

The Good Harvest of Christ (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43)

For Your Life in Christ the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

July 17th, 2011

Saint Paul's Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

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Introduction: Matthew 13 contains 7 parables on the Kingdom of Heaven, this one is called “the parable of the weeds”; a challenging, but very enlightening parable!

- A. The Kingdom of Heaven is manifest here on earth.
- B. For example, think of when St. Peter gave answer to Christ.

This was the dialog from Matthew 16:15-18:

Jesus: “But who do you say that I am?”

Peter: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

- C. So St. Peter was here on earth, but he made a confession – namely, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God – that was from heaven. So what came from heaven (the confession) *came through* St. Peter here on earth.

- D. Here, let us review the explanation of The Third Petition of The Lord's Prayer from *Luther's Small Catechism*:

The Third Petition: “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

What does this mean? “The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.”

How is God's will done? “God's will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die. This is His good and gracious will.”

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- E. In other words, when we live in the Word of Christ and in faith in Christ, we are experiencing what comes from heaven here on earth. In this respect, heaven is on earth.
- F. But there are other things on earth. Other things that are not from heaven. This is challenging, because God who is heaven created all things, but here we must appreciate that sin came into the world and now there is corruption in God's good creation. This corruption and sin is not from God and not from heaven.
- G. So we are faced with this truth:
 - 1. There are some things on earth that are from heaven.
 - 2. There are other things on earth that are not from heaven, from sin, corruption, and the evil one.
- H. And now we come to the details of the parable:

Part I: Jesus teaches about His people = wheat (who are now of heaven) being among other people (not merely unbelievers, but imposters and hypocrites within the visible church) = weeds (who are not of heaven):

- A. This is especially true where His people abide the most together in the presence of God through His Word and Sacraments: in the Church!
- B. Evidently it was Luther who said, “Where God builds a church, the devil builds a chapel.” This is only depicting the teaching of Christ in Matthew 13.
- C. Because God is active in giving heavenly gifts, His grace, love and mercy through the Word and Sacraments = the evil one attacks the Church more than any other place.
- D. The man of lawlessness (the antichrist) is said to take his seat in the temple of God (2nd Thess. 2).
- E. The devil has the most to lose through the Church, so he desperately tries to invade the visible church so that the presence of the evil one would distract from the heavenly gifts of Christ's Church. At the end of the day, that means there is a

mixture of people in the visible church: true believers and false so-called “believers” (imposters and hypocrites)...and we wonder why so people struggle with the “institutionalism” of the church! The true and pure Church is permitted by God in His wisdom to have to endure this admixture and burden.

- F. One of the most formidable objections to going to church is this: “there are hypocrites in the church.”
- G. Guess what? The accusation is biblical and true!
- H. It is the next step in the logic that must be challenged.
- I. The next step in the complaint is, “therefore I should not/will not go.”
- J. Wait a minute!
 - (1) Can you imagine using this reasoning for the other things we do in life?
 - (2) If you distanced yourself from other institutions, businesses, services, etc. simply because of the status of the other people who used these resources, then you would eventually find yourself living in a monastery.
- K. My wife grows a beautiful garden, and there are always weeds growing in that garden. Do we therefore abandon the garden? No! More importantly, does the presence of the weeds cancel the beauty and benefit of the good plants and flowers? Absolutely not!
- L. Are there weeds and the negative effects of the weeds in the Church on earth? Yes! Does this mean that the gifts of heaven in the Church are ineffective? Of course not!
- M. *In spite of the weeds, the power of the Word of Christ still stands! Thanks be to God!*

Part II: So How Do We Live With This Situation?

- A. First of all, understand that the Holy Church is a confession of faith like the rest of the saving faith. We need to rely on our faith when it comes to the Church! We believe in the resurrection of Christ! We believe that the Church is Holy...don't depend on what you SEE; depend on the Word of Christ about His Church!

B. Understand what comes from the weed element in the Church = false teaching and false life; we must be on guard against these:

- 1. We cannot allow anything to compromise God's Word:
1st John 4:1: ***“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”***
- 2. We cannot allow anything to compromise the life that God calls us to live.
1st Corinthians 5:6: ***“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”***

C. But don't all people – including Christians – sin?

- 1. Yes, but there is a big difference:
 - a. The hypocrite is sorry for sin only if caught.
 - b. The Christian is sorry for sin because they want to change.
 - c. The hypocrite believes in the PERMISSION to sin.
 - d. The Christian believes in the REMISSION of sins.
- 2. At the end of the day, the believer lives for God, the hypocrite lives for sin (and it is God who defines sin, not us).

D. To comfort us:

- 1. Jesus has dealt with our sin, so that as you trust in Him, you will not be condemned; thanks be to God that true faith, true trust in Jesus also turns from sin! This is your barometer that your faith is healthy and true.
- 2. He is in control of His church; the angels will not conduct the separation between the wheat and the weeds until the end, the last day.
- 3. In the meantime, even as the Church must go through many hardships – the normal Christian life is not a life free from hardship, but perseverance *through* hardship – but in such a way that Christ will keep His wheat, all of you, fed and nourished, forgiven and prepared!

