



## Kingdom of Heaven

### 1 – The Parable of the Weeds

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We're starting a brand-new series. Who else is excited for a brand-new series. I'm really excited about this one in particular. The title of the series is *Kingdom of Heaven*. Matthew is the only gospel that talks about the Kingdom of Heaven. The other three – Mark, Luke, and John, always refer to it as the Kingdom of God. There are a lot of reason why I believe that Mathew did that. He was writing to Jews, so the Gospel of Matthew is written specifically to the Jews. Luke is writing to the Greeks, Mark is writing to the Romans, and John is writing to the Gentiles. Matthew uses the Kingdom of Heaven to teach the Jews. They thought their coming Messiah was going to come back in a lot of power and a lot of pomp and a lot of control. Those that know Jesus, know that's not how he came back at all.

So, when you talk about any kingdom and any type of kingdom ship, if you take out the king, you just have what? Those that can't respond, you're probably what we're saying right now. The reason I'm pointing this out is for a couple of reasons. One, there is a period of Judges in the Old Testament where they didn't have a king. They did really dumb things. They had judges. They had Debra and different judges, but they kept going through the cycle of sin. They'd repent and then they would fall into it again. So, they cried out to God, "God, give us a king." They wanted a king. So, God finally raised up Saul, who had no heart for God. Then following Saul was David. He had a whole heart for God. Then following him was Solomon. Solomon had a heart for God. Then following them, the kingdom gets divided into the southern and the northern kingdom, Israel and Judah, and you have 42 kings. But no kingdom exists without it's king because without a king, it is just dom.

My point to all of that and the point that Matthew understood and what he was on top of is Heaven without Jesus is just dumb. So, any of us in here that has this idea like, *I want to go to heaven, I want to be in Heaven, I want to be in that kingdom, but don't have any thought of being with Jesus*, you're just dumb. I love you, but yeah, I just called you dumb, and here's why. Heaven without Jesus is not heaven. Heaven is all about Jesus. That's what heaven is about. It's about the one who took away our sin. It's about the one we will praise and worship forever.

That's why we're in heaven – to praise and worship Jesus. Heaven is not about us. Heaven is about us never having to taste death or cry or mourn or any of those things, but heaven is all about Jesus. And if you take Jesus out of heaven, that's dumb. If you're only idea is, *I just want to be in heaven so badly. I don't have to burn forever, because that sounds wretched, that sounds painful*, you're missing the whole point of heaven. The whole point of heaven is the King... the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords.

So, as we unpack this series, *The Kingdom of Heaven*, the whole thing is about Jesus. That's why I'm so excited about this series. Specifically, the whole series is going to go through Matthew, because only the Gospel of Matthew talks about the Kingdom of Heaven. So, as we look at the first parable we are going to look at, we've got Part 1 today which is looking at the Parable of the Weeds, also known as the Parable of the Wheat and Tares. One thing is fruitful, and one thing is not fruitful.

So, if you have your Bible and you like to follow along that way, we will be in Matthew 13. If you don't have your Bible, don't worry, you can just follow along on the screen. Let's look at Matthew 13: 24 – ***Jesus told them another parable...*** Jesus spoke in parables a lot. Why? Not to see if they were smart, but because he loved using word pictures.

One of the sweet staff members saw me walk in with this this morning. She goes, "Oh, I love it. You've always got little props." They are not props, they're not gimmicks, they are word pictures to help the people better understand the point I'm trying to illustrate. Jesus did the same thing. Jesus tried to use word pictures, he tried to drive a point home so that they better understand it. And Jesus is so grace filled and patient. Many times, through the Gospel of Matthew, as you read it, he tells a parable and then they'll come and be like, "Uh, Jesus, we didn't understand that parable." Then he actually explains the parable. So, rather than reading the parable and then going through the explanation of the parable, I'm actually explaining the parable while we go through it that Jesus explains a couple of verses later.

