

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50

Leave it to The Judge

January 31st, 2016

Today we are looking at two parables of the Kingdom of Heaven. Last week I spoke about the DNA of the Bible being “Covenant and Kingdom.” I defined Covenant as our relationship with God that ushers us into the Kingdom of God.

The understanding of these 2 concepts is fundamental to understanding the Bible and living out our faith in the world. Again, here is how the strands of the DNA of the Bible look paired together.

Covenant	&	Kingdom
Relationship	&	Responsibility
Invitation	&	Challenge
One with God (atonement)	&	what we need to do for God

“Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of Heaven” are equivalent phrases and help us conceive of the Kingdom as a current reality as well as future hope. We pray for the Kingdom every time we pray the Lord’s Prayer.

Now today’s parables can be characterized by the phrase which I used as a title, “**Leave it to The Judge**”. Who indeed can judge who is saved and who isn’t? These parables speak of the judgment of men and of God and refer ALL final judgment to God.

These parables speak to judgment in **3 spheres of life: the World, the Church, and the Self**. They speak to the need to defer judgment to the only One who can give true and righteous judgment and that is God!!!

These parables are very disturbing to people on many levels. If you see Christianity as seeking and demanding justice in this world as part of its work for the Kingdom of God the thought of ignoring evil in the world and waiting for God’s judgment at the end of time is unbearable.

If you see the Church as an institution that should be completely filled with only righteous and holy people, and doctrinally pure; leaving the sinner in our midst will make you sniff self-righteously and seek a better institution.

And if you think Christianity will completely cure all our personal bent towards sinning, well.... Think again! Have you been to church?

The message you hear in these parables though is a consistent message of Jesus.

Remember this frustrating demand of Jesus? *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.” Mt. 5:43-45*

Or, But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies , do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you pray for those who abuse you... Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Lk. 6:27-28

Or, “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; Lk. 6:37

These are disturbing and yet very inspiring scriptures in this day and age in which we seem to be dividing up into parties, groups and camps in this nation and within denominations. Civil discourse has in many cases been abandoned for name calling and character assassination.

We are in a time period of great division and divisiveness in our society and political system that has seeped into the Churches. I don't look forward to our General Conference in May because of this.

Let's look **first** at **Judgment of the World** through the parable of the Wheat and Weeds. In it there are two types of seed sown by two sowers.

These are two types of grass seed. The good seed of course is wheat and the bad is a grass called "Bearded Darnel" or "tares".



Until right before the harvest you cannot tell the difference between the two. And by the time you can tell the difference it is too late to pull up the Tares, because the roots of the Tares will be entangled with the Wheat and the Wheat will come up too.

The Wheat would get destroyed and the perfection that was sought after would be destroyed. The only way Darnel can be separated out is to wait until the harvest. At that time the Darnel seeds can be separated out because they are a different color.

The judgment will come at the end and must come for Darnel seeds, even in small quantities; they are very bitter and will make you sick.

So Jesus says wait! "Evil's" time will come. Tend both the wheat and the weeds and God will sort them out in the end. The caution is that we should not sort them out, the angels will and that will be at the end of time and the Judge will be God, not us.

The allegorical interpretation of the parable is in verses 37-39

The field is the world

The one who sows good seed is the Son of Man

The good seeds are the children of the kingdom

The bad seeds are the children of the evil one

And the enemy who sowed the bad seed is the evil one.

Now I hope you see the danger here. If we judge people who are in the world and not a part of the Church or Kingdom of God as "bad

seed” it gives us permission to do all sorts of bad things to them in the name of God. Just label them infidels and kill them. That is the bad judgment, the condemnation that Jesus warns us to avoid and during the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition we did not heed Him much to the Church’s shame.

But there is good judgment by the Church. The Church seeking to minister to the World led to the Church being the largest provider of health care in history. It led to 100 of the 110 first universities in America. It led to the opposition of and elimination of slavery in America and the ongoing fight to eliminate it in the places in the World where it still exists. Good judgment leads to providing safe drinking water, orphanages, and a drive by the U M Church to eliminate Malaria in the World in our lifetime.

Now here is where it gets really difficult. What if murder, rape, robbery, burglary or a host of many other evils have touched your life from the world?

It is hard and infuriating if you hear Jesus saying here, don’t judge! Does Jesus want such evil to continue? It can also be infuriating if you have ever suffered at the hands of a “bad fish” in the Church, or watched a church or Christian fellowship be damaged or destroyed by a “bad fish”.

And individually we can be heartbroken if we feel we have to put up with “that same sin or temptation in us for all of eternity.”

Do these parables say to just stand back and let evil things and evil people be? No! The lessons of history tell us that **“all that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”**

When possible and to the best of our ability we need to confront evil in this world. We need to support law and good government and as the scriptures say pray for our leaders. We need to turn over to the authorities those whose sin is criminal in nature.

When possible we need to work for justice and “**Accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves!**” as we will say in our membership vows today.

We are called to discern the difference between good and evil and fight the evil. We are fighting the forces of spiritual darkness. We often want to put a human face on evil and simply judge, condemn, destroy the person and then move on in all self-righteousness; rather than working for the good, praying for the good of another. We want to take the place of God and Jesus says, “NO!”

