

Text: Matthew 13:24-30, 34-43¹ [p. 819]

Series: Kingdom Vision, Part 2

Title: “Jesus, why don’t you do something?!” – The Parable of the Weeds

Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB

Date: January 29, 2012

[Invite people to open their Bible or the pew Bible...]

²⁴ He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, ²⁵ but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. ²⁷ And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?’ ²⁸ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ So the servants said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.’ ”

The daily news is filled of reminders that life is packed with events that can only be described as evil.

- carbombings
- genocidal wars
- terrorist attacks
- drive-by shootings
- school-yard massacres
- Christian’s persecuted for their faith in Jesus (cf. Voice of the Martyrs)

Cf. report of persecution in Sudan and prayer request that Omar al-Bashir, the Sudanese president, might come to know Christ ... “Really? Is that possible?”

The “sons of the evil one” seem very busy – and they often get away without punishment.

Often we’re left without knowing who perpetrated these great evils but in an absolute sense, we already know who did this...

“An enemy has done this.” Matthew 13:28

- And not just any “enemy”
- Cf. Jesus’ interpretation of this parable...

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission, All rights reserved.

[Read from Bible]

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.”
³⁷ He answered, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴² and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

- these were acts inspired by the devil himself – who else?
- The real enemy is the devil – twists & turns men & women to choose to do his bidding.

Cf. Joao Matwawana re Rwandan genocide

- these acts were Satanic – evil entered these men & women

Part of his ancient campaign of turning men & women against each other & against God

- loves to inspire hatred, anger, bitterness, resentment.
- A cycle of vengeance that has littered human history with countless international wars and household conflicts.

Norwegian anthropologist, Tone Bringa, found in her study of Bosnian Muslims and Croats that learning to hate your neighbor is much easier than we might think.

- she began her study in 1987 with a visit to a friendly mixed village where Muslims and Catholic Croats helped each other:
 - o they helped each other build their mosque and church
 - o as the war approached their village, they vowed to stand together – to fight to support each other
- in 1993 she returned – they had failed.
 - o when a close relative outside the village was hurt or killed, they vented their sadness and anger on the people in their own village.
 - o An elderly Muslim woman and Croat neighbor had coffee nearly every day for 40 years:
 - In 1987 they embrace and tell the camera nothing will drive them apart
 - In 1993 they will have nothing to do with each other

Why? Because sadness, rumours and fear & suspicion **sown** by ethnic warlords had driven the people apart.

“In the end,” Tone Bringa said, “neighbours, friends and families do turn against each other, and you realize evil exists. People become ugly, terribly ugly.”

- Evil exists – the enemy exists -- but remember, he started small -- his first success was with one family...
 - o First of all, he twisted one woman and her husband
 - o And then he twisted one brother to murder the other
 - o The beginning was small, but that’s usually where even the largest battles begin.

In Judith Viorst’s children’s book, *I’ll Fix Anthony*, the younger brother complains about the way his older brother, Anthony, treats him:

*"My brother Anthony can read books now, but he won't read any books to me. He plays checkers with Bruce from his school. But when I want to play he says, "Go away or I'll clobber you." I let him wear my Snoopy sweatshirt, but he never lets me borrow his sword. Mother says deep down in his heart Anthony loves me. Anthony says deep down in his heart he thinks I stink. Mother says deep deep down in his heart, where he doesn't even know it, Anthony loves me. Anthony says deep deep down in his heart he still thinks I stink. When I'm six I'll fix Anthony Anthony is chasing me out of the playroom. He says I stink. He says he is going to clobber me. I have to run now, but I won't have to run when I'm six. When I'm six, I'll fix Anthony."*²

Most of us have felt that same feeling – the Bible calls it revenge.

And God says...

“Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’” Romans 12:19 quoting Deuteronomy 32:35

OK, Lord, but when?

The parable of the weeds deals with this simple question.

If Jesus is King ...

If Jesus’ preaching is called “the good news of the kingdom” ... (cf. Matt. 4:17)

...when will we see the justice of the Kingdom?

² <http://www.cc-vw.org/sermons/luke6enemies.htm>

The answer that Jesus gives in this parable is simply this: it's not yet time for judgment, BUT...

Judgment is certain and judgment is coming!

The world in which we live is a mixed, twisted thing.

- There are "weeds" in this world – "sons of the evil one": people who act under the direction of the devil against God's purposes in the world.
- There is "wheat" in this world – "sons of the kingdom": people who act with the purpose of God, people who are His children.

