

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: June 21, 2009

Tares Among the Wheat

by Dan Trygg

“Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, ‘The Kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷ The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘“Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?”’ ²⁸ And he said to them, ‘“An enemy has done this!”’ The slaves said to him, ‘“Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?”’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘“No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘“First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”’”

Matthew 13:24-30

Recently, in our study of Mark, we studied the parable of the sower, which we called “the parable of the soils” (4:1-20). By way of review, the note in my Open Bible (1976 edition. Thomas Nelson, publisher) for Matthew’s parallel account (Matt. 13) offers some good insight: “**The parable of the sower illustrates the importance of the follow-through.** Only one fourth of the soil was ready for the seed, so only one fourth of the seed brought forth fruit. Jesus explains the parable..., and we learn that (1.) The sower is the witness. (2.) The seed is the word of God. (3.) The soil is the heart.

“We also learn that there are four types of hearts. They are:

- (1.) The hard heart; this is the wayside soil, fertile but hard.
- (2.) The shallow heart; this is the stony soil, fertile but depthless.
- (3.) The worldly heart; this is the thorny soil, fertile but possessed.
- (4.) The understanding heart; this is good soil, fertile and prepared.

“The lesson here is a simple one: If we expect the seed, the word of God to bear fruit, the heart must be made ready. The hard heart must be broken; the shallow heart must be given depth; and the worldly heart must be taught that the things of this world are temporal. This requires time, work, and patience.”

The heart that bore fruit was the one that truly understood the word, was sincere, was practical in regard to putting faith into practice, and was persevering in the working-out of faith in character and actions.

Immediately after the parable of the sower, Matthew records the parable of the tares among the wheat. This parable is found *only* in Matthew’s gospel. While using some similar themes, this illustration opens up some entirely different subjects than the previous parable. Both are about sowing seed and producing a crop; both address the notion of fruitless lives; and both hint at the possibility (or reality) of false conversions. Aside from these similar themes, however, the two stories go in two very different directions.

Again, the disciples asked Jesus to explain the parable (vs. 36). He said that **the good seed were the children of God’s Kingdom.** The field is the world, and the One sowing the good seed was the Son of Man, Jesus Himself. **The tares are the children of the evil one, and the one sowing them is the devil.** The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. What may not be so evident to us is that the so-called “**tares**” refer to a plant called “**darnel**”, which is a weed that was very common in Palestine in those days. **In the early stages of its development, it looked exactly like wheat. When the plant formed a head, however, instead of large edible golden grains, it produced small, hard, worthless seeds.** Until the head formed, however, it was virtually indistinguishable from the desired crop of wheat.

In the parable, the landowner went to the seed merchant and bought good quality wheat seeds. The idea was to have a good, weed-free crop. The enemy, however, came by night and sowed the darnel seeds over the wheat seeds. When the crop came up, everything looked good, at first. The wheat and darnel grew up together undetected. When the heads began to form, it became obvious that there was a problem. The workers thought maybe the landowner had purchased inferior seed. **He knew, however, that there was nothing wrong with what he planted. He rightly concluded that an enemy had sabotaged his crop** by sowing the darnel in with his wheat. Knowing that *the weeds would interfere with the fruitfulness of the wheat*, by competing with it for sun, nutrients and water, the servants asked if they should try to pull out the darnel. The master knew, however, that by this time the roots would have been so intertwined that to remove the weeds would likely uproot the wheat. He determined to allow them to grow up together. At the harvest, they would be sorted out. The darnel would be burned and the wheat would be gathered into his barn.

It is important to remember that we have to be careful not to take the story too far. **The point of the story is that there will be counterfeits among us.** People who may seem to start out well as believers, or at least make a *claim* to being good people, are placed among the people of God. **They are there by the enemy’s design to interfere with our vitality.** They do this in numerous ways:

They compete for the *resources and provisions* of God, given to the Body of Christ.

They compete for *time and attention* of spiritual leaders, Christian workers, and other believers.

