

Parables of Judgment and Grace – February 7 2021
Matthew 13: 24– 30 [36– 43; 47– 52]

(Parable of the weeds is a tale of judgment & grace. So is parable of the net.)

Introduction — sometimes, the stories in the bible are not easy to understand. At other times, you just have to pay attention. The new pastor was asked to teach a boys' S,S, class in the absence of the regular teacher. He decided to see what they knew, so he asked who knocked down the walls of Jericho. All the boys denied having done it, and the preacher was appalled by their ignorance. At the next trustees meeting he told about the experience. "Not one of them knows who knocked down the walls of Jericho," he lamented. The group was silent until finally one seasoned veteran of the board spoke up. "Preacher, this appears to be bothering you a lot. But i've known all those boys since they were born and they're good boys. If they said they didn't know, I believe them. Let's just take some money out of the repair and maintenance fund, fix the walls, and let it go at that." Jesus liked to speak in parables to his followers, the twelve disciples and hundreds of others. Often, he explained to the twelve, what the parable meant. Other times, he just let the parable remain on people's minds, w/o further explanation. Let's look at two parables from Matthew chapter 13, which fit each of those categories.

I. What do these two parables teach??

>>>>> First, let me say:

1. Chapter 13 can be called the 1st "parable chapter" in the gospel of Matthew. (7) what made the parables of Jesus so effective in telling the people God's truth, were that they told simple stories based in everyday things around them. About half of the Jewish people of Jesus' day were farmers — they could understand the problems of weeds getting mixed in with their preferred crop, wheat or whatever. And someone actually sowing weeds in a farmers' fields, was not just a high school prank!!! The ancient Roman Empire had a law, that it was a crime to sow weeds in another farmer's field, and if found guilty, you paid a fine and could even go to jail!! Jesus went on to explain that the parable was a story of God's judgment, at the end of time, when god will judge all people, according to their faith and their actions.

2. And the second parable??? Let me read matt. 13: 47– 50. (read) the fishermen and women who were listening — they, and everyone who lived near the sea of galilee, had seen people use dragnets to pull in dozens or hundreds of fish at a time. And they understood that some of the fish caught that way were good for the kitchen table, and many were not — too small, or fish not good to eat. (bottom feeders, etc.)

I have said before — The parables of Jesus have one main point:

II. What is the main point of these parables?

1) what is the main point of the good wheat, & the weeds??

-- God alone will make judgments, at the end of time And from that, we can realize:

— There is always evil around us to trip us up, to sow discord and trouble in our lives. Know that, and do not let evil influence you wrongly and lead you astray

— It is not always easy to understand people's motives, or whether they stand for the good, or for bad among us.

— therefore: do not judge others: we all make mistakes, many of us are tricked by influences around us — we just need to recognize our mistakes for what they are, & put it behind us...

— God alone is the final judge ! ! ! ! God knows what every person thinks and feels and what are their motives are and what they actually do. People might change — let god deal with them!!!

— 17 centuries ago, St. Augustine of Hippo commented on this parable, and said something so helpful, he might have said it last week: “I tell you the truth, my beloved, even in these high seats (the clergy, the preachers) there is both wheat and weeds (tares), and among the laity there is wheat, and weeds (tares). Let the good tolerate the bad; let the bad change themselves, and imitate the good. Let us all, if it may be so, attain to god— let us all through his mercy escape the evil of this world.” 1

— Do not try to do God's job!!!! Let god be the ultimate judge ! ! !

— It is up to the rest of us to do what Jesus told us to do — to love other people, to forgive and be reconciled to others, and encourage others to be reconciled to god and to each other. To work hard and be honest, and to encourage others to also be honest and constructive

2) What is the main point of the good fish and the bad fish??

— In some ways, the net is like the Christian church, of all denominations, all around the world. The church is made up of true believers, yes — but anyone, and everyone may come to faith in Jesus Christ, and ultimately, God alone is the final judge as to who are true believers!! God knows what every person thinks and feels and what are their motives and what they actually do, and what they truly believe.

— God alone knows who is the “good fish” and the “bad fish” to be separated out, one day.

One reason Jesus told people these parables, and what he still challenges us today, is:

— What do you want to be???

— Do you want to be the good wheat, or the troublesome weeds??

— Do you want to be the good fish, selected by the fishermen, or will you be the bad fish, to be cast aside??

the point of these parables today, as last Sunday, is that you can choose

— you can choose to be the “good seed” — that welcomes the good news of God’s love and acceptance ... you can choose to be the “good fish” — that welcomes the good news of God’s love and gladly shares the love of God with others, in our actions, in our generosity, and in the words we say.

Conclusion — one of the best ways that we can renew, or deepen our dedication to our lord Jesus, to be the “good seed” and the “good fish,” is to share in the Lord ’s Supper — communion.