet that's how we think. We train men in seminaries that this is one of their primary responsibilities and that they've got to lead the church in order to build the church. They gauge success or failure by how many people are sitting in the pews. That's wrong because the emphasis is not on the King. There's no kingdom without a king!

We can have gatherings without the King, we can even "do church" pretty well without the King, and a lot of people are doing that and left their services today thinking they had done well, but you cannot have a kingdom without a king.

It's not about building the church. In Matthew 16, the only place where Jesus mentions the church, our Lord says:

*Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*

Again, the Roman Catholic tradition has filtered down to even we Baptists who say, "We're not Protestants because we never protested against Rome," I think we didn't protest enough and that's our problem.

*And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:17-19)*

This goes back to the prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That happens as the kingdom's influence brought to bear upon the earth through the church. Here is the role of the church in the kingdom. You and I are God's primary instrument of bringing His rule, reign, and influence, to bear upon the earth. This isn't the only tool He has but it's one of the main ones. It's our job to bring the influence of the King to bear upon the earth so that His will in heaven is done on earth. That's our task. This is revolutionary, radical, this is awesome! My job is much greater than being a representative of Oak Grove Baptist Church. I'm a representative of heaven. I haven't been to heaven—I'm on my way there—but I carry documentation from that kingdom inscribed upon my heart and engraved with His name on my forehead, marked by God, His representative. You and I are royalty. Listen to what Peter says, "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people." Why, because you're members of a church? No, not at all. Because you're members of the kingdom. You're an ambassador for the King.

This is better than just being a member of a church. The church is very important, we are the bride of Christ, we are the eternal helpmate of God. One day the consummation will be finished and we will be there with Him ruling and reigning. Where and in what? In His kingdom, which is larger than the church.



We're so gung ho about getting people to the church. Friends, this is not the church. We are the church. I pray God spare you folks and that from day one you get it into your heads that the church building is just a building. It's not the house of God. God doesn't live here at 2945 Oaks Road. He does not live here. He lives in you. You're the dwelling place of God. We are the church and are important, but we're important when it comes to the kingdom in the sense that we are the primary instruments in His hand to bring the kingdom to bear upon this earth.

Therefore, our Gospel is not inviting people to church. Our Gospel is inviting people to know our King. We invite them to our King because He will bless them. We'll talk more about that in just a moment.

## **II. What is the Purpose of the Parable?**

### **A. The Purpose of the Parables Were Two-fold.**

Jesus says the first reason He tells parables is to keep the blind, blind.

*Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup> And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; <sup>15</sup> For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.' <sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear. (Matthew 13:13-16)*

One of the reasons He told stories like this was to keep some people in their darkness. I said this recently to you all, but someone said I needed to tell more stories like Jesus did. Okay, but you will understand far less if I start telling stories like Jesus did because most people heard the stories of Jesus and walked away and said, "I don't understand what He said, do you?" Even the disciples didn't understand and had to come and ask.

So He told parables to keep the blind blind, but secondly He says He told parables to explain some of the mysteries of the kingdom to the disciples. Some of the mysteries to the disciples only.

*And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"*

In other words they said, "Why do You keep telling these stories? Why don't You just teach concepts? These stories are confusing everybody. Why do You do that?"

*He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given." (Matthew 13:10, 11)*

They didn't even understand the story, so how did it help them? Because the disciples would come and ask. Crowds would walk away puzzled, scratching their head but not concerned enough to come to Christ and ask, "Would You please explain?" Why? Because they weren't hungry for spiritual truth they just wanted a meal ticket. "Would You give us some more bread and fish like You did yesterday?" But the disciples had the seed of the kingdom in their hearts and because of that they wanted more. They wanted to understand, so they would go to Him and He would take those parables and dissect them and superimpose them like we did a few moments ago so they would understand some of the mysteries.

Jesus acknowledges that the kingdom is very mysterious. It's really baffling. I had one of the pastors call me on Friday and asked a series of questions and said it was so helpful to see. Because even we, ministers who have been studying the Word for years, have lots of things regarding this kingdom that we just don't understand. It's shrouded in mystery so Jesus gave us stories to give us a little bit more understanding.

What does this parable, the Wheat and Tares, show us about the kingdom?

## **B. They Mystery This Parable Teaches Is the Simultaneous Reign of the Kingdom and Evil.**

Isn't that a mystery? If God sovereignly rules and reigns over everything, why does He allow such pain, sorrow, and misery in His world? If He's the King and this is under His jurisdiction, why is He allowing the things that are taking place?

