

The Wheat and the Tares

Matthew 13: 24-30

Having spoken to the disciples and the multitude concerning the sower, the seed, and the soil, Jesus shares another parable regarding planting and reaping. The previous parable focused primarily on the soil, the condition of the heart necessary to produce fruit. This parable focuses on the actions of the enemy as he sows corrupt seed among good seed, and the harvest at the end of this age.

After Jesus shares two more parables following this one, He sends the multitude away and the disciples question him privately regarding this particular parable. He had already publicly explained the parable of the sower, the seed, and the soil, but it is interesting that the disciples desired further explanation of this parable, [V.36](#). We don't know why this particular parable concerned them more than the others, but one could rightly assume they were troubled by it. Apparently it spoke to their hearts and they desired further explanation.

I remember hearing this parable preached over the years and it is a convicting passage. It clearly deals with those who appear to be saved among those who are genuinely saved. It causes us to search our hearts in regard to salvation. Just as Jesus revealed only 25% of the soil was conducive to bearing fruit, many who appear to be saved and right with the Lord are not known of Him. They bear many similarities to those within the body of Christ, but they have no relationship with the Lord. Let's examine the [details](#) of Jesus' teaching as we consider: [The Wheat and the Tares](#).

I. The Diligence in the Sowing ([24-25](#)) – Jesus reveals the diligent labor put forth in sowing seed prior to the harvest. Consider:

A. The Sowing ([24](#)) – [Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.](#) Jesus reveals that good seed was sown in the field. Those who know the principles of planting and harvesting understand the necessity and potential of good seed. Jesus also reveals that He is the one who sowed the seed and the field is the world. The good seed represents the children of the kingdom, those saved by grace, [VV.37-38a](#).

- Jesus plants the seed of the Gospel of grace in the hearts of men, leading to their salvation by faith in Him. He fully satisfied the righteous demands of God as He took our place, becoming the sacrifice for sin, and secured our salvation. Jesus plants the seed of salvation in mankind.

B. The Sabotage (25) – **But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.** As Jesus plants the seed of the Gospel among the world, the enemy, Satan sows tares among the world as well. The tares were sown among the wheat, being planted right beside the good seed. The enemy has always sought to hinder the work of the Lord and bring reproach to His name. He seeks to keep all he can in darkness, striving to prevent anyone seeing the glorious light of the Gospel. **2 Cor.4:4 – In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.**

- Jesus knew this of the enemy in his day, and Satan has not changed his methods. He is a master of counterfeits, striving to produce something that resembles truth, but is corrupt and vile. To understand this better, we need to know the characteristics of tares. They look very similar to wheat. In fact, the untrained eye may be unable to discern the difference. While the tares are growing there is no discernable difference. It is not until the wheat has produced fruit, that the difference can be seen.

- Tares may look very similar to wheat, but they are very dangerous. The seed within a tare is poison, and if eaten can lead to nausea, convulsions, and even death. Is that not how the enemy likes to operate? He never shows the end result of sin. Many are unaware of the toxic effect and eventual death associated with sin.

II. The Discovery during the Growing (26) – **But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.** As the wheat and tares grew together, an eventual discovery was made. Notice:

A. The Duration (26) – The tares went unnoticed until the plants had grown to maturity and began to produce fruit. The difference wasn't noticed immediately after the seeds were sown. The difference was discovered while the plants were growing side by side. It wasn't until the wheat was becoming ready to harvest that the tares were discovered among them.

- This parable speaks of those who have made public professions of faith in Christ, and yet have never been saved by His grace. Some of which are church members. They attend services like everyone else. They serve on committees and participate in mission projects. They sing in the choir, teach Sunday school, and fill pulpits. They are in and around the body of Christ for extended periods of time, and go unnoticed.

B. The Detection (26) – **But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.** The tares went unnoticed for an extended period of time, but eventually they were

discovered. As the wheat began to produce fruit, getting ready for harvest, the tares were discovered. The only way to properly discern the difference between wheat and tares was to examine the fruit being produced. At this point, the differences were unmistakable. The tare closely resembled the wheat while growing alongside it, but it could not mimic the fruit produced.

