

The Parable of the Weeds

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[0 : 00] Well, let's now have a look at the parable of the wheat and the weeds. Boys and girls, you would have seen the video earlier where you were introduced to what Jesus is teaching there.

Now we're going to try to understand it. And so put your thinking caps on, grown-ups as well. And let's dig into this parable and see what it's really saying to us. Well, a few years ago now, we had a garden makeover in our home.

So the garden was looking very worse for where, mostly because of the drought that had happened for a few years. And over the years of the drought, we couldn't water our garden.

We couldn't water our grass because we weren't allowed to use tap water for that. And the grass just deteriorated over time. And so we eventually got in a whole lot of new grass.

We layered over new grass. We got a landscaper to come and bring us a truckload of new grass. And they put it in. And I was very excited about this new green grass.

[1 : 00] I expected that after they left, I could just sit and watch the grass grow and enjoy the new garden. And so it came as a bit of a surprise to me a few weeks later, when the grass started to grow, that I noticed a whole lot of weeds growing up with it.

And that wasn't what I expected. I was expecting new grass with no problems. And then I see all these weeds and I'm asking, why are the weeds here?

That's not what's meant to happen when you get new grass. Well, Jesus, in this parable that we're looking at today, answers the similar question.

If the kingdom has come, like we've been learning in the previous parables, it has come with Jesus. If he's truly the Messiah that the Old Testament spoke about, why is evil in this world and why is it getting worse?

And that is the question that this parable is here to answer. If the kingdom has really come, what is evil still doing here? And so let's have a look and see if we can answer that question with this parable and Jesus' explanation of it.

[2 : 20] Turn with me to Matthew 13 and let's have a look at the parable. Now, you would have seen in the video some of the ideas of what Jesus is saying in this parable.

Let me just refresh your memory. It's about a man who sows seed in his field to grow wheat. He wants to grow wheat and then he goes to sleep. But in the night, his enemy comes and he wants to sabotage his field.

And so what he does is he throws a whole lot of seeds of weeds that are going to grow up with the wheat and cause problems. Then after a while, the servants of the owner of the field see this.

They see weeds are growing up with the wheat and they run to him and they say, Master, Master, your enemy has sown weeds in your field. Can we pull them up? And this is where the parable gets interesting because he says no.

He says they can't pull up the weeds. They mustn't pull up the weeds because, as we read verse 29, when you pull up the weeds, you might also uproot the wheat with them.

[3 : 30] All right. And then he says, let both grow together until the harvest. At harvest time, we'll sort it out. Then Jesus stops. And only later, when his disciples come to him, does he explain to them what that parable is all about.

But in between him telling the parable and him explaining the parable, we read this from verse 34. Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables and he did not tell them anything without a parable, so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled.

I will open my mouth in parables. I will declare things kept secret from the foundation of the world. And that's very important that we read that because that's a quote from Psalm 78.

And what it's saying is that just as God has revealed throughout history new things, things kept secret from the foundation, that means things that people didn't know, which God has then told them about this world and about our lives here.

So in Jesus telling parables, Jesus has also come to reveal new things that were secret before. And that was very important for the Jews of the day to hear.

[4 : 39] Because the Jews had a lot of expectations about what the kingdom would look like when it came, what the new grass, if you like, would look like.

And one of the things they didn't expect is that after the kingdom came, evil would still exist for a time. But Jesus is saying in this parable it does and there's a reason for it.

Now, you've got to understand just the kind of expectations Jewish people had and still have today for the Messiah when he comes. Now, the Jews of today don't realize that he's already come.

And one of the reasons when you talk to them and ask them why they don't recognize Jesus as the Messiah, is they say, and I know this because I spoke to, or at least I chatted online with a Jew not long ago, about this very question.

What they say is, well, the Messiah, our scriptures tell us, is going to bring a reign of peace and justice and prosperity to this world.

[5 : 44] He is going to eradicate all evil and wickedness from this world. Your Jesus didn't do that, so he can't be the Messiah.

Now, that was their understanding of how the kingdom was going to come and what was going to happen when the Messiah comes. But Jesus is now in these parables saying, it's not like you think, right?

The kingdom has come, but those things are still going to happen in the future. These things are happening in stages. And that's what this parable is really here.

It's here to change our expectations, change the Jewish expectations for the coming of the kingdom. And it's also here to correct our wrong thinking when we look at the world around us.

And we look at this world and we see evil. We might be led to think some things about the kingdom that aren't true. And so I want to address at least three of those things this morning.

[6 : 43] Three incorrect thoughts we might have when we look at the world around us and we see all the evil in this world and we see it still growing. The first of those is that we might be tempted to think Jesus is not in charge.