A couple of Sundays ago, when I heard the news from Brother Paul that the young pastor in Zambia had died, I'm telling you, it broke my heart. Of all the ministers I met while there those 10 days, this was the most promising man. In fact, I told him sitting in Paul and Velda's home, "Brother Lubinda, I believe God's hand is on you and God is going to use you to be a pastor among pastors." He was already training young men in the ministry. Hundreds of orphans were under his care and they all called him "Daddy." We were willing to work with Brother Lubinda in the future and put resources in his hand, if God would so grace us, because we knew this was a Timothy we could invest in. And for God to take him, barely 40 years old, I have to be honest with you, I heard that news and went home and said, "Lord, I don't understand You. I don't understand why You would do this. We need men like this. That's why we go. And then we get one and You take him home. I don't get that." There's a mystery there.

Can you explain to me how this sovereign *good* God would allow jihadists to go into a remote village in Iraq and tear out Christian parents and their children and inexplicably and horribly torture and execute those children before their parents' eyes. If God is so good why does He suffer that to happen? It's a mystery.

You think I may be on the border of blasphemy here, but I'm just being real. I don't understand God sometimes. He doesn't always make sense. It feels like He wants to lose this thing sometimes. Do you ever get that feeling? It's like He's throwing the game.

God is answering these questions in this parable. There are sons of the kingdom and at the same time there are evil people, sons of the devil. Both are allowed to exist in the kingdom of God.

No doubt as John the Baptist wondered so did the apostles, “If the you are the King where is your kingdom and why do you not eliminate the evildoer?” And in Acts, even these men, who we revere as the apostles, after three and a half years, having seen the cross, having seen the resurrected Jesus, they still don’t understand the kingdom. Right before Jesus ascends one of the last things they ask Him,

*Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6)*

All they could see of the kingdom was Israel, just like all we see of the kingdom is the Church. We are doing the same thing they were, only it’s not Israel we think is the kingdom, it’s the church. The kingdom is shrouded in mystery. We think, *God, if You’re sovereign You have to eliminate the evil one and overthrow the enemy and we will reign with You and there will be peace and tranquility.* But Jesus says this is part of the mystery of the kingdom that God allows both good and evil in His kingdom.

### **III. Two Sowers and Their Seed**

#### **A. Jesus is the First Sower and the World is His Field.**

His seed are the elect, the sons of God—the church. There’s the church in this parable, you and me. We’re the seed. Jesus takes His hands and pulls back the soil and plants the seed of the word of the kingdom in your heart and that word has life in your soul and you sprout and germinate and one day you grow up to be fruitful unto Him. You were chosen before the foundation of the world for that. You are His chosen ones. Sons of the kingdom. We’re not illegitimate. We are purposed by God, purchased by the blood of the Lamb, and planted carefully, sovereignly in the place He desires. We are the product of God.

#### **B. Satan is the Second Sower.**

His seed are His children.

*“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8:44)*

*“the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.” (Ephesians 1:2)*

Anyone that is not a Christian is of the devil. I was once of the devil, his child, but God has translated me, birthed me anew, and that old man who was born in the kingdom of darkness is dead and gone. I'm a new man, a new creation! But all those who are yet to receive the new birth are sons of the wicked one.

#### **IV. The Growth of the Seed**

Both grow side by side. Sons of the kingdom and sons of the evil one.

When asked about separating the corrupt seed from the good the Master commands patience and refuses the offer of the servants to let them grow.

The King says to let them grow side by side.

#### **V. The Point of the Parable**

What is the point of growing side by side? If you get that point, you get the whole parable. Why allow them to grow side by side? Evidently it is good for the sons of the kingdom to co-exist with the sons of the wicked one.

In verse 28 the King is asked if He wants His servants to uproot the tares. He answers in verse 29, "No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them."

We have to be careful here. My first word of caution is that Jesus does not explain this verse when He explains the parable. He doesn't touch verse 29 in the explanation, which means we better be careful and not go in headstrong, thinking we're going to pull out some great theological truth. Even Jesus didn't explain it. Why did He not explain it? I think it's simple.

I think it's because the disciples would have understood it. They were living in an agricultural culture. Even though some of them were fishermen, they still would have understood agriculture. They lived off the earth. They knew that a darnel seed, which is what a tare was, had a terrible way of being able to infiltrate the root system of whatever was around it. So they would have understood if you pulled the tare up, you're going to pull wheat up with it. So the only thing you should get from verse 29 is this: It's good to let the tares stay—for your benefit. That's all you can get out of it.