We need wisdom & prayer in order to properly discern what to do.

Second these parables speak to **Judgment in the Church**. This the parable of the Net speaks to. The net is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It pulls in fish of all sorts and types into the Church. Most are good fish and some are bad. When I was saltwater fishing at times we would catch a fish called a “Lion” fish.



It had beautiful fins, but all sorts of poisonous barbs cover the fins and body of the fish. It is so poisonous it scared the fishing guides on the boat.

Within the Church what do you do with those who seem to tear down the body? How and when do you speak the truth in love? Part of a pastor’s Biblical mandate is to “rebuke” a member when found in sin. How and when do we do that without being judgmental and condemning? And most frustrating, why do the good and bad fish need to be with one another until the end? Why do we need to put up with sinners?

Now part of the answer to why are there sinner in the Church is answered by the question, “Why are there alcoholics in AA groups?” The church is for sinners most of whom want to become saints. But we’re sinners at heart, so we often backslide into sin.

And, at times we are all weeds in God's garden. We are bad fish caught in the net of the Gospel. So we must come again and again to God and each other seeking God's forgiveness and grace.

Over the years it has been my observation that most of the people who I felt were bad fish in the church weren't actually bad fish. They truly were not sons and daughters of the devil. They were sinners just like me. They were more annoying or ignorant than evil. Some indeed needed to grow just like me. The best advice that comes from this scripture is to just ignore them and let God deal with them in the end.

And in the end who can figure the heart and life of another? We just see a small slice of another's life and God judges on the whole from beginning to end.

I attended once a men's Bible Study. There were 4 at the table I was at: Greg, Ed, Walt and myself. Ed was a big quiet guy, and Walt prompted him to speak by telling Greg and I that Ed was surviving cancer.

Ed then shared his witness. He told us fifteen years ago he and his wife got married. It was a second marriage for both of them. He wasn't at all a believer. He thought faith and Church sorta useless, but his wife faithfully attended worship and so he went along. He sang the hymns. He joined in the liturgy. He helped with fund raisers, but didn't believe any of it... at all. This went on for eight years.

One day someone handed him a 5lb book. When he took hold of the book his collar bone broke. He went to the hospital, and found out he had bone cancer.

He'd never thought of death before...just assumed death happened to other people. Two bone marrow transplants later, several rounds of chemo and radiation, and his condition is now chronic, but not fatal.

For eight years he sat an unbeliever going through all the motions, a weed among the wheat and no one knew.

Then he made a choice to turn his heart and life over to Jesus, and a new sprout of wheat began.



He was fed on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and then at the right point, right time, he became wheat, a good fish in the Kingdom of God.



When I was a youth pastor I was at a youth group picnic in a park. As I was sitting and watching the youth an angry, red faced man came up to me and poked his finger in my face and demanded, “Is that kid part of your group?” as he pointed to one of the boys in our group.

I felt embarrassed and knew what he meant. The boy he referred to was rude, crude, cussed, and made sexually suggestive remarks. He never was the type most would think would go to a church youth group. He did not make us or the church proud. But we worked with him for years. He never did anything so bad as to get kicked out and eventually learned to do better with his mouth. The first day he showed up for youth group I almost kicked him out for swearing before he entered the door. But through the love of Christians he was slowly changed and converted. The wheat rubbed off on the weed, the good fish on the bad.



He reminded me of another obnoxious, fowl mouthed youth I once knew. This young man along with 3 of his friends drove off the only youth counselor the church had at that time. This young man was tolerated, loved, spoken to sternly, chewed out and taught rather than being pulled up by the roots, or tossed out. That youth was attracted and held by the love of Christ demonstrated by others in that church long ago. That youth was me. And I thank God for that Methodist

Church that lived out the tolerance of these scriptures and brought me to this pulpit today.

Third and finally I must speak to **Judgment of Self** for often the church does not drive us out, but our own shame and lack of faith that God will forgive us does.



When I was a young pastor I remember being shocked by an old Christian woman being so mad at herself for falling victim again and again to the same old sin. She had fought this sin all of her life.

I and she thought by her age she should have conquered it. Our scripture though reminds us that even with ourselves the ultimate victory is God's! Verse 41 says, **"The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom ALL CAUSES OF SIN and all evil doers."**

For us who know Jesus as our savior this means that all the sin that remains in us will be wiped away!! It will all be burned away.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:12-13 , **"Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day (of Judgment) will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done."** My friends the sin that is still in us will be burned up. All that will remain is refined gold.



As verse 43 says, **"then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father."**



My friends this scripture brings great hope that in the end, at the final harvest and sorting: God will judge and purify all things. If justice was not found here on earth it will be found in the world to come.

The perfect Church will be created by God and he will see us face to face.

All the sin that we just can't seem to conquer here on earth will forever be cleansed from us and burned away.

Praise be to God, Amen!

If today you want to begin a relationship with God and enter the Kingdom of God, then in your heart and with your voice make the commitment you will hear our new members make and our members renew. Make their commitment yours and begin a new life! Speak with me afterwards or with a Stephen Minister.