

**Sermon      Kingdom Living... Cultivating the Soils    Matthew 13: 23 – 30; 36 – 43**

Kingdom Living... For many of you who have heard me speak from the pulpit recently...

You may know that Kingdom Living has been the common theme of my most recent sermons.

You might think... Kingdom living sounds like you're supposed to live like a super Christian...

But Kingdom Living is simply living life every day with a purpose for being real... before God...

What I mean is... being who God made you to be... and each day being aware of His presence...

Aware... as you work, as you interact with people, as you make decisions, and as you pray...

There is one common denominator that all Kingdom Living people have... As followers...

God's Spirit is mysteriously united with our spirits... which enables us to better understand truth

Especially... truth found in the writings of Holy Scripture... from the beginning to the end.

And... the truth of how special the love of God is for all of us...                      We are His people...!

Kingdom Living is a lifelong process of growing to know and rely on God's love for us...

Every day..., we learn more of what Kingdom Living is...

It's very personal... and It is a path of living life which is unique to you alone.

Much of what we know of Kingdom Living, is taught by Jesus in his Kingdom of Heaven parables

Today... We will look at a couple of these Kingdom of Heaven parables found in Matthew, 13 ...

We will look at the parable of the Sower, and the parable of the Weeds... OPEN BIBLES

Often, when you are reading Scripture, and thinking about what is being taught...

You get a new insight from a passage... something you never saw before...

This happened to me as I was reading through these parables in chapter 13...

At the end of the chapter, Jesus asks his disciples a provoking question... verse 51

He asked them...                      *"Have you understood all these things?"*

Of course, Jesus was asking the disciples this question... but... how about me...?

Have I understood these things... i.e., the lessons Jesus is teaching in these parables?

Well... I went back and reviewed the parables again...

Specifically, the parable of the soils and the parable of the weeds

And then... I did realize something new... Rather than seeing these two parables separately...

I realized these two parables can be seen as a whole...

Each supporting the other in teaching or conveying a truth about living as disciples...

Within these parables, Jesus reveals a critical life lesson for Kingdom Living...

Jesus teaches us to look for ways to help people... rather than to judge...

We will look at both parables... but I'll first read the Parable of the Weeds... Read along, 24-30

Most followers of Jesus are familiar with the parable of the Sower...

Jesus uses a farming illustration which most likely is perfect for the people listening...

Because much of the 1<sup>st</sup> century society were farmers or involved in food production.

So, we picture a farmer casting out seed onto the ground... but in this case... everywhere...

The seed was cast out onto walking paths, rocky places, among weeds, but also good soil...

This illustrates the message of the Kingdom of Heaven being spread throughout the world...

And the seeds of the Kingdom message are being sown everywhere... no place untouched...

Think of it like this... The seeds of the Kingdom message are spread out like glitter...

If you've ever had little children in your home, using glitter even once, you know what I mean...

In that home, you will never ever stop finding glitter... It's everywhere... [the book...]

So, the seed i.e., the message of the Kingdom... is spread everywhere...

But the seed doesn't always develop well... It sometimes falls on unfertile soil...

Yet, some of the seeds do fall on good soil... and these seeds prosper... producing great yields...

Later in that day... The disciples wanted to have Jesus explain the parable... so he did...

Most of us are familiar with Jesus' explanation... but follow along as I read verses 18 – 23

This parable, for many of us... reveals a life matter which is very personal...

All of us have dear friends or family members who have heard the gospel...

But for many reasons, they haven't been moved to embrace faith or even the need for faith.

Sometimes, the people we love and care for are in other faith systems...

Jesus teaches them that bad influences often get in the way of people embracing the gospel.

For whatever reason.. these people have not as yet had the seed of God's Word take hold ...

Possibly, for some of you, this may be your story earlier in life, or even may still be your story...

Of course, there are many people, who do hear the gospel and are right away... 'all in'.

They never look back, and they continue to grow as people of God...

And this is the best outcome, of course...

In these cases, The seed of God's Word has landed on good soil... a receptive heart...

I then to think many people do not immediately embrace faith when first hearing the gospel.

At least... that's my story... But I'm glad the seed finally did begin to grow... and to be viable...

It took time and some circumstances... But eventually, the Holy Spirit changed my heart...

The seed of God's Word never lost its viability... it just needed the right conditions for growth...

I imagine some of you have a similar story to mine... So, that's the parable of the Sower...

Now, let's look at the parable of the weeds...

I read this earlier...

In this parable, Jesus continues an agricultural theme... but he discusses the problem of weeds...

Here again, good, and viable seed is broadcast... but this time sowed where the seeds will grow.

But weeds soon grow among the wheat... these seeds, Jesus says... are sown by "the enemy."

The Greek word used here for the weeds... describes the weeds as troublesome... or poisonous

These weeds also look very similar to the Wheat as they sprout... This isn't unusual...