***"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field..."*** Who do you suppose the man is here? Well done, you're in church. Just say Jesus. Ninety-nine percent of the time just say Jesus and you're going to be right. The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man. That is the son of man. That is Jesus. Jesus is the one who sows the good seed in his field. As a matter of fact, Jesus sows nothing evil in our life. He only sows what is good. You're like, "Hold on Adam; I surrendered my life, I'm following Jesus, I've been doing Bible studies and it seems like the more I press into Jesus, all this evil stuff is going on around me. We're going to explain that. But Jesus only sows what is good.

So, maybe you've surrendered your life to follow Jesus and you feel like your whole life is falling apart. Jesus only sows what is good. As a matter of fact, there is nothing good in any of us in this room apart from Jesus. Outside of Jesus, there is nothing good living in any of us. As a matter of fact, Romans 3: 10 says, "There is no one righteous, no not one." The rich young ruler comes to Jesus and he says, "Good Teacher, and Jesus responds, "Why do you call me good, there is only one who is good. He was the one. He was tricking the rich young ruler to see if he knew who he was. There is only one who is good and that good is Jesus.

So, that Good Sower, that man who is sowing, he only sows good. Nothing sinful is from Jesus. So, if you are in a relationship that's not equally yoked, so if you're a believer and you're dating the non-believer, that is not from Jesus. Jesus will not and cannot contradict the Word of God. If you're living in a sinful lifestyle and you want to justify it thinking, *Oh, God gave me this*, nothing sinful is from Jesus. As a matter of fact, sometimes difficult things are from Jesus, but not sinful things. Romans 8: 28 says God works all things for good for those he's called according to his purpose. So, even the difficult things in your life he's going to work for good. He is the epitome and the source of everything and all that is good. He does not want evil in your life, and he won't put evil in your life.

As a matter of fact, he is fighting on your behalf. He and His angels are fighting a war on your behalf against the spiritual forces of evil. That is what he's doing for you. So, you can never say, I can never say that something evil or sinful is from Jesus. He does not sow anything that is evil or sinful. He only sows that which is good.

It goes on to say, **25 But while everyone was sleeping...** Who do you think everyone is? Everyone is us. In this parable, everyone is us – everyone in here and everyone watching online. **...his enemy came...** His is Jesus. Who is his enemy? Satan. **...and sowed weeds among the wheat...** What do weeds do? It's about to be spring. What do weeds do? They kill things, they destroy the things that are actually good. That's what weeds do. That's why there is weed killer and different things to try to get rid of the weeds. We know the best way to get rid of the weeds is not weed killer, it's actually pulling them up from their roots. And that's what his disciples think. **...and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.**

Satan only sows evil in your life. Now it might look pretty for a short time, or it might look attractive and alluring. That's his job. But Satan is real and so is hell. *Oh great. I came to church this morning to listen about Satan and hell, which we don't talk about a lot; I get it.* But hell is real and so is Satan and it's important to understand. Not as a scare tactic. I don't believe in scaring somebody into salvation. The reality is there is an enemy, and he hates you and he hates your family and he hates your job and he hates your kids and he hates your witness and he hates everything about you, but he never comes out and says, "I hate you." You would run. We don't run to people that hate us and say, "Tell me more how you hate me; I want to hang out." No, we don't do that. And Satan doesn't do that.

So, nothing holy is from Satan. He hates you and he only sows that which is evil in your life. At the time, you might think it's really something good for you, but he planted it where it might, in like 5 to 10 years down the road, manifest itself in a really evil way in your life. It could be something as small as where one drink turns into ten, or one glance turns into an addiction, or one flirt turns into an affair. It's the smallest, most subtle way. He doesn't show up like we think he shows up with his red mask and these horns and this tail and this pitch fork and say, "Come follow me." That's not how Satan operates at all.

As a matter of fact, scripture says he's still here. I'm not trying to freak anybody out, but 1 Peter 5: 8 says, Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. 1John 5: 19 says, We all know that we are children of God and the whole world is under the control of the evil one. But just for a time being. I've read the whole story, I know who wins in the end. Jesus is coming back, but for the time being, he's roaming this earth trying to trip you up, trying to plant evil seed amongst us. That's what he's trying to do. He's circling the heavens, fighting spiritual warfare and he's on this earth trying to take out all of the believers of Jesus. He's mad, he's ticked, he's bitter. He's like an Eagles fan – He doesn't know how to handle defeat. So, he's either really delusional and believes that he can actually flip the script, which I don't think is the case, or he is just really mad, and he wants to take as many people with him as possible so he's not lonely... for eternity.