The common answers are flatly unacceptable. Some want to believe, again, this is about the church. They use this parable to justify the leaving off of church discipline. They advocate that if you enforce church discipline you're going to pull up some good members along the way as you're trying to get rid of the bad ones. That's ridiculous. Verse 29 is nothing more than Jesus' way of explaining something through agriculture that the men would have understood. You don't pull up tares while it's growing amongst the wheat. You wait because that's good for the wheat.

Now, as I start bringing this to a conclusion, how could it be good that you and I exist in the world where there are evil ones around us who hate us, hate our message, or at least don't pay attention to it? How could it be good that evil exists around us? How can it be good that jihadists and radical fundamental jihadists are on the rampage today? How can that be good? How can it be good that there are Christians in some Russian gulag in Siberia tonight freezing to death? How can it be good for Christians to be persecuted from the people we love?

There's so many times over the years that I've seen one spouse get saved but I don't see the other one come to Christ and the torment the saved spouse has to go through breaks my heart. I plead, "God, they're unequally yoked. That's not good!" But for whatever reason God hasn't saved them. But from this parable I understand that it's somehow good in this case for the son or daughter of the kingdom to have their lives intertwined with someone who doesn't believe yet.

There are several reasons for this to be good, but let me give you a few pounding in my heart.

### **A. We Learn to Love Like Jesus.**

I think this is one of the main reasons.

It is the responsibility of the King to judge the World, not you and me. We want Him to do it now and if He won't do it now we'll help Him. Internally we censor people and label them *unacceptable, forgone, impossible, too difficult*. That's not your job. You're now in the realm of the judge, the king. I know there's a lot of evil out there, I know it's all around us, but it's not our job to point our fingers and say, "There's the evil and to condemn it." Our job is to love it, not the evil, but those who are the sons of the evil one, just like Jesus does. I know this is difficult for some but listen, if there were no evil ones to love unconditionally, how would you learn to love like Jesus? You may say, "I'm failing at it miserably." That's okay. They're still in your life, aren't they? Then your lesson is not over. You still have time to pass and love them like Jesus.

"Pastor, it hurts too much and I don't think that's right." I harken you back to this morning. I know it's not right, I know it's not just, but this isn't about justice yet. It's not harvest yet. The reapers have not been sent. Then the Judge will discriminate and discern and create a difference but right now it's time to love like Jesus.

Judging is the privilege and prerogative of the King. It is not our task to make distinction and separate the wheat from the tare. Let me ask you, how does Jesus love? I know it's a foolish thing to ask to you who have been loved by this stupendous and amazing and inexplicable love, but I ask you nonetheless: how does God love? He sacrificially loves.

Paul answers the question this way,

*"When we were still without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly."  
(Romans 5:6)*

Who does He love? Ungodly people.

*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:7)*

He goes on to say in the tenth verse that we were reconciled to God while we were enemies. That's how God loves you. So God affords you the opportunity to get to do what Jesus does. You say, "I just don't know." What do you mean you 'don't know'?! He's the King and the King is in you. You can love like Him because He dwells in you.

*"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)*

You can love this way because God can. But you've got to learn how to do it and it's mainly about saying "no" to yourself and "yes" to Jesus. That's why He has allowed the sons of the evil one to coexist and grow up with us.

This leads me to my second reason.

## **B. The Church Is Salt and Light So that the Kingdom Advances.**

That's why He doesn't save us and then immediately transfer us to heaven. He's got other sons to bear. Other seeds to be planted. And you're going to be workers in the field and the field is not the church, the field is the world. But the only way you can do that is to be right there with them. Salt will not preserve sitting on the shelf, it must be on the meat. Salt will not heal sitting in the saltshaker, it's got to be sprinkled on the wound for the disinfecting power to begin. We are to be light and salt.

The next two parables reinforce this.

*Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,<sup>32</sup> which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."<sup>33</sup> Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (Matthew 13:31-33)*

The kingdom of God starts working in a person's life very small. In fact, that person may not even know it. The seed you're sowing in the soul of a person you love, a person you serve and demonstrate the Gospel, but nothing has happened and so you are tempted to give up. Don't do that! Why? Because you're not giving up on the person you're giving up on the King. Remember what the King said the only time He mentioned the church? "I will build my church." It's not my job to



build the church; it's the King's. I am to declare the Gospel of the kingdom by demonstrating and proclaiming God's love and leave the results to God. That's all I've got to do.

