

Parable Of Wheat And Tares

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

MEMORY VERSE

MATTHEW 13:43

"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A bowl of dirt and several toothpicks. Color half of the toothpicks black from half-way down.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Character Charades

Ask for some volunteers to act out a particular familiar character like Adam, Noah, Moses, Joshua, etc. Depending on the age of the children in your class, you can allow them certain liberties of expression. Younger children, for instance, can describe verbally, and older children must not make any noise, using only actions.

Have the class try to guess the name of the character that is being acted out. Give several children a chance to participate. Explain to them that acting like someone else does not actually make you that person. Sometimes there are people who act like Christians but do not really know Jesus. We are going to learn about these people today through one of Jesus' parables. **Not everyone who says he is a Christian is really a Christian.**

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to talk with Jesus face to face? In today's lesson, we are going to meet up with Jesus as He teaches a multitude of people. We find Him sitting in a boat, speaking to the people who are gathered on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. As He is teaching, Jesus tells them a parable (story) called The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares.

You may remember from past lessons that Jesus used many parables to help people understand the truths of God's Word. The word parable means to lay along side. In other words, a parable is a story that is laid along side a truth so that we can better understand the truth.

Let's sit back and enjoy Jesus' story today. As the story is being read, let's pretend we are sitting on the seashore listening to Jesus. Do feel the sand squishing up between your toes? Remember to listen closely to the story because we might need your help understanding the parable later.

MATTHEW 13:24-30

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;

"but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

"But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

"So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

"He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

"But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

'Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Does anyone remember what we said a parable is? The word parable means to "place or cast along side." It is a story that is compared along side a truth so that we can understand it better.

Wanting to share with the people a heavenly truth, Jesus told them this story to make it more understandable. Can anyone here explain what this parable means? If you are unsure, do not worry. It is sometimes hard to get the meaning without anything to compare it to. Even Jesus' disciples did not understand.

Sometimes there are things in the Bible that are hard for us to understand. The disciples spent over 3 years with Jesus and still did not understand many things. You will find that as you grow older you will learn more and more about God and His Word, and He is faithful to help you understand His Word, through His Holy Spirit.

Let's see if we can dig a little deeper to find out what this story is all about.

MATTHEW 13:36

Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

Why do you suppose that no one from the multitude asked Jesus to explain the parable? Maybe they were embarrassed and did not want anyone to think they did not understand what Jesus was saying. It is sad to think of how many people may have gone away that day without understanding the parable because of pride.

We can also learn an important lesson from the disciples. They knew that they did not have to be embarrassed to ask Jesus what the answer was. They also knew that He would have the answer. God's Word, the Bible, has all the answers to life's important questions. Jesus wants us to come to Him with our questions. Are you afraid or embarrassed to ask Jesus for help? We can always go to Him for help.

Let's not be like the multitude and go away without the truth; let's be like the disciples and ask the Lord. Now let's learn the lesson that goes along side the parable of the wheat and the tares.

MATTHEW 13:37

He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man."

Jesus is the one who plants the good seed. When someone asks Jesus into their heart to be their Lord and Savior, a good seed is planted. Jesus wants to plant new life into our hearts.

MATTHEW 13:38a

"The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom..."

God has planted Christians all over the world. The world is like a field that God has planted with good seed, Christians to bear fruit for Himself. God wants us to be good examples of Jesus and stand strong for truth.

MATTHEW 13:38b

"...but the tares are the sons of the wicked one."

The tares are people who do not know the Lord. Tares are weeds that grow along side the good crops in a field. Those who are tares follow the ways of the world, because they are not born again. They may look just like a believer and even be planted in the same field, but without Jesus planting that good seed in their hearts, they are just tares or weeds in the Lord's field. **Not everyone who says he is a Christian really is a Christian.**

How many of you have ever seen a weed? Maybe you have helped your mom or dad pull them out of your family's flowerbeds? What is so bad about weeds? After all, they look like normal plants. But weeds are not wanted in a garden because they do not produce anything good. All they do is take water and nutrients away from the good flowers and plants. They do not produce good fruit. In fact, weeds can even cause harm to the good plants that you are trying to grow. So, we pull them up. But in this story we are told not to pull up the weeds.

Why were the servants instructed to leave the weeds in the field? It is because they might accidentally pull up the wheat along with the weed. Sometimes the weeds are so close to the wheat that we cannot tell the difference between the two. Many times people come to church, and they look like Christians. They participate in Christian activities. They even say that they are Christians, but they are not. Why? It is because they have never asked Jesus to plant the seed of life in their hearts. **Not everyone who says he is a Christian really is a Christian.**

These people are like weeds that grow next to the wheat. We are supposed to let God take care of the weeds that grow in the church. Only God can look into the heart and know for sure if someone is a tare or wheat. Hebrews 4:13 tells us that "...there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the

eyes of Him to whom we must give account." Only God is capable of exposing the thoughts and intents of men's hearts. Our job is to be representatives of Jesus.

Should we be worried about these people or try to pull them out? No! We are to leave all of that up to the Lord. He knows who His people are. We should be concerned with our own hearts and whether or not they are right with God.

Wheat or Tares?

Take a bowl full of dirt and several toothpicks. Color half of the toothpicks with black marker half-way down. Leave the others clean. Stick the clean toothpicks randomly into the dirt.

Have the class close their eyes and read to them:

MATTHEW 13:25

"...but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way."

While you are reading, place the blackened parts of the colored toothpicks randomly into the dirt.

Have the class open their eyes and read:

MATTHEW 13:39a

"The enemy who sowed them is the devil..."

Tell the class that while they were sleeping the enemy came in and planted weeds among the wheat.

Give several children an opportunity to "weed" the toothpicks. As they pull out the "tares" make note of how much they are pulling up as well. Explain to them why we are not good at being weed

pullers for Jesus. We are to love one another and share that love with everyone, even those we suspect of being tares.

MATTHEW 13:39b

"...the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels."

One day God will make sure that we are separated from the weeds. When He returns, He will work everything out. Now we live in a world with a lot of evil people. One day, God will send the angels to pull up all the weeds and throw them into the fire. Weeds cannot get into heaven.

At this time in Jesus' ministry there were many multitudes of people following Him. But many were following for the wrong reasons. Some of them wanted to be entertained by His miracles. Others wanted to get a free meal, hoping He would multiply the bread and fish again. Perhaps others just had nothing better to do.

Now, if we were to ask them whether or not they were followers of Jesus, many of them would have said, "yes." But there was never any change in their hearts. They did not humble themselves before the Lord and ask Him to be their Savior. So when they faced persecution for following Jesus, they rejected Him rather than suffer. We will one day have to stand before Jesus to give an account to Him for the choices we have made in life. Have we chosen Him and the salvation that He provides for us?

MATTHEW 13:40-43

"Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age."

"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,"

"and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

"Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

It is very sad what will one day happen to all of the tares. But like weeds in a garden, they do not produce fruit and only bring about harm. There are some who say they are Christians who are really tares. The Lord knows who are His and who are not. Let's make sure that we have the good seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ planted and bearing fruit in our lives.

How do we know if we are good seed? If we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, He has made us good seed. Have you ever done that?

One day all of the true Christians will be taken to heaven to live with God. Our prayer is that there is a great multitude of wheat in heaven, including everyone here today. Pray that God will help us tell our families and friends about Jesus who plants the good seed of life into our hearts.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of boldness to share the love of Jesus with everyone in their lives. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.