**26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.** They came up all at the same time. The believer and the non-believer came up at the same time. Those following Jesus and those not following Jesus came up at the same. **27 "The owner's servants...** So, Jesus' servants...

Who are Jesus' servants? That's us. ...**came to him** (Jesus) **and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field?** Yes, that's all he sows, so they are all confused. They're, like, "We know all that you sow is good, Jesus..." **Where then did the weeds come from?'** "If you only sow good seed, why is their evil amongst us?"

**28 "An enemy did this,' he replied."** Satan did this. Know this: the enemy wants to destroy you, period. It might not look like that, but he'll do it in a most subtle way. That's why he comes to seek, kill, and destroy. John 10: 10 – **The thief only comes to steal, kill, and destroy.** It literally says in that passage in John 10: 10 and it says *only*. The only reason he comes to steal, kill, and destroy. There is no good in him. That's all he wants to do.

So, when you look at these two formed heads, you're thinking, *why don't we just get rid of them right away. Why do they have to live amongst us? Why do they even need to be next to us? I don't understand.*

Well, let me show you a picture of why he doesn't do it right away. The Greek word for this weed is Zizania. Zizania, also known as Darnel, is a really toxic weed. As a matter of fact, in ancient days, some people would actually put it in their bread and things and get a little buzz and get a little dizzy. If you take too much of it, it can literally kill you. It's a toxic weed. But this is actual wheat on the left, and this is actually Darnel on the right. You can see, in the early stages, a farmer couldn't tell one from the other. So, when they come to the master and say, "Why don't we pull this weed out?" they'd say, "We don't know yet. We'll know soon enough whether or not they are truly walking with Jesus or if they are truly not because a more harvested or a ripe weed looks like this."

So, you can see when they fully harvest and they are fully ripe, wheat doesn't split off. Wheat looks like a healthy thing. At the end of Zizania or Darnel, it starts to split off and that's how you tell. These are at the end of the harvesting age of the plant. You can't separate them because you don't know yet. And then at the end of the time, you're going to be able to know which is which. That's what Jesus is saying. By the time it comes to harvest or the time it comes that individual takes their last breath or when I come back, I'm going to be able to tell who is really mine and who is not." What's crazy too, that you need to understand, is the reason the disciple would understand him so well is that so much of their culture was around agriculture. They didn't have grocery stores. As a matter of fact, the Pharisees, to come after Jesus... On the Sabbath, he breaks grain and he eats it. They come after him and say, Why are you eating on the Sabbath? He goes, "Well, you're dumb because I am the King, and I can do what I want." He didn't call the pharisees dumb, I did, but he might have thought it.

So, at the end of the day, you're either going to be wheat or weed. How do we tell the difference. The reality is it's hard to tell the difference until the very end. And Satan loves to disguise himself almost looking really attractive. 2 Corinthians 11: 14 says he masquerades as an angel of light. That's not the cartoon picture we have of Satan at all. Satan loves to make evil things look really good. But the only thing that is good comes from Jesus. Only things that are good come from Jesus. Satan loves to masquerade as an angel of light. He loves to make evil things look very attractive. He loves to make addictive things look non addictive. He loves to make things that don't belong to you look like they belong to you. He loves to make harmful things look non harmful.

That's what it means by he masquerades as an angel of light. He makes things look attractive in your life. He'll actually steal, kill, and destroy your soul. We have to be mindful of that. He doesn't show up like we think he shows up. He's very tactful, he's very deceitful, he's very manipulative. He didn't show up to Eve in a mask. He showed up as a snake, which I thought that would have been a red flag enough for her, but obviously it wasn't. But the way he just twisted it and turned it just enough to get her to believe the lie.