It will often not start with fanfare. It begins small and hardly anyone notices but with time it grows.

There are seeds smaller than a mustard seed, however before microscopes it was the smallest seed the first century knew about. It was an idiom of that day. If you wanted to say something was small you would say, "Well, it's as small as a mustard seed." The Pharisees even used that colloquial statement. So Jesus borrows it and says, "The kingdom of God is like this tiny seed." How small is a mustard seed? It's like the dot that a sharpened lead pencil can make on a piece of paper, that's how small it is. But with time it grows up to six or eight feet. That's a pretty big garden plant. There's nothing bigger in a garden than the mustard seed. And notice what happens—the birds of the air come and sit in its branches.

You've got to be careful, but there is another place He uses the term "birds of the air" in this set of parables, it's in the first parable of chapter 13 of Matthew. It was the sower who sowed his seed on the hard soil and the birds of the air came and devoured the seed. What did Jesus say the birds of the air represented? The enemy, the wicked one. I don't see any reason to think that He has changed this illustration or imagery; I think He's trying to say the kingdom will even bless wicked people. They'll sit in its shade and be refreshed.

A little leaven spreads through the whole batch of dough. There is influence! God is working. Where is the King working? We say, "He's working in the church!" But wherever the rule and reign of the King is, there is His activity. God is as active if not more so out there than He is in here. The activity of God is always in the world as well as in the church. Jesus says, "My Father works always, therefore I work." Where was Jesus watching for God to work? In the synagogue? They ran Him out!

Where was God at work? It was beside a pool where lay a sick man in the town of Bethesda. It was a blind man, who had been blind for years. It was a prostitute, who had been caught in the act of adultery. It was a tax collector, the Bernie Madoff of His time, who climbed a sycamore tree because he was too short to look over the crowd. It was in the world where Jesus was working! That's where we are to be.

We're not going to reach anybody sitting here because the church is not designed to do so. Listen, the church is for Christians. I'm not telling you to quit inviting sinners to church, but I want you to understand the law of spiritual averages here. It's not going to be as productive as you want it to be because church isn't designed for sinners. The world is designed for sinners, therefore we have to go into the world and then they'll come in because they're saved and will want to be here.

We have made some serious theological mistakes. For example, we look at ministers like Charles Spurgeon, who took a little church and in a matter of time grew it to thousands and we say,

“That’s the standard. That’s what should happen in every church.” Or we look at the Great Awakening with the Jonathan Edwardses and the Timothy Dwights and the George Whitefields and we say, “There it is, there’s the norm. That’s the way it’s supposed to be.” No it isn’t. Those were extraordinary moves of God. Those were seasons of revival and awakening.

The norm is that we are to go into the world and make disciples! That’s the norm. But we’re sitting here in this church house praying, “God, bring people in,” and God is saying that’s not His design! Why do you want to bring the unregenerate in here? His design is that we are to go to them! We’ve let certain ministries, as previously mentioned, influence us and we’ve let the crusade mentality govern the local church and turned it into an evangelistic crusade. That’s wrong. Christians are impaired by this system. This is the place for equipping you to go and be salt and light.

### **C. We Are the Ambassadors of the Kingdom Announcing Good News that the Kingdom Has Come.**

That’s your job. When you leave here tonight, your job tonight as given by your King—not by me—is to go and tell them that He has come. The King has come and His kingdom has come. What does that mean?

It means the kingdom has already come—we’re not waiting for it to come. He’s already been here, He’s already established His authority, and He has the keys of life, death, and hell. He’s already won. He’s already made a public spectacle of our enemies, they are defeated—He has crushed the devil’s head! He’s already come and the King patiently and graciously calls you to Himself to be blessed. That’s it.

### **D. The Good News About the Kingdom Having Already Come is that the King is Patiently Gracious to Bless.**

The King is patiently gracious to bless, not to judge. The Bible says God sent Jesus into the world not to condemn the world but to give His life so that whoever would believe would not perish but have eternal life. All judgment was given to Jesus while He was on earth but it wasn’t time for judgment. There will be a time for judgment, when He returns visibly on this earth and He sends His reapers into the harvest.