Many people look at this world and they say, there's suffering, there's death, there's pain, there's evil people getting away with evil things.

How can you say Jesus is actually in charge? That's why we need this parable. Because what this parable tells us is that Jesus, the Son of Man, that's one of his titles is the Messiah, is the owner of the field.

And even if weeds are growing up in the field, it doesn't mean that the owner is not there and it doesn't mean that the owner is not in control. That's the first thing we need to realize from this parable.

Because throughout this story, the owner was in control of his field and he didn't want weeds to grow up, but he let them grow up for a reason. He let these weeds exist with his wheat.

[7 : 48] Jesus is saying, he, even if he's in charge of this world, lets evil exist for a while. That is a difficult thought, I must admit. And the obvious question is, well, why? If he's powerful, if he's in charge, why does he let evil continue to reign and exist in this world and even get worse?

And that's where we need to go back to verse 29. When his servants asked the owner of the field, why aren't you pulling up the weeds? Why don't you want to?

He says, when you pull up the weeds, you might also uproot the wheat with them. So here the owner of the field orders a deliberate delay so that the wheat can grow up without being damaged. And in the same way, Jesus is saying, he is delaying the judgment of evil, even though he's in charge of this world and he is ruling God's kingdom, which has come to this world, even though it's still, for the most part, invisible.

It is still here and it is still growing and people are coming into it and people are submitting to God and serving God. And Jesus is saying, the reason he is not dealing with evil yet is so that God's children can be identified and that they can grow before the end of this age.

[9 : 08] And so Jesus is allowing a time for the kingdom to grow alongside the growth of evil. And the first time he came to this earth wasn't to do all the things that the Old Testament says the

Messiah is going to do, eradicate evil and bring a reign of peace and prosperity.

In fact, he only came to do one of the other things the Old Testament says the Messiah is coming to do and that is to atone for sins, to rescue his people from their enemies. And our greatest enemy is sin.

And so we see this explained, for example, in John 3. If you have a look at John 3, verse 16, which we all should know quite well, it's probably the most popular verse in the Bible, but we've also got to read the next few verses as well.

John 3, verse 16 says, For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

And so there we read that the first time Jesus came, it wasn't to judge, it wasn't to condemn, it was to save. So that when judgment does come, and it must come if we want evil to be dealt with in this world, then we can be saved from it because of what Jesus did the first time he was here, when he died on the cross, to pay for human sins for all those who trust in him.

[10:32] But we must remember, as Hebrews 9 says, Just as it is appointed for people to die once and after this judgment, so also Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

And so what this says is that judgment is coming. Judgment is still coming. Just because Jesus didn't defeat evil and eradicate it from this world the first time he came, doesn't mean it's not going to happen.

He will come a second time, and judgment will happen, and he will save those who are waiting for him, patiently, even in a world of evil.

And so what we must do in response to this, the application, is that we must make sure we're waiting for him. And when we're waiting for him, we must wait patiently. We mustn't look around this world and be discouraged and think he's not here or think he's not in control.

The owner of the field is always the owner of the field. He's in control of it, even if the weeds are growing up. And evil is growing. Let's be honest.

[11:44] We look around in our world, and it could really discourage us when we see things like corruption, when we see crime continuing and getting worse in many places, when we see sexual promiscuity, when we see the continual, everyday blurring of the difference between right and wrong.

So the first false assumption that we've got to have corrected is the assumption that Jesus is not in charge. He is in charge. He is the owner of the field, and he has a plan for this world.

The next false assumption that I think can often cause us to think when we look at the evil in this world is that, well, it's pointless to be holy.

What is the point of pursuing holiness in this world? What is the point of trying to live a good life? Especially when people who don't care about holiness are getting away, and in many cases, prospering more than people who are trying to live good lives and trying to live God's way.

What is the point? If there's so much evil in the world, if you can't beat them, join them, is maybe the idea that a lot of people have. And this, we need to then let us go to Psalm 73, because that's really the problem that the writer of this psalm was struggling with in his own mind.

[13:11] Look at what he writes from verse 3. I envied the arrogant. I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have an easy time until they die, and their bodies are well fed.

They are not in trouble like others. They are not afflicted like most people. And so in many instances, crime does pay, is what he's saying. And the people who do wrong actually benefit from it, and sometimes have a better life in this earth than the people who are trying to do right.

What's the point? What's the point of pursuing holiness? Well, he goes on, and eventually, through thinking about this and praying about it, he gets an answer to that question. Look at verse 17 of Psalm 73.

And he's complaining, complaining, complaining, and until, verse 17, until I entered God's sanctuary, sanctuary, then, I understood their destiny.

Until I entered the sanctuary, until I actually came to God, and asked him, what's going on? Why is the world like it is? And God then revealed mysteries hidden for ages past.

