

## WHEAT OR TARES?

**Key Verse: Matthew 13:24-30**

**Key Thought: Assurance in your Faith**

In this chapter, Jesus gives no less than 8 parables. In these "earthly stories with heavenly meanings" Jesus speaks about God's plan of salvation, the work of Satan, the fickle nature of the human heart and the greatness of the kingdom of heaven. After Jesus had finished telling the first four parables, the disciples came to Him to ask Him a question. In verse 36, they don't ask about the Sower, the soils, or the seed; they don't ask about the mustard seed or the leaven. When they ask Jesus to explain a parable, they ask Him to explain the one that is the focus of the message this morning, the parable of the Wheat and the Tares. Why did they choose this one over all the others? Well, the Bible doesn't say for sure, but I am going to guess it is because this parable contained something that troubled them. And to be honest, some of the elements of this parable bother me! But He does go on to explain the parable, explaining why it caught the attention of the disciples.

What is the Context?

A farmer plants a wheat field. He uses good seed and plants the crop expecting a good harvest. However, while he and his servants slept, his enemy entered his field and planted tares among the wheat. What are "tares"? Basically, they are weeds that go by the name "Bearded Darnel". In the early stages of its development, it looks exactly like wheat. It is only when the plant matures and the kernels form in the head of the genuine wheat plant that the 2 plants can be told apart from each other. The bottom line is this: The wheat has fruit in its head, while the head of the tares is filled with little black seeds. So, the field looks good, and the farmer is getting excited about harvesting an amazing crop. It seems that there is more wheat growing than he expected.

However, as the harvest grew nearer, it became apparent that there were tares among the wheat. The servants discover the tares and come in to tell the master about the problem. You see, they were able to tell the difference because as the wheat develops, and the kernels grow inside the head of the wheat plant, the weight of the kernels causes the wheat stalk to bend, making the head appear to be bowing toward the earth. The tares, on the other hand, have light heads and they continue to stand straight and tall! The servants see the problem and offer to pull up the tares, but the master, knowing that the roots of the tares have intertwined with those of the wheat, forbids them. He knows that if the tares are pulled up, that much of the wheat will be uprooted along with them. His counsel is to let them grow together until the harvest, then he will send in the reapers to gather the tares first and bind them to be burned. Then the wheat will be gathered and placed in his barns.

In explaining this parable, Jesus gives His disciples, and us, the identities of those involved in this story. The Sower is Christ. The good seed is the Gospel of grace. The one who sowed tares is the devil. Wheat is those who are saved. The tares are those who are unsaved but have the appearance of salvation. The tares are those in the church who look saved, act saved, sound saved, but who are in truth deceived about their salvation. The tares are those who expect to go to heaven when they die, but will, in fact, go to hell!

I am almost 100% sure that I am preaching to some today who are tares. Now, you think you are saved. You hope you are saved. You know the lingo of the church, you look saved, and act as saved as anyone around you, but you have never really been born again.

This morning I want each of you to do what the Apostle Paul commanded the Corinthians to do, in *2 Corinthians 13:5 (NIV)*

***“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?”***

Also, in *2 Peter 1:10 (NIV)*

***“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble.”***

The question may come this morning, "why are you preaching this message to us?" The answer is: I don't want you to go through life being deceived about your salvation and ending up in hell! I want you to be sure that you are saved by the grace of God!

***Are you wheat? Or are you tares?***

Some of you may say, "We're all saved today! There's no need for a message like this!" But you don't know that! You say, "I know that my mom is saved!" No, you don't! "I know my dad is saved!" No, you don't! "Well, I know my kids are saved!" No, you don't! The truth is, you don't know about anyone but yourself!

Think about this, there are over 200 million people who are church members. If they are all saved, then why is there crime, abortion, drinking, drugs, sexual immorality, and hellish living in our society? If they are all saved, then why do young people who claim to be saved have premarital sex at the same rate as the world? The truth of the matter is that people often think that they are wheat when they are in fact tares. Allow me to share 3 brief thoughts with you that tell what the wheat and the tares have in common, but which also point out what makes them so different.

Please let the Lord speak to your heart today. If you are saved, this message won't hurt you, but if you are lost, it could be the turning point of your life. Let God speak to you today.

## **I. BOTH WERE PLANTED TOGETHER**

Both the wheat and the tares shared the common experience of having been planted. The difference in the experience is revealed in 2 very important ways.

- a) **The Character of The Seed** - Obviously, the wheat seed produced wheat while the tare seed produced tares. On a spiritual level, the "seed" is that thing that we have placed our faith in. For the genuine believer, the "seed" is the Gospel of grace. The truly born-again person is trusting Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. The tares, on the other hand, may be trusting in any number of emotional, spiritual, or physical experiences for their salvation. It all comes down to where you have placed your faith. What are you trusting in for your salvation?