When the servants asked the master, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?" the master said, "No."

- Wouldn't you want your field, your garden or your lawn cleared of weeds?
- Many of you use herbicides or other techniques to reduce the weed content of your fields
- BUT in the ANE, the only method was hand-pulling
- The weeds had strong, deep roots – when you pulled them, you pulled the wheat up with them.
- The master said: **"Let both grow together until the harvest..." Matthew 13:30**

Judgment is coming, punishment is coming – but not now.

When? At "the harvest," "the end of the age" (v.39)

Paul, speaking to the people of Athens, spoke of that harvest when he wrote that God...

"he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." Acts 17:31

- a "day" – specific, certain time, known only to God Himself
 - o our God is a God of due process!
 - Doesn't strike out with reactive violence – he is very deliberate
 - He will not be altered in His course – the day IS fixed!
 - It's guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus – God's power & promise will bring it to pass – COUNT ON IT!!
- We can be sure that justice will be done!
- BUT it must be done according to God's timetable.

Jesus spoke of that day, too. During our study in John's Gospel we found that God the Father has entrusted the judgment of the world to Jesus because he is "the Son of Man." (John 5:27-29) And Jesus taught that...

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.” Matthew 25:31-33

Wheat OR Weeds?
 Sheep OR Goats?
 Sons of the kingdom OR Sons of the evil one?
 All will be sorted out on that day.
 Why is He waiting?
 Why not now?!

If this isn't the day of judgment, what day is it?

When Jesus began his ministry of preaching the kingdom, he went to his home town synagogue and read these words to the congregation in Nazareth from the book of Isaiah:

**“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor...”
 Isaiah 61:1-2**

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, **“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”**
 (Luke 4:18-21)

His message to the people was about:

- good news
- freedom
- release
- the Lord's favour

BUT Jesus stopped reading in the middle of the sentence in Isaiah. Isaiah continues:

“...to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God” Isaiah 61:2

Jesus didn't read that part – why?

Because this isn't the “day of vengeance” – This is NOT the age in which people get what they deserve.

Today is the day of salvation.

Judgment is certain,
Judgment is coming,
But not today.

Why does he wait?

Because God is patient!

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9

He wants people to come to him with sorrow for their sin.

- asking for forgiveness
- asking for power to live lives that march to His drum and not the drum of the evil one

He doesn't want to crush and destroy – He wants to have mercy and to save!

He wants people to change – to choose to live His way!

In 1867, Swedish chemist Alfred Nobel invented a new high explosive, which he named "dynamite." He was convinced that his invention would make war too horrible to ever happen again. However, he quickly discovered there was no shortage of buyers for his new explosive. He made a huge fortune from its sales, yet was horrified with the suffering and misery it caused in wars and conflicts. But what was he to do?

Towards the end of the 19th, century he awoke one morning to read his own obituary in the local paper: "Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, who died yesterday, devised a way for more people to be killed in a war than ever before. He died a very rich man."

Actually, it was Alfred's older brother who had died. A newspaper reporter had confused the epitaph. But the account had a profound effect on Alfred. He decided he wanted to be known for something other than developing a means to kill people efficiently, and for amassing a fortune in the process.

As a result, he initiated the Nobel Prize—an award for scientists and writers who foster peace. Nobel said, "Every man ought to have the chance to correct his epitaph in midstream and write a new one."³

God is giving mankind a chance to change, not just their epitaph, but their eternal destiny!

³ © 2012 PreachingToday.com Doug Murren and Barb Sharin, Is It Real When It Doesn't Work? (Thomas Nelson, 1990); submitted by David Holdaway, Kincardineshire, Scotland | posted 7/17/2006

During this age of God's timetable, when salvation rather than judgment, is the main theme, **what do we while we wait for justice to come?**

1) Be assured that judgment is coming.

Cf. Acts 17:31 – there a day that has been set and it will come!

God is watching – God is keeping record – the books are filling up – and day – it will all be over!

Cf. man teaching in seminary in West Africa

1 Thess. 4:16 “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command...”

- Student asked: “What will he cry out?”
- Reflected on conversations with students:
 - o One man had been captured and tortured by rebels
 - Escaped and took his family to next country BUT 2 sons had died in the process
 - o Others had experienced similar tragedy
- “Sir, you haven’t answered my question – what will he shout?”
- “ENOUGH! He’ll cry out, “Enough...”
 - o Enough pain, enough cruelty, enough starvation, enough war, enough sickness – Enough!