In one of the last parables He told in this chapter about the kingdom was a man who cast his dragnet and collected all kinds of fish in different shapes and sizes and the man separates the fish, the good from the bad. That’s judgment of God. But at this time the good news of the kingdom is that the King is patiently gracious to bless you. In the Sermon on the Mount, which is about the kingdom of God, we read about how those in the kingdom live and how the King operates.

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,<sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He*

*makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.<sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?<sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:43-48)*

How does He define *perfection* here? By loving, blessing, doing good, and praying for the unloving, undeserving, and ungodly. That's the good news.

In other words, your job is not to go and try to persuade people that they need to be at Oak Grove Baptist Church. Your job is to say, “The King has come and He has told me that He wants to bless you.” They might say, “What do you mean, ‘bless’ me? I don’t even believe all that stuff.”

“Well,” you respond, “that’s the good news! The King loves you even though He knows you don’t care about Him but He cares about you—He died for you! How can I pray for you that God will bless your life? What can I do for you today that will show you how much God loves you?” That’s our task. That’s the message that we are called to herald and then do it, like I talked about this morning.

For example, throughout Christian history the unconditional and sacrificial love has blessed societies and man’s plight.

“In the ancient Roman Empire, secular historians record the gracious way that Christians cared for not only their own, but also the poor, dying, and even the slaves at large in the empire. So effective was their social care for the people of the empire that the pagan Emperor Julian grew frustrated that the rest of the Romans could not behave like these Christians whom he called atheists since they did not worship his gods. The social and moral conditions throughout the empire were affected by the work of Christ’s kingdom among His people.” —Phil Newton, *The Growth of the Kingdom*

God has not changed His protocol; it will work again today. This is where we are. This is where I am. I love you all. But Jesus said I don’t get a reward for loving you. In one sense of the word, tax collectors and sinners love their own too, so what am I doing? I mean, you and I have something in common and it’s so wonderful that it really elicits love for one another and it’s easy to love one another. I’m around some of you and my energy level goes up. It climbs just being around you. But Jesus said that doesn’t count. It’s when you love your enemy. It’s when you are willing to cross the street and go to a neighbor, shaking in your boots and say, “I’m here to bless you.”

I’ll tell you how much God has spoken to me this week as I see this for myself. I have a neighbor across the street that we know them very well. We’ve talked to them about the Lord, we’ve prayed for them. I know my neighbors beside them. I don’t have a neighbor to the left or right of me, but I’ve got a neighbor that lives on the corner. They’ve been there for years now and I’ve never walked across the street once to introduce myself. I want you to pray for me, that God will help me to cross the street. That’s what Jesus is saying here. This is the work of the kingdom.

They may run you off their property because your love is getting to them, but that's God's business. He will build His church.

I said something a few weeks ago and I want to reiterate it and explain it. You shouldn't love people just to reach them for Jesus. Now that is a statement that I'm sure you never thought you'd hear from the pulpit. I'm convinced that if my motive is to try to "get them in" that I'm not really loving them, I'm loving my ministry, I'm loving the validation, the approval, the success I might get. Now if you love someone you'll want them in the kingdom, but can you love somebody and keep loving them even if they don't come into the kingdom? Jesus does. There is not a soul that will breathe its last breath and enter into eternity without God that God, even in that last breath, did not love and care for. Even in that day He showed them many mercies but they were too blind to see. He loves them to the very end and He has the power to save them. Once again here is mystery.

Are we really sons of the King? Are you really a son or daughter of the King? How are you children of the King? When you act like your Dad. When you become, proverbially speaking, "a chip off the old block." When you love your enemies. When you bless them that curse you. When you do good to them that hate you. When you pray for those who spitefully use you. Then you're just like your Father.

The King and the kingdom is here in this world and, as we leave here, our task is singular. We are to proclaim to the world that the kingdom has come. Look at what Jesus did. He traveled the countryside healing the sick, causing the blind to see, preaching the Gospel to the poor, setting the captive free. What's He doing? He's proclaiming that the kingdom has come and the kingdom is not judgment, it's mercy. It's love. It's grace. The kingdom is open to any who would come and hear the call and enter in. We'll not critique you, we'll not judge you, rather we'll receive you just the way you are—that's the message of the kingdom. That's the good news! You don't even have to change. The King will change you. He wants to bless you. He's blessing you right now, and if you think that's something, just give Him your life and then see what He will do.

*Count your blessings; name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done*

That's the ministry. That's the proclamation. The King has come, the kingdom is here and He's patiently gracious to bless you. Amen.