

MATTHEW 13:24-30
WEEDS FOR THE FIRE AND WHEAT FOR THE BARN

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

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? 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?

But he said, No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 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.

Fires and barns do not make a good mix. As a youngster growing up in Wisconsin dairy country, I remember seeing two barn fires, plus the aftermath of more. The causes? Perhaps damp hay that got too hot in the haymow, a lightning strike, a cigarette butt picked up by a bird, etc. Disastrous! Yet, fire and barns are each precious in their own special use.

Our text for today, which speaks of both “fire and barn,” is a parable of Jesus. A parable is a down to earth story by which Jesus uses the topic to explain something about God’s “great operation” or kingdom. Here, the term “Kingdom of Heaven” is used—God’s glorious operation to bring souls, redeemed by Jesus’ blood, to eternal life in heaven.

A landowner sowed good seed, wheat seed, into his field. Whether he did the job himself, or his laborers, is not told us. He was looking forward to a good crop, a good harvest. By dark of night, when all were sleeping—maybe that very night—an enemy sowed tares, weeds, in the field. No one was the wiser.

Going ahead now, to Jesus’ own explanation of the parable (verses 36-43, not included in the printed text) helps us to understand. Jesus says the landowner, the one who sowed the good seed, was the Son of Man, Jesus Himself, God’s promised Rescuer from sin. Jesus was born a man to Mary, true God and true man, to save “man” from sin. His whole operation—the Kingdom of Heaven—is the Kingdom bringing people to eternal life by faith. Jesus’ explanation also says the field is the world. Big field! The good seed are believers—“sons of the Kingdom.” Jesus plants this good seed / believers around the world, not just North and South Dakota or the CLC. Further, the enemy, who slyly sowed the weeds or tares is the devil. The tares themselves are the unbelievers. The devil seeks to plant unbelievers everywhere to disturb the growth of God’s Kingdom. The devil has been against God since the day he rebelled and was cast out of heaven. *God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (2 Peter 2:4).*

Now, a little about tares: The word “tares,” like the word “oats,” is both singular and plural. We say, “Oats is a grain” and “Oats are good to eat.” Tares is/are a weed. Another name for it is “darnel.” When it comes up, it looks very much like wheat. However, when the heads form, it can be seen that the kernels line up differently on the stalk compared to wheat. The parable goes on, *But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.* This “sprouting of the grain” does not mean the sprouting of the seed underground—as potatoes sprouting in the basement in March. The sprouting here is the sprouting of the heads on the stalks—like the sprouts of Brussel sprouts on the stalk.

As the wheat and the tares both headed out, the servants figured out what was happening—many were tares! The Master correctly concluded it was the work of his enemy. The servants wanted to “gather up” the tares. They knew the tares didn’t belong there. They would compete against wheat! Weeds and crops do compete for water and nutrients—kochia and tomatoes, pigweed and potatoes, or thistles and carrots.

In this life unbelievers, including your own old Adam, compete against the new man of faith in Jesus in your heat. They say, “Your scruples and morals are nonsense. Drunkenness is just a little bit of fun. Adultery against God’s marriage principles and privileges is just the natural functioning of the body. Stealing is just a form of fairness.” Etc. The ungodly compete for your loyalty, to drag you down. You compete against the weeds of

Satan all your life. Temptations and allures to sin do change with age and circumstances, but they never go away. Seek the Savior's forgiveness daily and request His strength to war against them.

Why doesn't God do something about it?! In the parable, the servants wanted to gather out the tares and help the wheat. What's wrong with that? But the Master was wise. *No*, he said, *lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them*. To get the tares out of the wheat at that stage in the wheat's development would damage to the wheat. Wheat would get uprooted too. Bad idea.

Let both grow together until the harvest. At the harvest when the wheat is ripe, the tares would be especially easy to spot and remove, without damage to the wheat. Kernels of wheat are tan/brown. Kernels of tares, I have read, are black. *At the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather together the tares . . . then gather the wheat*. The day of separation will come—harvest day. In Jesus' explanation, He says the harvest day is the "End of the Age," that is, the end of the world; and the reapers will be His angels (v. 39).

In this life believers have opposition and competition from unbelievers. Again, WHY doesn't God do something about that?? He could. He could get rid of the unbelievers around us in an instant. However, God in His wisdom knows when it best to delete them. To do so immediately might bring side effects worse than their presence. If, for example, a family has a dad or a mom who is an unbeliever, would the result be good or bad for the children if father or mother were taken from them at a tender age? If a wayward son or daughter were taken, would it be better or worse for the father or mother? The same is true in our nation. The same is true in the church. If God suddenly took a sin-ridden pastor from a congregation where the Word of salvation in Jesus was being spread, even by his hypocritical heart and mouth, would it be better or worse for the congregation?

God will sever the ties when the time is right, when worse damage cannot be done. The ultimate day of separation will be Judgment Day. *At the time of harvest [He] 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*. There will be two very different end-results. The tares, the weeds, the wicked, will be gathered up and "burned." *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, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 13:41-42)*. On the Last Day the unbelievers will not get away; they will be cast into the fires of hell, crying for help and grinding their teeth in agony. Hell is real. There, body and soul will be afflicted there forever in physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual pain—sent away from the Father's presence and blessings forever! The wicked will "get theirs." Do not envy them, or copy them, or join league with them. Their end will be fire without end.

On the other hand, for the believers, those righteous in Christ: *Gather the wheat into my barn!* Maybe the word "barn" makes you reluctant. Barn? Who wants to live in a barn? When I was young and would come into the house, but not close the door behind me, my Mom would say, "Were you born in a barn?" I think back to the barns of my youth—dairy barns. Two rows of milk cows in stanchions, facing opposite ways with a manger for feed and drinking cups for water in front of them; and behind them a ten foot(?) "walk" with a gutter on each side; plus flies, spider webs, and various odors. Whatever undesirable picture of any barn come to your mind, discard it. Consider the valuable barn! It is a place to store and keep things, crops and livestock, out of the weather, a safe place. If you were a bushel of ripe wheat, wouldn't a dry and secure barn be inviting! About life in that barn, Jesus says, *Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (v. 43)*. Nothing shabby there! Safe in God's shelter! There the believers will be with the Lord and with one another in perfect friendship and in praise to the Savior. He will bring you safely through the opposition and competition of the weeds of life, into His treasured storehouse.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:2-3)! Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Revelation 21:34)!

The destructive fires of hell will be far separated from the bliss of God's glorious "house/barn" forever. They will not mix. Days of life beset by sin and Satan, not easy, will be over. This is Jesus' Kingdom. He will take you there—you, His precious wheat!

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---