For some of us, he just shows up in daily conversations that we have that are toxic or friends that we have that are toxic. So, when you talk about the wheat and the weed and being around certain people, the opposite of wheat is actually toxic, you have to ask yourself, *How many conversations do I have with people that actually drive me to toxic places?* We'll talk about that here in a second. So, he masquerades as an angel of light, and he wants to destroy you. Check out this video – video plays.

The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist. He does all these deceitful things to plant as many weeds around you as he possibly can. And the reality is the more wheat we are as believers the better off we're going to be. You have to decide. *In my life, am I surrounding myself with people that are toxic? Am I surrounding myself with Darnel?*

Sometimes, you may be the toxic person because if everywhere you go and everyplace you encounter there is the same problem, it's not the places you go and the people you encounter, it's the common denominator. And if every service you come to and you're like *man, I wish so and so heard it*, no God wanted you in here for you to hear it. So, when we always point to someone else, we might be that toxic person that's not receiving the fruitful message that God has for us.

And who we surround ourselves with matters. If every phone call you have with your girlfriend or your boyfriend or whoever it is and it's always gossip and it's always pointing you toward Darnel rather than wheat, I don't know if those people are wheat in your life. I don't know if they are people that are going to produce fruit in your life. Who we surround ourselves with matters. The disciples used a word called *koinonia*, which was fellowship, and who we fellowshiped with matters. The question is does your mother or father or the people you talk to most of the time, the people you interact with, do they point you closer to Jesus or do they push you more toward toxicity, more toward gossip and just cloak it in a prayer request. Or do the people you hang around with actually push you more toward the Good Sower, the Good Farmer, who is Jesus.

How many of you have ever been to Target? We've all been to Target. Here is a picture of Target, from a man's perspective and from a woman's perspective. The thing I appreciate about this illustration the most is regardless, both of them somehow made it into the Nerf aisle. Have any of you ever walked in the Nerf aisle? All of you have been in the Nerf aisle. I have a 10-year-old boy and an 8 year old boy, so I walk in the Nerf aisle often. The inventor of Nerf had a son that got smoked by a baseball stitch and he decided to create things to soften. He invented Nerf so the kids wouldn't get hurt. We want to Nerf everything for this culture. So, you walk down the Nerf aisle and there are Nerf balls and Nerf darts and Nerf guns and Nerf bullets and Nerf swords. Everything is Nerf and everything is soft. But you know what I've never seen in a Nerf aisle when I walk down that aisle. I've never in my life seen a Nerf sharpener. Do you want to know why? It's because Nerf doesn't sharpen Nerf.

Proverbs 27: 17 says iron sharpens iron so one man, one woman sharpens another. Are the people in your life wheat or Darnel. Are they toxic or are they fruitful? If I were going to war with any of you, I would want to go to war with someone who has an iron sword and not a Nerf sword. That's just a fact.

So, as we are going to war, and we are at war. I told you the enemy is here. He's trying to take all of you out, including me. Who am I going to war with? Who am I surrounding myself with? Is it wheat or is it Zizanion.

***“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’ 29 “No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.*** You may uproot those who are actually fruitful, walking with Jesus, and accidentally take the wrong person. But he's saying you are still going to live among them. My young people justify it like this all the time. “Man, Jesus went to bars and he was hanging out with tax collector and he was hanging out at parties. That's who Jesus was.” I'm like, “yeah, and he also walked on water. I don't see you doing that.” So, it really easy to justify the people around you. The reality is every time you get around something, you are either being influenced or you are doing the influencing. Who you surround yourself with is so important.

I just got a text yesterday from a former player. He was like, “Now I understand why you didn't want us listening to secular music all the time when we were working out.” He was alluding to an NBA player that just made a really dumb post this weekend. Music is influential. And the people we surround ourselves with are influential. And the conversations they have and the behaviors they have... all those things influence and rub up against us. Nerf does not sharpen Nerf.