- Fruit is always a distinguishing characteristic of the believer. Not all fruit is the same, or produced in the same quantity, but it will be evident in the lives of those who belong to Christ. [John 15:5](#) – I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. Tares will never produce fruit, but mature wheat will always produce fruit. What does your life reveal? Are you bearing fruit for the Lord? It isn't enough to appear like the Lord in public; one must bear fruit if you belong to Christ. I am always leery of those who have been in church for years, and yet there is no discernable fruit in their lives. The presence of fruit reveals the difference. [Gal.5:22-23](#) – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ^[23] Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

III. The Discernment in the Reaping (27-30) – Here Jesus reveals the discernment the sower possesses regarding the harvest. Consider:

A. The Discussion (27-28a) – So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? ^[28a] He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. While preparing for the harvest, the servants noticed the tares among the wheat and questioned the master regarding his seed. They thought he must have planted seeds that was corrupted with tares. The master of the field knew immediately what had happened. The enemy had slipped in and planted tares among the wheat.

- Jesus knows the tactics of the enemy and He knows those who belong to Him. He has the ability to discern the wheat from the tares. Many today are perceived as believers, and yet they are tares among the wheat. The servants of the Lord may be unable to discern the difference, but the Lord knows those who are His. He is never fooled by a tare pretending to be wheat.

B. The Dilemma (28b-29) – The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? ^[29] But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. The servants were ready to quickly remove the tares from among the wheat, but the master of the field knew this would be unwise. The tares had been sown so closely to the wheat that removing them would also damage the roots of the wheat and affect the harvest. The master instructed them to leave the tares in the field and allow them to grow with the wheat. This careful separation would be left for the experienced reapers.

- Bear in mind that we are servants of the Master of the field. Many are zealous and would have no problem removing the tares, but we are instructed to leave that to the reapers. We are not the Holy Spirit and would only hurt the wheat if we began uprooting the tares. The Lord knows those who are His, and He will deal with the tares during the harvest.
- In this we also see a picture of the Lord's grace provided for the church. While there are many tares within the church, Jesus doesn't want to hinder the church by uprooting the tares prematurely. I am convinced that America deserves judgment for her sinful ways and for abandoning the Lord. He could bring swift judgment upon our land that would affect the wheat and the tares. In His mercy and wisdom, judgment is stayed for the moment. This is not because judgment is undeserved, but because of His great love for the church.

C. The Directive (30) – *Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.* Jesus spoke of the instructions that would be given by the master of the field. Consider:

1. The Separation – The tares would first be removed from the field prior to the harvest of the wheat. It would be separated from the mature grain, valuable to the reaper. The tares and the wheat had grown together in the field, but they would be separated during the harvest. At this point, the difference is easily discerned. The wheat-head is filled with grain and bows toward the ground. The seeds within the tare are light and it continues to stand upright.

- While we live in this life we are surrounded by others. We all fall into one of two categories: wheat or tares, saved or lost. At the end of the age, Jesus will separate the tares from among the wheat. They will have grown alongside the wheat, closely resembling the wheat, but in the end there will be a separation. Those who have bowed in submission to the Lord in salvation will be separated from those who stood in defiant pride. *Mat.25:32-33 – And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: [33] And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*

2. The Destination – The tares are bundled together by the reapers and burned with fire. The wheat is harvested and gathered into the master's barn. After the separation in the field, the wheat and tares faced a vastly different destination. One was burned, considered unworthy, and the other was gathered into the barn, the abundance of the harvest.

- Jesus revealed eternal truth when He spoke of the final destination of the wheat and tares. Like the tares, those apart from Christ will be separated and burned eternally in the lake of fire. The wheat, those who belong to Christ, will be gathered into the barn of the Master. The saved by grace will inherit eternal life in heaven, being accepted and received of the Lord.

Conclusion: Let's take a moment to read the explanation Jesus gave the disciples regarding this parable, [Vv.36-43](#). Each of us belong to one of these categories: wheat or tares. I cannot tell by looking at the outward appearance. The difference lies in the fruit produced. Only you know the condition of your heart. When the Lord calls for you, will be found bowed in submission or standing defiantly in sinful pride. If the Lord had spoken to your heart, revealing your need for salvation, I urge you to respond immediately. The harvest may be much sooner than you think!