2) Overcome evil with good

- natural & easy to respond to evil with evil.
- BUT when we respond to evil with evil, evil wins!

Cf. Charles Colson

- one of the reasons he believes that Christianity is from God is that it asks us to do so many things that run counter to human nature.

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Romans 12:21

Cf. Fr. Jerzy Popieluszko

- Catholic priest in Poland in the early 1980s
- Twofold message: “Defend the truth, and overcome evil with good.”
- People responded – the church overflowed
- Fr. Jerzy received death threats from the police because of his effectiveness – one night he disappeared
- 10 days later, 50,000 people came to the church to listen to a tape of his last message & pray – word arrived that they found his body – mutilated by torture.

- The secret police braced for an uprising
- BUT on the day of his funeral – the huge crowd that passed in front of police headquarters shouted what their huge banner declared – “We Forgive!”

Colson wrote...

“Only Christian men and women who are touched by and understand the present reality of the Cross can overcome evil with good. And if we don’t, no one else will. Rage and anger will carry the day and [evil] will have won!”⁴

3) Pray for & support our leaders

“for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.” Romans 13:4

Governments have the God-given responsibility to protect their citizens and punish evil.

BUT their actions must be just.

- pray for our Prime Minister and other leaders of the world as they respond as “agents of wrath” to punish those who do wrong.

NB. The focus of this parable is on “the world” (v.38)

- this parable is not about the mixed nature of the church of Jesus Christ
- misapplication of this parable to suggest that it is teaching that the church should never remove from its midst someone who is living in sinful rebellion against God

c.f. 1 Cor 5:13 “Purge the evil from among you.”

4) Act justly

“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:8

Cf the work of the International Justice Mission ... www.ijm.ca (also Voice of the Martyrs: www.persecution.net.)

In 1997 Gary Haugen formed the International Justice Mission (IJM), a human-rights organization founded to seek justice on Christian principles. International Justice Mission’s corps of lawyers, criminal investigators, and government relationships workers today defends and rescues victims of violence, sexual

⁴ <http://www.breakpoint.org/commentaries/3228-overcoming-evil-with-good>

exploitation, slavery, and oppression around the world. And they do it in the name of Jesus Christ.

Their Biblical watchword: “learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.” Isaiah 1:17

A few years ago the International Justice Mission freed a woman from slavery in a brothel in South East Asia. She was a Christian woman from the countryside who had come to the city looking for work and had been grabbed off the street and literally imprisoned in a room and forced to serve the male clients. When IJM rescued her they found the walls of her cell covered with Scripture. In large letters, larger than the rest she had written these words from Psalm 27...

“The LORD is my light and my salvation -- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life -- of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.” Psalm 27:1-2

She was looking to God for her deliverance!

Cf. Mark Buchanan’s word of support for IJM:

"A typical reaction of most churches and most Christians to the overwhelming injustices in the world is to avoid the matter altogether. It's too big, too complex, too costly, too dangerous. But in avoiding the matter we've become, in effect, the priest or the Levite in Jesus' parable: we join the company of those who walk past the beaten man. Supporting IJM allows any church, Christian or Good Samaritan to join the company of those who do not walk past."

5) Call people to salvation

This is the day of salvation.

Cf. John Fischer, commenting on our desire to bring judgment says: **“Listen: the world isn’t supposed to get fixed; people are supposed to get saved!”**⁵

Paul wrote...

“Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:2

Many comparisons have been made over the years between the September 11, 2001 attack on the US and the bombing of Pearl Harbour by the Japanese on December 7, 1941.

⁵ John Fischer, 12 Steps for the Recovering Pharisee (Like Me),

Following the Pearl Harbour attack, the Americans launched a retaliatory airstrike against the Japanese mainland.

- led by Lt. Col. James Doolittle – In April 1942 B 25 bombers took off from aircraft carriers, bombed the Japanese mainland and then headed for landing strips in China

Jacob DeShazer was an American airmen who took part in the Doolittle raid on Tokyo in April 1942.

- While most of the Doolittle raiders made it to safety, DeShazer's crew didn't. They were taken captive by the Japanese & spent war in a prison camp
- horrible experience – starvation, torture.
- Time to think: "What makes people hate each other?"
- "Doesn't the Bible say something about loving our enemies"

Asked for a Bible – got one.