I've spent many of my professional years managing weeds in people's lawns...

One weed, crabgrass, can look very similar to our good St Augustine grass in its early growth.

If you try to pull out the crabgrass sprouts, though, you will most likely also pull up good grass.

This is the situation the master wants to avoid...

He says, "No...you're going to pull up the good with the bad... so let it alone."

He emphatically gives this command... the separation is not to happen until the harvest.

Later, Jesus also explains this parable to his disciples... Read 37 – 42

One significant thing to point out here is how Jesus describes the weeds... verse 38, 39

He refers to the weeds... as the sons of Satan... These are people whose character is evil...

They either do evil works, or they attempt to cause as many people as they can to sin...

These evil ones... Jesus says will be finally condemned at the end of the age...

This is a very hard fact for many people to accept... But this is what Jesus teaches...

It's hard because people want God to only be a God of Love...

And for no one to perish in a Hell...

God is the God of Love...! But evil does exist in this world...

And there is no place for evil in the Kingdom of Heaven...

There will be judgement...

But there is yet another hard or disturbing thing to consider...

People of faith cannot know or determine decisively, who the evil ones are...

Yet, believers tend to think we can...

Recall earlier, I made these statements...

“Often, when you are reading Scripture, and thinking about what is being taught...

You get a new insight from a passage... something you never saw before...”

Return with me to verses 27 -29... Read

The Master's servants say... *“Do you want us to go and pull the bad weeds up”*

Or in other words...

“We know who the bad ones are... Don't you want us to get them out for you...?”

Do you see a problem with this request? Do you see why the Son of Man answers... No?

The problem is... they can't know precisely the bad ones, and will mistakenly destroy good ones

Our first Scripture reading today came from the Genesis account of the Fall of Man...

Here... The serpent... Satan himself... lies to the woman, Eve, saying, *[If you eat the fruit...], You will not certainly die... For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*” Genesis 3; 4, 5

The sin that led to the fall of man and the corruption of creation... wasn't eating the fruit...  
The sin was man desiring to be like God... and wanting to decisively know good from evil...

People who know me well, know that I believe that I know the answer to solve most problems...  
Honestly... I do...! But people close to me will roll their eyes and often just humor me.  
But even if I do know the answer to most problems... there is one thing I won't claim to know...  
I don't know enough, nor will I ever know enough... to decisively say someone is going to Hell...

And neither can anyone else... It's not our place or our responsibility to do that...  
We are not God... perfectly knowing good and evil...

Illustration... Do you still think I'm going to Hell?

We cannot know that anyone is condemned.

But we can display God's love and draw people to it...

Scripture clearly teach us what many of our responsibilities are...

Here are the important ones:

We are to *"love the Lord our God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... and to Love our neighbor as ourselves."* Matthew 22: 37; 39

Jesus also gave us the great commission where he said... *"go and make disciples of all nations... baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit and to teach them everything I have commanded..."* Matthew 28: 19 - 20

Scripture gives us many other ways we should live as people of the Kingdom of Heaven...

Of course... It is important to confess our sins... repent... and ask Jesus to come into our life...

Asking God to change our hearts... and then, when we can...

To tell others of the gospel of Jesus...

So... What is a takeaway today for us... from the teaching of these two parable...? Simply this...

God's people will not carry out God's judgement at the end of the age... His angels will do that...

Rather than judging people... we need to instead focus on cultivating the soil of their hearts...

Matthew Henry writes... “Man’s heart is like soil, capable of improvement... of bearing good fruit...it is a pity to allow the heart to lie fallow... Jesus does not say that this good ground has no stones in it, or no thorns, but the soil can be cultivated to be never-the-less fruitful.”

We have the Kingdom Living responsibility to display God’s light in the way we live our lives...

It is very important for believers to understand this...

There is little hope for us displaying God’s light... if we are viewed as condemning people.

Our work is to find ways to cultivate the hearts of people... so that the good seed can grow...

It is God alone... who makes the good seed to grow in the cultivated hearts... of His people.

Paul writes of this in 1 Corinthians... *“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow... The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose... for we are co-workers in God’s service...”* 1 Corinthians 3: 6 - 9

My granddaughter wrote a poem during the same week I began preparing for this message.

The cool thing is... Neither of us knew what the other was doing...

The poem is printed in a handout in the bulletin... Follow along with me as I read it...

It’s all about helping people... displaying the light... to attract them to want to seek God...

And, then when we can... sharing the good news of the gospel...

The Holy Spirit will take over from there... Amen???

**Choose** by Nora McCall

Some people

Only very bad people of course

Have grown off of evil down to their core.

But others have simply, lost their way,

When wondering whether to go or to stay.

Those people of course,

Can find the right track,

If somebody shows them how to get back.

And when they get back we all will rejoice,

And hope they continue to choose the right

Choice