

## The Tares Among the Wheat.

Text: Matt 13:24-30

Suggested Hymns:

507, 260, 267, 285, 515

1) The tares are sown by the devil

2) The tares are not to be violently plucked up by us

3) The tares will be destroyed in the Judgment by God Himself

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 13:24-30, <sup>24</sup> *Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; <sup>25</sup> “but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.*

<sup>26</sup> *“But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. <sup>27</sup> “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?’*

<sup>28</sup> *“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?’ <sup>29</sup> “But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.*

<sup>30</sup> *‘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.”’” (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We read in Psalm 24:1 that *The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein.* But it doesn’t appear to be so. As we look over the world and its doings, see and hear what is going on, read the summary of world events, and the reports on local happenings, it appears that this is the very world of the devil. Ponder the words of Hymn 260 which we just sang.

However, it still remains true, *The earth is the LORD’s* and He has not abandoned it. The world is the great field where the Son of Man has planted His kingdom and is constantly sowing His children, as seed. Yet the heavenly

Husband-Man has His difficulties, just as our farmers and gardeners have theirs. There are the bothersome weeds that grow up everywhere to jeopardise the growing of the good seed.

There are tares among the wheat. The godless, the unbelievers, are everywhere, and the children of God find themselves surrounded by them. This is a vexing situation. It troubles our mind. Why is it so? And what is to be done about it? Let us not try to solve the problem ourselves. Let us permit our Lord to instruct us about it as we consider what He has to say about the tares among the wheat. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Tares Are Sown By The Devil**

Our text begins, *“The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;”*<sup>25</sup> *“but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.”*<sup>26</sup> *“But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.”*

This situation puzzles the servants. They turn to their master and ask, *‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’* They know he has sown good seed. They cannot imagine that he would have sown the bad seed also. But then, how did the bad seed get into the field? The servants are perplexed.

So also the servants of God, the Christians, are perplexed at what they see around them. They know that God has sown the good seed, He has planted and preserved His kingdom for many generations. They cannot allow themselves to think that He is in any way responsible for the evil seed, the children of unbelief.

But there it is. In the world, even in lands where God has spread His kingdom for centuries, even in so-called Christian countries, there is so much sin and wickedness, so much godlessness, unbelief, and superstition. Many a person has been offended by this fact. Unbelievers point to it as proof for the ineffectiveness of Christianity. They say it shows that the Bible religion is not genuinely divine.

In the parable the servants turn to their master with their question. Thus Jesus points us where to go for information that pertains to the Kingdom of God.

We are not to solve the riddle with answers that come from human speculation and are the conclusions of human reason. We are to go to our Lord and to His clear and reliable Word. Now, what is the answer to our questions. Where does all this unbelief and godlessness come from? Where do the tares come from?

In the parable the master answers his servants, *'An enemy has done this.'* And Jesus explains this part of the parable by saying *the tares are the sons of the wicked one.* <sup>39</sup> *"The enemy who sowed them is the devil."*<sup>1</sup>

Sin and unbelief were sown in the field of the world when man in the Garden of Eden disregarded a clear command of God. To blame God for his fall, as some do, is blasphemous. God sowed good seed when He made man in His own image. The image of righteousness and holiness. The suggestion and temptation to doubt God and to commit sin came from Satan, and man willingly and of his own choice consented.

Yes, the devil, the sworn enemy of God, has done this. And since the days of the Garden of Eden he has been busily sowing his evil seed, the *"sons of the Wicked One"* Christ calls them, on God's field, the world. The devil still is spreading false doctrine, all kinds of temptations to depart from God's holy Word, to outright disobedience and godless living.

To all unbelievers the words of Jesus apply as it is written in John 8:44, *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.* All ungodly people, who do not believe and keep God's Word, whether they are criminals and moral villains or respectable, self-righteous individuals who lead a good life in the eyes of men, or recognised church members who hide their unbelief with the cloak of hypocrisy, all of them are the *"sons of the Wicked One."*

We are indeed disturbed by the growing ungodliness in all parts of the world and in our own country. Let people explain things as they will. We Christians are instructed by the Lord, who knows and does not lie, that this is the very work of the devil, the archenemy of God.

## **2. The Tares Are Not To Be Violently Plucked Up By Us**

Now what is to be done about it? In the parable the perplexed servants have another question. They are outraged at the brazenness of the enemy.

In loyalty to their master they are ready to take measures against the enemy's wickedness. With a readiness that waits only for a nod they ask, ***'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'*** They are more than willing to go right out into the field and ruthlessly tear up the tares that have been sown.

That seems to be the quickest and best solution of the problem, to pluck out the tares. And there have been those who consider this the best and most efficient way of dealing with the spiritual tares. Rescue the honour of God, save the Saviour's name, protect and extend the kingdom by force! Use the strong arm of the government if need be! Make laws against atheism and unbelief!