It's important here... and I don't want any of you in here ever to question salvation. I don't want to drive fear in any of you. But scripture on whether or not you are wheat or you are not... It makes it really clear if you're going to heaven or you're not. Scripture says if you have confessed with your mouth and you believed in your heart that Jesus is Lord and you believe that he died, was buried, emptied the tomb, ascended, and he's coming back, then you are wheat. Ephesians 1: 13 says that at that moment, you've been marked in Him with the Holy Spirit, a promise deposit, guaranteeing your inheritance. You can't lose your salvation.

But it's important to know whether or not you ever truly surrendered your life to Jesus. I think that's a safe question to ask. Scripture says there are ways that you'll know that. Jesus says you will know you're my disciples by the way you love one another. People will know that you are Jesus' disciple just by the way you love people, even your enemy. Matthew 5: 43 says even your enemy. Even the people that think different politically than you do. Even people that speak toxically on social media. You will know that you are wheat by the way you love other people.

The other one says that you will bear fruit – John 15 says You will bear fruit and fruit that will last. There will be fruit in your life from following and living for Jesus. Believers will see fruit in their life. 1 John 1 says that there will be conviction in your life, which leads to repentance and obedience. You will walk in obedience to the scripture if you are truly wheat. It says you'll be sanctified. So, when you come to know Jesus, Jesus doesn't say, “Okay, you've made it.” It says there is a process that begins.

1 Thessalonians 4: 3 says he's going to take you through the sanctification process where from the time you came to know Jesus and then ten years later, you won't be the same person. Jesus does not and will not stop you from growing. You're going to grow. That's a part of coming to know Jesus.

The other thing it says is that you will have the Holy Spirit. John 14: 16 and John 14: 26 say when you become a believer, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you. He gives you discernment, he teaches you, he gives you conviction, and he helps lead you toward the good Farmer.

Those things should be in your life as a believer. Now, if you just became a believer six months ago, you might not see all those things manifesting themselves as quickly. But it says in scripture that for those that have surrendered their life to Jesus, there will be love, there will be fruit, there will be conviction, there will be growth, and repentance over their poor decisions. That's what scripture says. I'm not trying to scare anybody. I'm just telling you that. In Philippians 2: 12, Paul says to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. That word *fear* there is *reverence*. So, understand that God has saved you and grow in your obedience, grow in your knowledge of him, grow in him. That's what Paul is saying. He's saying you shouldn't remain stagnant as a believer. That is how you know if you are wheat or you are Darnel, a toxic thing that is trying to influence and pull other people down because they don't want to surrender their life for his. When Paul say in, Philippians 1: 21, to live is Christ, to die is gain, he's not telling you to die for him. The reality in this culture living for him can be even harder than dying for him.

**30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters...** Who is the one calling the shots? Jesus. Jesus knows our heart. That's why I said I'm not questioning anybody's salvation in here. Jesus is the one that knows the heart. He gets to sit on the throne. Praise God I don't have to sit on that throne. Because when I stand face to face before him and he asks me why I should get to go to heaven, I don't get to answer that in the first person. I don't get to say because I did this or because I did that. The only answer that is going to suffice Jesus is in the third person. "Jesus, the only reason I get to get in is because of what you did on the cross, because of what you did for my sin, because of the life you lived that I should have lived, because of the death you died that I should have died, because you defeated the tomb, because you took the crown of thorns, because you took the whipping, because you did it, Jesus." There is nothing I did to get me into heaven; it's everything you did. That's why he's the one in control.

**At that time I will tell the harvesters...** He's in charge, he's the boss, he is the King in the kingdom and without him, it's just dom. **First collect the weeds...** So now they can tell. You can see they've harvested, and you can tell they are not really living for Jesus; there's no fruit in their life. That is a toxic weed. **"...Collect those weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned..."** He's referring to hell. I'm not trying to scare you, but it's real. Heaven and hell are real. ...to be burned... grab the people that weren't in Jesus, and they are going to hell. That's a real place. And I want to say this too. It's completely normal because it's faith and it's completely to even have a little bit of fear of Heaven or a fear of dying. That's why it's called faith. Some people think like *man, if I were really a believer would I be scared of dying?* Yeah, I think that is natural. That's the flesh part of us. But we have faith to believe that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. **"...then gather the wheat (us) and bring it into my barn."** Which is heaven.