It's important we realize that Hell will be filled with people who are basing their salvation on some "fuzzy" experience they had when they were a child, or some emotional experience during some revival or good service. What we need to understand is that salvation only comes to a heart that has been convicted of sin and after genuine repentance has taken place. *John 6:44* tells us that it is impossible to be saved until the sinner has been drawn to God. Trust me, if you have ever been under conviction, you will never forget it. There will be nothing "fuzzy" about that experience!

The question that must be answered today is this, "Where is your faith?" On what do you base your hope of Heaven? It must be in the Gospel, that is, in the death and resurrection of Christ's atoning work at Calvary, or your faith is in vain!

Be sure your faith is in the right One!

- b) **The Character of The Sower** - The good seed was sown by the owner of the field, the tares were sown by his enemy. Why did the enemy do this? Obviously, it was to ruin the crop and ultimately, it was an attack upon the farmer.

Satan is in the business of sowing tares among the Lord's wheat. Why? Well, he knows that if he can place enough of the artificial among the genuine, then he can devastate the entire crop. Satan is in the business of undoing all that the Lord is doing! If he can fill the church with lost church members, then he can fill hell with a multitude of deceived people. If he can mix enough goats in among the sheep, then he can disrupt the harmony of the church. Whenever there is church trouble, you can almost bank on this truth: there is a lost person involved somewhere. Satan knows that enough lost people in the church will give the church a bad name. Why? Because the lost can only imitate the saved for so long, then their true nature, like that of the tares will come out!

What I am trying to say today is that you do not need to base your hope of Heaven on some experience or the other. You need to be sure beyond any shadow of a doubt that you have truly trusted Jesus Christ and Him alone for your salvation.

## **II. BOTH PROGRESSED TOGETHER**

- a) **There Was All the Activity of Wheat** - Now this is interesting, both the wheat and the tares grew. As the wheat grew, so the tares grew alongside them. They did everything the wheat did and they looked good doing it!

I think it is obvious that saved people grow in the Lord. If you stay in church, stay in the Bible, and stay in prayer, then you are going to grow and prosper in the things of God. However, did you know that it is possible for the lost church member to grow in the things of the Lord also? Oh yes! Take the Bible for instance. It is a spiritual Book!

That is, it takes the right kind of spirit to understand the deep truths of the Bible.

*"The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit."*

*1 Corinthians 2:14 NIV*

Now, imagine a lost person who gets deceived into thinking he or she is saved. They sit under preaching where the truths of the Bible are explained and made clear. That lost person can certainly understand the Bible. They can memorize it and know the Bible stories. They can possess all the activities of the genuine believer. Tares in the church have been known to sing in the choir, serve as Elders and Sunday school teachers, and they often attend faithfully and come to prayer meetings. They have even been known to stand in the pulpit and preach the Word of God. But just because they have all the activity of the wheat, does not mean they are real.

- b) **There Was All the Appearance of Wheat** - Not only do the tares grow alongside the wheat, but they also look just like the wheat. Until they have matured completely, it is impossible to tell one from the other. If you had wheat in one hand and tares in the other and held them both before your eyes, you would not be able to tell them apart!

That's the way things are in the church. We cannot tell the difference between the genuine and the artificial. The tares in the church dress right, talk right, walk right, and give every appearance of being saved. If you examined a real Christian and a tare together, you could not tell them apart. That is why we must never be guilty of telling someone that they are saved. Parents should never tell their children that they are saved! Spouses must never tell the other that they are saved, as none of us truly know the heart.

- c) **There Was None of the Abundance of Wheat** - So, the tares act like wheat and they look like wheat, but this is where the similarities end. One thing the tare cannot produce is fruit. If you were to open the head of a wheat plant, you would find it filled with wheat kernels. If you opened the head of the tare, you would find it filled with tiny black seeds. One thing the tare could never produce was lasting fruit.

It is the same with tares in the church. They give all the external appearances of being the real deal. They look right, act right, talk right and walk right, but when you get right down to it, there is no fruit in their life. What do we mean by fruit? The tares will lack the things that make the genuine believer so special. They will lack the fruit of the Spirit.

***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”***

***Galatians 5:22-23 NIV***

They may be able to counterfeit it for a while, but eventually, their true nature will be seen. If you are a tare, you might give all the external appearances of being a Christian, but don't let what you look like and the things that you do be the basis of your assurance. Be sure your faith is in Jesus Christ and in Him alone!

It is interesting to note the response of the farmer when he was asked about the removal of the tares. His counsel was to allow them both to grow together until the harvest. Why? Because the roots of the tares would intertwine with those of the wheat and if the tares were pulled out, then some of the wheat would be damaged also. The picture here is this: You and I cannot really tell the difference between the genuine and the artificial!