- ten days into his study he asked Christ to forgive his sins.

He remembers, "suddenly ... when I looked at the enemy officers and guards ... I realized that ... if Christ is not in a heart, it is natural to be cruel. [My] bitter hatred ... changed to loving pity."

- asked God to forgive his torturers, too.
- Began to show them kindness even when they treated him with cruelty

14 months later – liberated

After the war, a chaplain on General MacArthur's staff wanted something that would help to heal the animosity between the US and Japan.

- came across DeShazer's testimony – had it printed & distributed: *"I Was a Prisoner of Japan."*

NB. Remember my question about praying for Omar al-Bashir's salvation.

NOW LISTEN TO THIS ... this story is true – no Hollywood here – only God's power to save & heal!

One day, after the war, a man by the name of Mitsuo Fuchida stepped off a train in Tokyo and received one of these pamphlets.

Who was Mitsuo Fuchida? He was the Japanese navy pilot who commanded the Dec. 7 raid on Pearl Harbour!

He read DeShazer's story – amazed by DeShazer's ability to forgive his Japanese captors -- and he started reading the Bible, the book that had led to DeShazer's transformation – Fuchida was amazed by the peace that DeShazer had found in the Bible.

Fuchida later wrote...

The peaceful motivation I had read about was exactly what I was seeking. Since the American had found it in the Bible, I decided to purchase one myself, despite my traditionally Buddhist heritage.

In the ensuing weeks, I read this book eagerly. I came to the climactic drama -- the Crucifixion. I read in Luke 23:34 the prayer of Jesus Christ at His death: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." I was impressed that I was certainly one of those for whom He had prayed. The many men I had killed had been slaughtered in the name of patriotism, for I did not understand the love which Christ wishes to implant within every heart.

Right at that moment, I seemed to meet Jesus for the first time. I understood the meaning of His death as a substitute for my wickedness, and so in prayer, I requested Him to forgive my sins and change me from a bitter, disillusioned ex-pilot into a well-balanced Christian with purpose in living.

That date, April 14, 1950 -- became the second "day to remember" of my life. On that day, I became a new person. My complete view on life was changed by the intervention of the Christ I had always hated and ignored before. Soon other friends beyond my close family learned of my decision to be a follower of Christ, and they could hardly understand it.

Big headlines appeared in the papers: "Pearl Harbor Hero Converts to Christianity." Old war buddies came to visit me, trying to persuade me to discard "this crazy idea." Others accused me of being an opportunist, embracing Christianity only for how it might impress our American victors.

But time has proven them wrong. As an evangelist, I have traveled across Japan and the Orient introducing others to the One Who changed my life. I believe with all my heart that those who will direct Japan -- and all other nations -- in the decades to come must not ignore the message of Jesus Christ. Youth must realize that He is the only hope for this troubled world...

I would give anything to retract my actions ... at Pearl Harbor, but it is impossible. Instead, I now work at striking the death-blow to the basic hatred which infests the human heart and causes such tragedies. And that hatred cannot be uprooted without assistance from Jesus Christ.

He is the only One Who was powerful enough to change my life and inspire it with His thoughts. He was the only answer to Jake DeShazer's tormented life. He is the only answer for ... people today.⁶

⁶ Mitsuo Fuchida, "From Pearl Harbour to Calvary," <http://www.biblebelievers.com/fuchida1.html>

The world doesn't need to get fixed – it needs to get saved!

One day we will all stand before the Judge of the universe...

- the only hope we have is the forgiveness that God offers to us through the cross of Jesus Christ.

It's not just terrorists or war criminals who stand guilty before God. We all stand guilty before him...

- It's every word of cruelty we've ever spoken,
- It's every judgment we've ever cast against another person
- It's every punch we've ever thrown
- It's every promise we've ever broken
- It's every dollar we've ever stolen
- It's our failure to love God and our neighbor as we should

It's every sin we've ever committed that stands against us!

We are guilty!

Only one thing will wash it away is the blood of Jesus Christ who died to take our punishment for sin.

What moves us from being "sons of the evil one" to being "sons of the kingdom"?

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" John 1:12

Sheep or Goats?

Wheat or Weeds?

Sons of God or Sons of the evil one?

Where will you stand?

Where do you stand?

- **Invitation to Prayer Ministry**
- **Final Song:** Lion of Judah
- **Benediction**