I once heard a mentor of mine say, "If you can imagine heaven, that's not it." That's how amazing it is. And we don't like to think about heaven because it can be overwhelming, daunting, it can just be too much. Let me remind you what John the revelator says that Heaven actually is 21: 4 – Heaven is where he (Jesus) will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death has lost its sting and shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning nor crying. And every parent of a nine-month-old or younger said, "Praise heaven! Heaven come quickly." No pain anymore.

I have a close loved one to me that I don't want them to die but I long for the day they get to be in the presence of Jesus. They are in a lot of pain, which is causing pain for people close to me. So, when I think of heaven it actually brings me hope and joy, not the opposite. This in here, where we are today, is so temporal and we get so fixated on the temporal we forget there is a bigger plan and a bigger purpose. For the former, the things we're living in now, have passed away. They are gone. I think as believers, the more we actually think of Heaven, the more we reflect on Heaven, the more worry dissipates, the more the illusion of trying to gain control loses its grip, the more bitterness fades. When we think about heaven and what truly matters, everything begins to just fade away.

There's a story from 1952. A lady named Florence Chadwick. She was going to set out to swim from the Catalina Islands to the coast of California. It's a 26-mile swim. If you think 26.2 miles is a long way to run a marathon, try swimming for 26 miles. Florence Chadwick was going to swim this 26 miles from the Catalina Islands to California. As far as they knew, she would be the first to ever do it.

She gets a team around her in little boats as they are going to make this trek and to watch out for sharks and any dangers. She started swimming. It was a beautiful day in California. I grew up in Southern California. The marine layer comes in. She gets in and she is 15 hours into this swim. Fifteen hours just swimming in the Pacific Ocean. Sure enough, the Marine Layer comes in and the fog hits. She can no longer see what is ahead of her.

At this point, she doesn't know it, but she has swum about 25.3 miles, which means she has .7 miles left. She doesn't know that and the people in the boats don't know that. There was no GPS satellite system in 1952. She tells her team, "I'm done. Pull me out." They get her in the boat and sure enough, the shore was right there. She was that close. Fifteen hours swimming and she stopped. She realized how close she was so a couple of months later, she was going to try to do the same thing – a 26-mile swim.

It's a beautiful day. She starts out at Catalina Island and heads to the 26 miles toward the California Coast. She starts swimming. Sure enough, just like last time, here comes that marine layer like clockwork and the fog comes in. She makes it to the coast this time. And then they interview her. They asked, "When it got tough and your body started aching in the fog and you couldn't see anything, how did you get to the shore? She said, "This time, I closed my eyes, and I just pictured the shore the whole time. I just knew the shore was right there. Instead of looking at what I couldn't see, I trusted and knew what was there and that's how I made it to the shore.

Jonathan Edwards, a great theologian, said, "God, stamp eternity on my eyeballs."

I think so many times, we get so discouraged and so distracted, just like the enemy wants us to. Because our eyes get fixated on the problem rather than the King who makes the kingdom possible, and what he has instore for us in eternity.

I don't know where you're at today. I know I love you. I know I care a lot about your soul. But God does even more so. I don't know if you are wheat, and I'm going to be praising Jesus with you in heaven, because that's what heaven is all about, or you might be Darnel and you're like I don't know if I know Jesus.

Let me encourage you. We have a phenomenal prayer team at this church that will be up here right after the service. They would love to pray with you. I don't tell you there is a heaven and a hell to scare you. I tell you there is a heaven and a hell because I love you and care about you and want you to know there is nothing greater than knowing Jesus, personally and intimately, and letting him do a work in your life that we can't do.

Father God, thank you so much for this church body and this family and your goodness and just your assurance that you give us through your Word of who we are and who's we are. I pray for all the viewers online, I pray for all the viewers here. I pray, Lord, that this community and this world would know us as followers of you by the way we love other people. Many people come to know you by the way we love them well.

We love you and we are so thankful for all you do for us, Jesus. It is in you mighty and matchless, high and holy name that I pray. And all God's people said... Amen.