

BIBLE STORY: THE TARES AND THE WHEAT

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Central Thoughts

- Jesus' word is the "good seed" that creates faith in Christ.
- Satan's word is the "evil seed" that creates unbelief and the rejection of Christ.
- The true identity of believers and unbelievers is often hidden and will not be revealed with certainty until the end of the age.
- Attempts to eradicate all unbelief may undermine and threaten the faith of true Christians.
- The Church is called to preach the Gospel and commend the results to the Holy Spirit to work faith in Christ when and where He pleases in those who hear the Gospel.
- The tares are unbelievers who reject Christ and, because of their rejection, are those who "offend" and "practice the lawlessness" of impenitence.
- The wheat are believers in Christ who, by faith in Christ, are declared righteous and "shine forth as the sun in righteousness in the kingdom of their Father."

Discussion Questions

Who is the Son of Man who sows the good seed?

Jesus, the Son of God our Savior

What is the good seed?

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

What is the field?

This world

How does Jesus sow His good seed into the world?

Through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel

Who are the good seeds?

Christians, who have become "sons of the kingdom" by the miracle of faith in Christ produced by the "good seed" of the Gospel.

What name is given to the good seeds?

Wheat

Who is the enemy who sows tares in the field?

The devil

What are tares?

Tares are weeds that look very similar to wheat as they begin to grow.

Who are the tares?

Unbelievers who have rejected Christ in impenitence and unbelief

How does the devil sow tares into the world?

Through the preaching of false doctrine, the devil sows the seed of impenitence and unbelief in the world.

Who is responsible for impenitence and unbelief?

The devil

Why does the owner not want his servants to uproot the tares?

In the process of uprooting the tares, the owner does not want the wheat to be uprooted in the process.

What is the unique characteristic of wheat and tares when they first begin to appear?

The wheat and the tares look the same. Their identity is not fully known until the harvest.

What purpose could Jesus have for patiently enduring the presence of tares in the field of wheat?

1. *Through the preaching of the Gospel, unbelievers may still be brought to repentance and faith.*
2. *Believers in Christ are given the opportunity to show forth Christ's love to those who do not know Him.*
3. *We cannot know with certainty who the believers and the unbelievers truly are.*

Who are the reapers?

The reapers are the angels of God who will gather up the tares and the wheat at the harvest.

What is the harvest?

The harvest is the end of the age when the angels of God will separate the believers and unbelievers in the judgment.

Why are the tares described as "those who offend and practice lawlessness"?

Their offense is the rejection of Jesus Christ for their salvation and the lawlessness of impenitence and unbelief that produces bad fruit.

Why is hell described as a place of "wailing and gnashing of teeth"?

Apart from life with Christ there is only the pain and suffering.

Why are the wheat described as "the righteous" who will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father?"

They have been declared "righteous" or "justified" by faith in Christ and in His everlasting righteousness they will shine forth for all eternity in the kingdom of God.

Meditation on the Bible Story

The kingdom parables of Jesus teach us to ponder the mysteries of God's grace and how His thoughts and ways are very different from our ways. In our way of thinking, it makes sense to eradicate all weeds from a field of wheat so that the wheat can grow strong, produce a bumper crop, and not be choked out or interfered with by the tares. But from God's point of view, the tares are to remain in the field until the day of judgment, that they too might be given the opportunity to hear the Gospel and be brought to repentance. The presence of unbelievers gives to Christ's Church and every individual Christian the opportunity to demonstrate Christ's love to others through the faithful preaching and living. Furthermore, it is not always possible to discern who believes in Christ and who does not. The Parable of the Tares and the Wheat encourages us to walk by faith in Christ and to depend upon His Word alone as we look forward to the end of the age. We are called to preach the Gospel, confess our faith in Christ in the lives that we live, and allow the Holy Spirit to work faith when and where He pleases in those who hear the Gospel. On the last day, at the end of the age, Christ will send His holy angels to separate the believers from the unbelievers. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth for those who have rejected Christ, but eternal joy for those who have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ. In that day, we will shine like the stars in the kingdom of our Father in heaven.

Prayer on the Bible Story

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of saving faith in Jesus. Teach us to rely upon Your promises alone and to look forward to the end of the age. Help us to be faithful to Christ, to preach the Gospel, and to allow Your Holy Spirit to work faith in the hearts of those who do not know Christ. Enable us to be faithful witnesses to others of the gift of salvation that is found only in Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



The Parable of the Tares and the Wheat
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