

# PARABLE OF THE WHEAT AND WEEDS

## MATTHEW 13:24–30, 36–43

### LESSON 5



#### WELCOME

If you had any childhood farm experiences, describe your favorite memory. If not, what farm experiences would you like to have had?

#### BACKGROUND

As we approach another farming parable, it is good to recall the purpose of parables in general. “Parables are stories [that] compare something familiar to something unfamiliar, helping us understand spiritual truth by using everyday objects and relationships. Jesus’ parables compel listeners to discover truth, while at the same time concealing the truth from those too lazy or too stubborn to see it. To those who are honestly searching, the truth becomes clear. ...”<sup>1</sup>

Some would hear Jesus’ parables and embrace the truths in them; others “would hear His teaching but remain deaf to its implications. For them it would be an interesting but pointless story conveying no revelation of divine truth.”<sup>2</sup>

The parables specific to the Kingdom of Heaven were meant to explain that the Kingdom of Heaven had arrived on earth through Jesus. Yes, there would be a heavenly Kingdom at His second coming, but in this parable of the wheat and weeds, Jesus was referencing daily Kingdom living here on earth.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1568

<sup>2</sup> France, R.T. *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*. InterVarsity Press, 2008. 135

<sup>3</sup> “The Kingdom of God is not a geographic location but a spiritual realm where God rules and where we share in his eternal life. We join that Kingdom when we trust in Christ as Savior.” *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2007. 1569



## WORD

*As you come to the Word, pause and ask God to make it come alive for you.*

**Context:** While Jesus was ministering to large crowds in the Galilee region, He used the shores of the lake as an amphitheater of sorts. In order for His voice to better project up the hillside and to get away from the crowds, Jesus borrowed a boat and pushed out from shore to teach the eager people. He had just finished teaching the Parable of the Soils when He launched into another farming parable.

### **Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43**<sup>4</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Here is another story Jesus told: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a farmer who planted good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But that night as the workers slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat, then slipped away. <sup>26</sup> When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew.*

<sup>27</sup> *“The farmer’s workers went to him and said, ‘Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds! Where did they come from?’*

<sup>28</sup> *“An enemy has done this!’ the farmer exclaimed.*

*“Should we pull out the weeds?’ they asked.*

<sup>29</sup> *“No,’ he replied, ‘you’ll uproot the wheat if you do. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds, tie them into bundles, and burn them, and to put the wheat in the barn.’”*

<sup>36</sup> *Then, leaving the crowds outside, Jesus went into the house. His disciples said, “Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field.”*

<sup>37</sup> *Jesus replied, “The Son of Man is the farmer who plants the good seed. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, and the good seed represents the people of the Kingdom. The weeds are the people who belong to the evil one. <sup>39</sup> The enemy who planted the weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the harvesters are the angels.*

<sup>40</sup> *“Just as the weeds are sorted out and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the world. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will remove from his Kingdom everything that causes sin*

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<sup>4</sup> The parable is found in **Matthew 13:24–30** and the explanation is found in **Matthew 13:36–43**. The verses in between (**Matthew 13:31–35**) contain two more parables that will be discussed in future lessons.

*and all who do evil. <sup>42</sup> And the angels will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's Kingdom. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!*

1. Briefly describe the events in this farming parable. (**Matthew 13:24–30**)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. While Jesus didn't always give detailed explanations of His parables, for this parable He did. In **Matthew 13:37–39**, how did Jesus identify who or what each part of the parable represented?
  - a. The farmer = THE SON OF MAN/JESUS
  
  - b. The field =
  
  - c. The good seed =
  
  - d. The weeds =
  
  - e. The enemy =
  
  - f. The harvest =
  
  - g. The harvesters =
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What was the enemy's strategy in this parable? (**Matthew 13:27–28, 38–39**)
  - a. How do you think the enemy still uses that strategy today?

b. In what ways can understanding the enemy's strategy help Christians and the Church today?

4. Having an enemy plant weeds in a farmer's field would not be surprising to Jesus' audience. "This was a known practice in ancient warfare and feuds—destroy a nation's (or person's) agricultural base and his military might would also be destroyed ..."<sup>5</sup> "The 'weed' Jesus referred to was darnel, a poisonous plant. In the early stages of growth the darnel was indistinguishable from the wheat, but in the end it had to be laboriously separated from it, or the consequences were serious ... To sow darnel in a person's wheat field was punishable by Roman law."<sup>6</sup>

a. How does this information help you better understand this parable?

b. What does the parable imply since darnel weeds and wheat look so much alike?