They are also “stumbling blocks” (vs. 41), meaning that they come to “trip people up”. For believers, this generally means that they would tempt us to sin. In reference to people who are not yet believers, however, a stumbling block is a person that brings an inappropriate offense that “trips people up” so that they will reject Christianity. Often the interpretation of this parable focuses on the church as the main setting where this occurs, but it is clear that Jesus was thinking about the *world* instead of the church. **The counterfeiters not only inhibit the growth and maturation of the genuine children of God, they also prevent and divert people from seeing the full glory of the genuine people of God.** The offensiveness of their lives looms so large that it tends to obscure the quiet beauty and goodness of those who *are* genuine and faithful. **These are people whose lives often bring the charge of “hypocrite” upon the church.** They have a pretension of godliness, but the fruit of a true disciple of Jesus is not evident in their lives. They captivate others by their *talk* and their *surface religious behavior*, but they really continue to be ruled by their flesh, and will even lead others astray into sinful behaviors like theirs (II Pet. 2). Not only does Jesus call them “stumbling blocks”, but also “those who commit lawlessness” (vs. 41). They are continuing in sin, rebelling against God and His revealed commandments regarding righteous living. Nevertheless, **God does not choose to uproot them** from the church, or from the world. He allows them to continue alongside His genuine children until the end of the age.

Note that **these counterfeiters become evident by their fruit.** Jesus returns to His teaching from Matthew chapter 7, “You will know them by their fruits.” (vss. 15-23; cf. 12:33-37). **To anyone who really knows what the genuine article is supposed to be like, these phonies quickly become evident.**

One lesson from this parable is that *God is looking for good fruit.*

A second lesson is just as important, *you can only produce fruit according to your nature.* A weed will eventually be shown to be a weed, because it can only produce what weeds do. By the same token, a genuine child of God will eventually produce fruit in accordance with his or her true nature (Matt. 7:17-19; I Jn. 3:1-9).

A third lesson is that *we will be sorted out, and judged, based upon our true nature and the outcome of our choices.* At the end of the age, Jesus will send out His angels to remove all the stumbling blocks, all those who get in the way of the genuine ones, and prevent or diminish their fruitfulness (cf. Matt. 13:49,50).

A fourth lesson is that *the end of those who are counterfeiters will be destruction.* They will be thrown into the furnace, where the text says there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. In other words, whatever the “furnace” is, it is *not* just death. It is *ongoing*, ...full of sorrow, pain, and regret. And it is *final*. There does not appear to be a way to escape the furnace, once you are “gathered up” to be sent there. That is why **it is so important to be certain you are a genuine child of God.**

How can you be sure? If you have never yielded to Christ as your King, that is where you must start. The good seed were the children of the Kingdom of God. **You cannot be His child without truly accepting Him as your Savior and Master** (Jn. 1:12,13; Acts 2:32-40). You cannot be part of God’s reign and rule if you do not *yield* to Him entirely. You cannot con Him (Gal. 6:6,7). You must truly lay down your own agenda and be willing to follow Him. **Next, you must invest yourself in maturing in your Christian walk and bearing fruit.** Peter tells us how to “make your calling and election sure”. It is by applying yourself diligently to grow and to obey God (II Pet. 1:5-11). If you do that “the entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you”. Fruit comes *naturally*, if we are healthy, spiritually. It truly *is* the outcome of our new nature.

Once all stumbling blocks have been removed, then “the righteous will shine forth as the sun”. This is a quote from Daniel 12:3. Daniel is writing the words of an angel, who was sent to him by God to reveal things to come. In the first three verses of the chapter, he alludes to a time of great distress or tribulation, one greater than anything yet seen by humankind, followed by a great deliverance for the people of God. Then there will be a resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, a sorting out and assignment of destinies, ...the righteous to everlasting life, the wicked to everlasting abhorrence. Then “those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of the heavens, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” Note that the righteous, **the ones “who have insight” are those who “lead many to righteousness”.** Do you see yourself as a leader of others? **Are you influencing others toward God and His righteousness, or away from Him?** Again, the Lord is looking for fruit. What is the outcome of *your* faith, ...the fruit of *your* walk?