[14:15] He revealed things that the psalmist couldn't have known by himself. He revealed where this world is going, and where people who are wicked versus people who are righteous are going to

end up.

It's exactly the same as what Jesus is doing in the parable of the wheat and the weeds, because the weeds and the wheat grow up together, which might lead some of the wheat to go, what's the point of being wheat?

Why can't I just be a weed? It looks so much more fun. Until we read on, and we realize harvest is coming, and when it comes, the owner of the field and his servants are going to burn, destroy the weeds.

And so you definitely don't want to be one of them, even if it's harder to be wheat right now. So the revelation that Jesus is giving in this parable is that one day this world will have no one who doesn't obey God's law.

Read with me again the parable right at the end, what the angels are going to do. The Son of Man, verse 41, will send out his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom all who cause sin, or all causes of sin, and those who are guilty of lawlessness, law breakers.

[15:29] And then what's going to happen? They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where they will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And so the fire in the blazing furnace is meant to destroy, eradicate the weeds.

And in the same way, all the people who don't obey God's law are going to be destroyed. That's what this is saying. They're going to be thrown into the fiery furnace. There'll be no one in this world who doesn't obey God's law.

But of course that doesn't mean we're all going to be Old Testament Jews who try to obey the written code of the law, which we've seen in the Old Testament Jews could never do.

Rather, as the Jewish prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel said, when the Messiah comes, God will write his law on our hearts, and he'll make us want to keep his laws.

And so keeping his law won't be a burden like it was in the Old Covenant, because now we'll be able to. We'll slowly be able to keep God's law more, and we'll want to.

[16:27] And that's the thing. If you don't want to keep God's law, which is his good intention for this world and for human beings, then you don't have the Spirit of God in you.

The proof that you've got the Spirit of God in you is a desire to keep his law. And he is going to, and he is aiming for, a community and a society of human beings, a kingdom where everybody both wants to obey his law and does successfully obey his law, because all of the things that even cause us to sin have been removed.

And that is God's picture for the world to come. And so, we've got to take holiness seriously. We've got to take obeying God seriously.

We can't look around in the world and say, well, the world's so evil, what's the point of trying to be holy? If the only people who are going to survive God's judgment are those who are pursuing holiness and desire holiness and want to be holy, then we've got to make sure we are those people now.

God says in 1 Peter in the Bible, He says, be holy for I am holy. He wants us to pursue holiness. He wants us to want holiness. And that should work itself out in the way we live daily.

[17:44] We should want to put off sin. We should be disgusted with sin. We should work with God and seek in His Word and pray and rely on His Spirit to constantly change us and mold us and put off sin and make us more holy people.

And so, this parable, if it's true, what Jesus is saying is that one day all of the lawless, all of those who don't care about God's law and don't actually want to live God's way are going to be destroyed. Then, seeking holiness holiness is more important than ever. Then, the third assumption that we often make when we look at the evil in the world around us is the assumption that it's our job to find a way to get rid of it.

It's our job to destroy evil. And that comes out in many ways. We grow up watching movies where the heroes are the ones who heroically go out and can fight and destroy evil and uproot it and there's a happy ending right at the movie because the hero has done his job and the point is that we've all got to be those heroes who go out and try to destroy evil and aim for a better world.

But it's not our job. That's what this parable teaches us. Because it wasn't the wheat's job to fight the weeds. The wheat just had to concentrate on growing.

[19:08] It was the servants whose job it was to then one day harvest and separate the wheat and destroy the wheat. I mean the weeds. Sorry. The wheat didn't destroy the weeds.

The servants did. And Jesus then says in the same way it's not you human beings job to destroy evil in this world. That's my servants the angels job.

Alright. And it makes sense because if evil is from a supernatural source the only way that evil can truly be destroyed is with supernatural weapons.

Supernatural means. Now the first thing this does then is it should change our view on what angels do. I was looking at this parable and I was going into the Old Testament and the role of angels in the Old Testament.

Angels are spiritual beings real spiritual beings who do God's bidding and do the bidding of the Son of God the Messiah as well. Now we tend to think of angels as these messengers from heaven with white shiny clothes and wings who are quite nice and pleasant.

[20 : 21] They're a bit overwhelming when they come to you at first but they look very pretty. That's the general view that most people have in today's society of what angels are.

But then you look in the Old Testament and you see the first time we really get to know some angels is when they destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their sexual immorality.

The next time in Exodus that we encounter an angel it's the angel of death whose job it is to kill the firstborn of the Egyptians. Angels are pretty scary and pretty hardcore in the Old Testament which explains why.

When angels did come and do their side job of bringing messages to people like Mary and Zechariah and them the first thing they had to say was do not be afraid.