If we set ourselves up as judges and start trying to weed out what we think may be tares, we will certainly pull up some of the wheat as well. Judging between the real and the false is God's job and it must remain that way! All we see is the outward appearance, but God is able to look upon the heart,

***"But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.""***

*1 Samuel 16:7 NIV*

Again, let me caution you against playing the Holy Spirit in the lives of those around you. You do not know who is saved or who is lost. You might even be fooled about yourself!

### **III. BOTH WERE PROCESSED TOGETHER**

Eventually the day of harvest arrived. The reapers were sent into the field to gather the tares first, and then the wheat. How could they tell the difference now? It is easy at this stage, because as the wheat matures, the head becomes filled with kernels and the weight of the kernels causes the stalk of the wheat plant to bend toward the ground. The seeds at the head of the tare are light. This allows the tare to stand tall. The picture here is plain and clear. As a genuine believer grows in the Lord, they tend to become more humble before the presence of God. The tare, on the other hand, will stand in their pride and go to hell clinging tightly to their false beliefs and foolishness. When harvest time came, they were both gathered, but they had vastly different ends.

a) **The Tares Were Burned** - These plants were bound together, allowed to dry, and were used much like kindling. They were fit for nothing but to be burned. If the tares were accidentally eaten, they caused nausea and dizziness.



**b) The Wheat Was Bared** - The wheat was gathered and taken into the barn. Here it would be processed for human consumption and maybe even sold for a tidy profit by the farmer. He kept the wheat but had no use for the tares!

The implications here are very clear! When this life has run its course, there are only 2 possible destinations for the human soul. Every person who lives and dies as a tare will find themselves cast into the fires of Hell, to be eternally separated from the presence of God.

The genuine believer, on the other hand, can look forward to going to Heaven. The question is, which will it be for you? It all depends on whether you are a tare, or you are wheat. I encourage you to examine yourself carefully this morning. Do not allow yourself to be deceived right into Hell. If your faith is anywhere else but in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are a tare and you need to be saved today.

In closing, as we try to bring all of these thoughts together, I would like to close with something of a warning to you. I want to ask you this question: ***How are tares made? Where do they come from?***

There are some things that you need to beware of as you walk through life.

**1. Beware of Good Works** - It is easy to substitute good works for salvation. Often, the tares are not the worst ones we can think of, they are the best. They are busy and active in the church, but they are lost, nonetheless. Don't let a position within the church, or something good you have done send you to Hell!

**2. Beware of Good Beliefs** - There is a real danger in attending a church where they tell you the truth, with so much truth preached and taught that it is easy to learn the doctrines, believe the right things, while never actually believing in the right Person, Jesus Christ! You see, you can believe the Bible and every word in it, and still go to Hell.

Name me a verse that the devil doesn't believe,

***“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”***

***James 2:19 NIV***

The devil believes it all, and even trembles at it, but he will never be saved. You can believe it and go to Hell! It won't make a difference in your life until you bow before the Lord in repentance for your sins and receive the atoning death of Jesus as your only hope of salvation. Don't let good doctrine send you to Hell!

**3. Beware of Good People** - There are people all around you that wouldn't hurt you for all the money in the world, but who would send you to Hell without even realizing it. My own grandmother almost did it to me. Don't ever let the words and assurances of another serve as the foundation for your salvation! Well-meaning people can send you to Hell by trying to assure you that you are right with God.

**4. Beware of Good Feelings** - Sometimes we have emotional services. There are some intense feelings during those services. It is easy to feel the emotion and maybe cry a little and even give a testimony and tell about that time when you were afraid and went to the altar, or when you had some experience or the other. You just need to know that those feelings cannot save your soul! I like good feelings, but I am not counting on them to get me to Heaven! I am saved whether I feel like it or not because I am trusting Jesus Christ for my salvation. What about you?

I believe that God has spoken to some of your hearts this morning. If someone is speaking to your heart and telling you that you are a tare and that you are lost, it's the Holy Spirit. He is calling you to come and get it settled today. If He is calling you right now, please let nothing or no one stand in your way. Get to this altar and get in nailed down right now. Don't let pride or what others might think about you hold you back.

Don't let your position in the church stop you. If God is calling come to Him today. If there is the slightest twinge of doubt in your heart, get to the altar, get to God, and get it settled right now and forever. Others have done it in the past, and today, it is your time. You come and honor the call of the Lord in your heart. Allow Him to transform you from a tare, into the real deal right now.

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Place: FCA

Date: October 1, 2023

Time: 10:30am

After Service Song: Spirit Lead Me (Influence Music)