Two of the disciples of Jesus advocated such strong measures. We read in Luke 9:54, <sup>54</sup> ***'And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"'***

Then also remember Peter in Gethsemane. We read in Luke 22:49-50, <sup>49</sup> ***'When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?"'*** <sup>50</sup> ***'And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.'*** Is that the way to deal with the situation? "No," says our Lord.

In the parable the master says to his servants, ***'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.'*** The master is definitely opposed to his servants' suggestion. And he gives his reason. To pluck up the tares will do too much damage to the wheat. It will at times be hard to distinguish between tares and wheat. When he grabs a handful of tares he might with them carelessly grab a good share of wheat also. Besides, the roots of both are so intertwined that even with the greatest of caution much of the wheat will also be uprooted. The only thing to do is to <sup>30</sup> ***'Let both grow together until the harvest.'***

What is true in the realm of nature is even more true in the realm of the spiritual. The distinction between one plant and another plant is often much more easily made than that between a Christian and an unbeliever. Many an unbeliever professes to be a Christian. We know that some of them are even within the borders of the visible Church, successfully hiding their unbelief under the cloak

of a cautious hypocrisy. To ferret these out would be especially difficult and dangerous to the wheat. Besides, human prejudice must be reckoned with — and the false zeal it creates. How much havoc has been wrought in the Church by the use of violent measures! For example Saul of Tarsus.

Again, in the spiritual realm tares can become wheat. Unbelief often gives way to faith under the influence of the divine Word. Many an unbeliever today might by such a program be destroyed who sooner or later would become a child of God. What a mistake it would have been had some misguided Christian killed Saul of Tarsus!

No, the tares are not to be violently uprooted by us. *‘Let both grow together until the harvest* because some of these tares may yet be part of the harvest. *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.”* They are spiritual — the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Through the Word better things can be done than plucking up the tares. Through the Word many of the tares can be changed into wheat. Those who are now enemies of God and the Saviour may one day be changed into children of God and heirs of eternal life.

Jesus answered James and John in Luke 9:56, <sup>56</sup> *“For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.”* So are we in the world not to hasten people into hell, but to save them from hell. The Church’s calling is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom in all the world for a witness unto all nations. This is not the Day of Judgment, but the day of salvation! Christ is still building His Kingdom of Grace, and this kingdom is not of this world.

His servants do not fight physically as we learn from John 18:36-37, <sup>36</sup> *Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”* <sup>37</sup> *Pilate therefore said to Him, “Are You a king then?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”* Those who are of the truth hear His voice. They witness to the truth. So — *Let both grow together until the harvest.*

### **3. The Tares Will Be Destroyed In The Judgment By God Himself**

Will unbelievers always be here to vex the children of God, to live in rebellion against God, to wallow in sin according to their liking? Yes, it will be so **“until the harvest,”** and **“the harvest is the end of the world.”**

Well, then, who can blame Asaph for saying, ***I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked?*** You can read how the wicked prosper in Psalm 73:1-14. Scripture says in Proverbs 24:19, <sup>19</sup> ***Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the wicked.*** And in Psalm 37:1, ***Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.*** Let us continue listening to the instruction of our Lord’s parable.

Jesus says that the tares will be taken care of in good time. In the time of the harvest the master will command his reapers, ***“First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”***

We read in Matthew 13:40-42, ***so it will be at the end of [the world].*** <sup>41</sup> ***“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,*** <sup>42</sup> ***“and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.*** The Last Judgment is recorded in Matt. 25:31-46.

We are not to forget that the tares will be destroyed in the Judgment by the Son of Man Himself.<sup>2</sup> Thus the parable ends in a solemn warning to all who are tares. Let all unbelievers, the vicious and the respectable, those that are outside the visible Church and those that are within, take note. ***He who has ears to hear, let him hear!***<sup>3</sup> The end of unbelief is disaster. The wicked may prosper in the world and spread himself ***like a native green tree,***<sup>4</sup> but ***the way of the ungodly shall perish.***<sup>5</sup>

While Jesus speaks this parable in solemn warning to all unbelievers, He also consoles and comforts the believer. Let no follower of Christ be tempted to think that he is following the wrong path. Let him know from God’s Word that unbelievers are the children of the Wicked One, and that, while they seem to flourish and prosper, and that even though God forbids Christians to take measures of violence against them, yet their doom is sure and terrible.

Blessed are those who have forsaken unbelief and the folds of the wicked for God and goodness, for faith in Christ and the service of Christ!

Then when judgment shall come upon the world, the Judge, the Son of Man, will gather them at His own right hand and say to them, as Scripture says in Matthew 25:34, *‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’*<sup>43</sup> *“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”*<sup>6</sup>

Let us remember the words of 1 Timothy 4:8, *Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 13:38-39

<sup>2</sup> Ps. 73:16-28; Ps. 37:9-11

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 13:42

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 37:35

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 1:6

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 13:43