Why would Mary be afraid? Because she knew what angels did. She knew what they were about. She knew that angels normally brought terrible judgment. So the angels job is to defeat evil in this world and they will when Jesus comes back and he sends his angels to all the corners of the earth and they will defeat all the causes of evil and all the lawbreakers all the wicked so that his people can then shine like stars or shine like the sun it says in Matthew.

[21 : 47] Now that the language Jesus uses here because this sounds very foreign to us angels and fiery furnace and shining his people shining it all actually comes from the book of Daniel.

That's why we read Daniel earlier. It's very important to understand what's going on in Daniel if we're going to understand what's going on here in this parable. Let me read to you from Daniel 12 and you spot the similarities with this parable.

At that time Michael the great prince who stands watch over your people will rise up. There will be a time of distress such as never occurred since nations came into being until that time but at that time all your people who are found written in the book will escape.

Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake some to eternal life some to disgrace and eternal contempt. Those who have insight will shine like the bright expanse of the heavens and those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

It's very interesting language because very often in the Old Testament that language of shining like stars refers to rulers of kingdoms or regions or countries and so if we read it in that way what this is saying is that God's people once judgment comes once Jesus returns aren't just going to be shiny they're going to be ruling which makes sense because that was Adam and Eve's job right at the beginning which they messed up to rule and care for creation and so one day God's people are going to rule again but first all the evil and the things that cause evil need to be removed from this world.

[23 : 24] That is what Jesus says is going to happen and all of those who are lawless and the causes of evil will be thrown into the fiery furnace which is an interesting illustration but again where does that language come from?

It comes from Daniel. What happened at the beginning of Daniel? His friends. Boys and girls you probably heard the story at Sunday school. Daniel's friends got thrown into a fiery furnace but God saved them from it.

Why? Because they wouldn't worship the king Nebuchadnezzar. They wouldn't worship the state if you like and we see that happening today in the world as well.

In China for example Christians are being persecuted because they don't worship the state above Jesus and we've seen it happening throughout history and the reason why the Christians in China are being told to worship the state is because the communist leaders of China are saying this is how we're going to fix the world and so they're trying to eliminate evil but they're putting themselves in the place of God and these are the kind of problems that happen when we try to rid the world of evil in our own strength.

We actually end up being just as evil as the evil we're trying to get rid of and we've seen that throughout history time and time again but what does Jesus do here? He says that just as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego just as his people in the past were thrown into the fiery furnace for not being willing to worship the state and were punished for that.

[24 : 53] When he comes it's going to reverse the situation and those who are not willing to bow the knee to him they're going to be thrown into the fiery furnace instead. The whole situation is going to be reversed and those who are not under the rule of King Jesus they will be put into the fire and destroyed and that's what the Bible consistently reminds us of and so we must remember that.

We must remember it's not our job to destroy evil. Jesus is going to do that. It's his job and the job of his angels who are far better at it than we ever will be.

What is our job then? Well again at the end of Daniel 12 verse 3 I'm going to read it again. Those who have insight will shine like the bright expanse of the heavens and those who lead many to righteousness.

So we've covered a lot of stuff here. We've looked at what's going to happen to this world. We looked at why the world is like it is. But we must also end really with thinking about what we must do.

We've seen we've got to wait for Jesus. We've got to make sure we're waiting for him. While we're waiting we must pursue holiness not looking around and thinking it's pointless to be holy. Realizing actually one day this world will only consist of people who are righteous and holy.

[26 : 14] But then we've also got to lead others to righteousness. And so instead of spending our energies trying to fix evil. Now of course there are times when we must resist the effects of evil.

We must reduce the effects of evil on the lives of others. But we can't destroy evil in this world. And so instead of spending our energies forming revolutions and trying to find ways to destroy the effects of evil and making this world what it should be which we can never do.

Rather than doing that we should spend our energies being ready for when Jesus does come and helping others to do the same. And that's what we at St.

Mark's Church are passionate about doing. Helping you to be ready for Jesus and making sure we are too. Well let's pray and ask for God's help to do that. Lord we thank you for this parable that you gave Lord Jesus that helps us to understand the situation we're in now and it helps us to understand what you call us to be doing.

Thank you how this parable has deconstructed a lot of false thinking. Just as much as it did for the Jews of the days when you were here it also does today.

[27 : 34] Help us to realize that while we can't fix the problem of evil in this world you are going to. Help us Lord to be waiting patiently for you. To be serving you and to be leading others to salvation so they too one day can be part of your glorious kingdom when you come and you rid this world of evil and you usher in an eternal age of goodness and prosperity and life.

Lord we pray that you would help us to live now in light of what's coming in Jesus name. Amen.