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<sup>5</sup> Barton, Bruce B. *Life Application Bible Commentary: Matthew*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. 267

<sup>6</sup> Barclay, William. *The Gospel of Matthew Vol. 2*. Westminster Press, 1975. 73–74

5. Why shouldn't the workers pull out the weeds before the harvest?  
(**Matthew 13:28–30**)

What could that mean for Christians in general and for the Church today?

6. As you read the following Scriptures, underline or jot down the varieties of "weeds" that you see in these passages.

a. **2 Corinthians 4:4**

*Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.*

b. **Acts 17:32**

*When they [the intellectuals of Athens] heard Paul speak about the resurrection of the dead, some laughed in contempt, but others said, "We want to hear more about this later."*

c. **Matthew 18:7**

*What sorrow awaits the world, because it tempts people to sin. Temptations are inevitable, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting.*

d. **John 3:19**

*... God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil.*

e. **Matthew 7:19–21**

*So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.*

*“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.*

- f. Review your answers and record your thoughts about these types of weeds growing around you.

7. As you live among “weeds” in today's culture, what are two of your greatest challenges?

8. The children of God will live together with unbelievers until the harvest.<sup>7</sup> As you read the promises below, underline the phrases that reassure you of God’s protection from the pull of the world.

a. **John 14:17**

*He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.*

b. **John 16:33**

*I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.*

c. **1 John 4:4**

*But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.*

## **ALLEGIANCE & INTEGRATION**

***Relinquishing and surrendering our lives to the King with loyalty to Him alone and putting our intellectual understanding of the Kingdom into practice in every aspect of our lives.***

9. **Titus 2:12** calls us to “... live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God.” In other words, as faithful Christians, we are called to integrate Kingdom living into every part of our lives. Choose a particular area of your daily life (i.e. school, work, gym, neighborhood, etc.). What are some specific ways you can live as wheat in that mixed field?

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<sup>7</sup> “... the Kingdom of God is present and growing in a world full of sin and unbelief. God will not eliminate all opposition until the end of the age ...” Barton, Bruce B. *Life Application Bible Commentary: Matthew*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. 268-269. At God’s final harvest/judgment, the weeds will be removed. (**Matthew 13:40–43**)

What have you seen fellow believers do that authenticates or demonstrates their faith and how can you learn from their example?

## **MISSION**

***Living out the Gospel and Kingdom values through faith-filled proclamation and demonstration.***

10. You may feel your witness is weak or that your influence among the “weeds” is limited, but the Word of God is a powerful growth agent, as are godly character and love. What do you learn from the following Scriptures about how you can be “on mission,” influencing people in the world to follow Jesus.

a. **John 13:35**

*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*

b. **1 Peter 2:12**

*Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.*

c. **2 Peter 1:3**

*By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life ...*





## WORSHIP

***Take a moment to enter into a time of worship—both on your own and with your community—to show praise, adoration and love for God.***

Living as wheat in a world full of weeds is not easy, but God has indeed given us everything we need for living a godly life. To strengthen and encourage your heart and life, pray the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray. Try this every day for a week or longer.

*My Father in heaven,  
may your name be kept holy.  
May your Kingdom come soon.  
May your will be done on earth,  
as it is in heaven.  
Give me today the food I need,  
and forgive my sins,  
as I have forgiven those who sin against me.  
And don't let me yield to temptation,  
but rescue me from the evil one.*

Amen

**Matthew 6:9–13<sup>8</sup>**

## CONVERSATION PROMPTS

***Consider using one of the conversation prompts this week to begin having a spiritual conversation with someone in your life.***

- What do you like about spending time with people who think differently from you?
- What do religious people you know do that makes their faith more credible to you?
- What do they do that makes their beliefs less credible to you?

## TAKE-AWAY SUMMARY

As you have worked through this lesson and listened to Holy Spirit, what is your one significant take-away?

Write a brief summary of your take-away on page 116.

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<sup>8</sup> The Lord's Prayer has been adapted with singular pronouns for use in your personal prayers.

# SERMON NOTES

## Lesson 5

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