

Small Groups @ TBC - Sermon Discussion Notes

Date of Sermon: 4 November 2018
Speaker: Mike Levy
Title: The kingdom is like a weedy field
Read: Matthew 13 vs 24 to 30 and 36 to 43

Introduction

In the case of this parable Jesus tells it then explains it, but there are still some things we can still say.

Context

Jesus is taking the opportunity afforded by the crowd to teach them many things through parables (**Matthew 13 vs 1 to 3**). He delivered rapid fire story telling one after the other and 6 of the 7 parables are introduced by the phrase “the kingdom of heaven is like ...” the odd one out is the parable of the sower.

This was no esoteric exercise, it was relevant to the time. The disciples, like much of the Jewish nation, had been waiting for a messiah for a long time, someone to overthrow Rome and establish a perfectly righteous kingdom right there and right then. Jesus had raised expectations. Jesus gave the explanation to the disciples, not the crowd, he wanted the Disciples to understand the wider purpose of God.

The weed that Jesus talks about is thought to be Darnel, it grew widely in the region and when young looks just like wheat.

The field is the world, not the church. Those who follow Jesus live side by side with those who do not.

Questions

Have you ever been asked, or have asked, questions like “why is there so much suffering in the world?” or “If God is a God of love and is all powerful why doesn’t he intervene and stop all the bad stuff in the world?” This parable is part of the answer.

Another sower

Part of the answer is that there are two sowers at work, Jesus sows the good seed and the devil sows the bad seed. The devil is the enemy of Jesus and is so clever he sows seed that looks like the good seed, at least for a while but later they show their true nature. One reason why the world is the way it is is because there are people who perpetrate evil because they are seeds sown by the devil. Notice that there are only two sowers, we are either for Jesus or not - there is no in between. This is not to say that everyone who is not for Jesus is evil, anyone can do good deeds, but as far as eternity is concerned, we are on one side of the fence or the other there is no in between.

Weeding

The natural reaction of the disciples, probably like most of us, was to want to do something about it, to help by pulling up the weeds. The problem is that, just as in real life, there is a danger that the wrong plant could be pulled up or that the plants from the good seed might be damaged. So, Jesus tells his disciples not to go around the world on some sort of purge because they may do damage. We can probably think of times in history when Christians have ignored this advice. But this does not mean that the weeds

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will last forever, weeding is a specialist job and to be left to God. When we see the world in the state it is it is natural for us to want to pull out the weed. (Read Luke 9 vs 51 to 56). When God is ready to judge he will judge - it is not our job to do God's job.

Permit

Why does God permit this state of affairs to continue if he loves us and his creation? Why not intervene now? Is this a lack of love? It is because God is a God of love that he permits the situation to continue, God is being patient. We all live in a state of grace and God wants to give time for as many people as possible to enter into a restored relationship with him.

Frustration

For us, in this state of grace, it can be frustrating. We want to see the kingdom of heaven come in fulness through the reign of Jesus, but we live in a period of time when the kingdom of heaven is established in part as Jesus lives with us through his Spirit but not in fulness. We live in a kind of messy mixed up world where we see glimpses of the kingdom at work but not in all places, at all times in all situations. We join with God in his bigger plan, we learn to be patient as God is patient, we continue to love without condition or judgement and we work and pray for the establishment of God's kingdom more fully and echo the words of the Lord's prayer: "Our father in heaven, blessed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven."

Reflection

1. Is this an 'old fashioned' message? - discuss!
2. Do you agree that people are either for Jesus or not, that as far as God is concerned there is a binary choice? What are the implications of that?
3. Is the use of the term 'evil' appropriate in today's world? Are there any circumstances in which it could or should be used?
4. When have you "pulled up weeds" or wanted to? With what results?
5. If the kingdom of heaven is both "here and not yet" what implications does that have?
6. How does this parable relate to other teachings of Jesus or elsewhere in the bible? For example, can a seed change?
7. What do you do when people ask you difficult questions?
8. What sort of questions do they ask and how do you answer them?
9. How satisfied are you with the answers you give? Or to the answer in this talk?