**The Harvest at the End of the Age**

Based on [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt13.24-30)

Preached on July 23, 2017

Pentecost 7, Proper 11

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

Today Jesus teaches us another parable about the kingdom of heaven, that is, the coming of Christ the king to rule over his people. The coming of the king from heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. **And as the parable unfolds and is later explained, it reveals three things about Jesus reign on earth now until the last day.** First, in this age there are sons of God, and there are sons of the Devil. **Second, it is God’s will that his children and the devils children live amongst one another in this age.** And finally, this age will not last forever, but on the last day, God will separate His children from Satan’s brood, and establish his kingdom of glory on earth.

First, in this age there are sons of God, and there are sons of the Devil. This teaching is a scandal to those who don’t know Christ. You see, all people know that there is a God, a creator of all things. Some people rebel against this knowledge, thinking they are wise, and become fools. And there are many ways to do this. Some claim there is no God and like the proverbial ostrich, stick their head in the sand angry and hiding from a God they don’t believe in. Others say that maybe God exists, but won’t seek him out.

But there’s a third form of rebellion against the knowledge of God, and that is those who acknowledge religion, but believe all religions worship the same God. Christians, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, Buddhists, Hindu, you name it. And their view, these are all just brand names, sects, primitive constructions that try to put God in the box of their own cultural norms and assumptions. They see, “*But God is bigger than their dogmas; he’s greater than their words about him. All religions are simply man’s attempt to give expression to the one true God worshipped by all religious people. And the one truth about religion is the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man.”*

God is the Father of all people in the sense that mankind was created in His image. And it is on account of this fact that all human beings are to be treated with dignity and respect, why when we see anyone of any creed or culture suffering or in pain, or lacking the needs of the body or the soul, we offer to them, provide for them, we love them as fellow creatures of the creator they may or may not acknowledge. Even the sons of the evil one, we do not hate them, but help them. Jesus says, “**Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you**” (Matt. 5:44). In that sense, there is a worldly brotherhood of man, and frankly, before Christ came the world taught no such thing. And today our hospitals, schools, and social institutions to care for the poor and destitute were virtually unknown apart from the gospel of the true God was preached to the gentiles.

However, there is not a universal religious brotherhood of man. Because there is only one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5). No one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6). And those who would attempt to come to the Father apart from the son have no standing with God. They are strangers to him. He does not hear their prayer (John 9:31; Proverbs 15:29, 28:9; 1 Peter 3:12). They have a different father, the father of lies (John 8:44) and what concourse is there between Christ and Belial? None (2 Cor 6:15). They are sons of the evil one because they refuse to approach God in his mercy.

But Jesus Christ is the man who sowed Good seed in the world. And those who come to him, receive the forgiveness of sins from him, so they can stand before the Father, and have the right to be called Sons of God. They approach the mercy seat, the throne of God’s grace. And scripture calls to the sons of God’s Kingdom saying, “**Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need**” (Heb. 4:16).

So Jesus says of his parable, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil.”

**Second, it is God’s will that his children and the devils children live amongst one another in this age.** In today’s parable, when the weeds appeared among the wheat, the servants of the master’s house asked him do you want us to gather the weeds from the field? “But he said, ‘**No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. Let both grow together until the harvest.”**

It is God’s will that the servants allow the wheat and the weeds, believers and unbelievers, grow together in the field until the harvest. The field, Jesus says is the world and this is important. **Some have interpreted this passage to say that the field is the visible church, and that Jesus is teaching his church not to discipline or excommunicate unbelievers from their midst.** This is patently a wrong interpretation. First of all Jesus teaches in Matthew 18, as scripture does elsewhere in many places (1 Cor. 5:5, 2 John 1:10, etc.), that, those within the church who do not repent, should be exposed and treated as unbelievers. But the plain words of Christ here should end the debate as he says plainly: “The field is the world.”

If the field is the world, then the servants who are to allow the wheat and the weeds to live amongst one another in this age are not pastors or ministers in the church, but Christian rulers. Jesus is teaching here what we call the doctrine of the “two kingdoms” as he does elsewhere. When the Pharisees asked him whether God’s people should pay taxes to the worldly Government, He responds famously, “**Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s**” (Matt. 22:21). Romans 13 says, “**Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God**” (v.1). So when Jesus himself is standing before Pontius Pilate on trial for his life, Pilate says to him “**Will you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you. Jesus answered him, ‘You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above**” (John 19:10-11).

God makes worldly rulers, even unbelieving ones. But sometimes these rulers are Christian. It was, in fact, faithful Christian princes that used their power to protect Martin Luther from being executed by the Empire for confessing the true faith. Worldly rulers have worldly power given them by God. Should they use that power to uproot weeds, to punish, drive out and kill unbelievers from their lands? Are worldly rulers responsible for bringing about God’s final and glorious kingdom on earth? The Koran, the holy book of the Muslims teach that very thing, that it is through violent Jihad that men are to seize power in the world, convert or kill all infidels and establish Allah’s kingdom for him. It is to this that Jesus is saying “no, lest in gathering the weeds you uproot the wheat also.” Let both grow together until the harvest, when angels, not men will be sent to gather.

It is unclear how uprooting unbelievers would also uproot the faithful; Jesus doesn’t say and so we won’t speculate. But for our learning, it is enough to know that God, the Master, is not worried about them growing together until the harvest, and neither should you be. We are in a world that is filled with apostasy, of those turning away from God. Is this a failure of the church? Is this a failure of the Government? No, this is the work of the evil one and it is not something we are able to correct. We are not called to save the world, only to remain in it and witness to the truth. Our heavenly Father is more concerned that a premature removal of weeds would affect the final harvest, the true reaping, when everything is ready and ripe for the gathering. That is the perfect day, the awesome day of final redemption, God will preserve his wheat until that day, and when the time is right, he will send angels to collect his harvest.

The harvest is, of course, the day of Judgment. And so the final teaching of this parable is that this age—the age where believers and unbelievers, sheep and goats, sons of God and sons of evil live together—this age will come to an end. This age will not last forever, but on the last day, God will separate His children from Satan’s brood, and establish his kingdom of glory on earth. We do not bring about the end through worldly government, or through any ways and means at our disposal. Only the Father knows the day of harvest and you can trust that he will bring his harvest home.

Ultimately, this parable answers the question of vocation. What is our job and our role in establishing the kingdom of heaven? Only this: we believe the word of the kingdom and we preach the word of the kingdom, and we continue to grow as we await the final harvest. Your seed was watered in Holy Baptism, and daily you drown out the old self in repentance and live holy lives to God. You hear God’s law preached that you are dead in your trespasses and have life in Christ alone, who has won forgiveness, life and salvation for you to be received by faith. How do you know for sure that you have received that forgiveness and life? Because you regularly and often eat Christ’s body and drink his blood, and he promises “**Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day**” (John 6:54).

You have no need to be anxious, Jesus has paid for all your sins and the sins of the whole world. And what makes you sons of the kingdom and wheat is that your sins have not only been paid for, they have been forgiven in your hearing and believing. The world’s not going to win, the weeds are plentiful, but God is ushering in his kingdom. He knows when the harvest is ripe. And he will bring all His children, even you home to Glory in that day.