

Text: Matthew 13: 24-30

Theme: Series-The King is Here: The King's Prerogative

Sermon delivered by Will Eley during Service of the Word on 05/02/2017 at 10.30am

Introduction

Have you ever sat watching the news or been reading a paper and come across a story of such incredible evil or injustice - and it's made you think to yourself – if Jesus Christ really is King, why is there still so much evil like this in the world? Perhaps you can think of a time you thought that in the past or maybe more recently.

When we see a world mixed up with so much evil and often so little good, it's hard sometimes to hold together the idea: that Jesus really is God's King. That he's ruling and his Kingdom really has come.

Maybe seeing so much evil makes you question what God has said: Didn't he promise a Kingdom where he would rule with justice and peace – not one full of evil, injustice and suffering? God's heavenly Kingdom can seem like an expensive much awaited and anticipated amazon package you were told to expect to arrive, but it turns out its been lost somewhere along the way and now something far less impressive has come through your door instead.

Or maybe for you, seeing evil in the world makes you question what God is like. You might well believe he sees everything and that he is powerful enough to change things - but sometimes wonder if he really cares? God seems to just shrug his shoulders at the evil in the world.

Or perhaps you're not a Christian and you just can't take the Christian message seriously because – well it really doesn't seem that God is at all concerned with people who commit truly horrendous crimes, let alone the things you do. So why take seriously the idea of God's judgment?

Context

Well, Jesus told this parable to begin to help us with our expectation and understanding of what his Kingdom will be like. Jesus told it not long after he had announced the arrival of his heavenly Kingdom. And you can perhaps imagine the excitement and expectation about God's Kingdom coming as Jesus performed incredible miracles, healed people, cast out evil spirits, brought a little girl back to life.

It certainly looked like God's Old Testament promises of glorious salvation for his people and judgment for his enemies was right on the door step. And so surely, surely the mess of evil was about to be sorted out, cleared up.

Jesus told this and other parables like it in Matthew 13 to prepare them for what his heavenly reign would look like.

Matthew 13:24-30

Look back with me then at Matthew 13:24.

Jesus paints this picture of his Kingdom being like this.

Imagine man who owns a field and he sows seeds in it to grow wheat. He sends his workers out into the field casting out the seed and at the end of a long day they head home. But while his men are sleeping– someone else creeps into the man's field. This someone has really got it in for this man's wheat business.

He wanders through this other man's field also sowing seeds. But not to grow wheat - to grow weeds. And he sows them amongst the wheat seeds. Both the wheat and the weed seeds sit

in the soil mixed together, their roots all intertwined and tangled, growing up together in the field. Wheat and weeds – all mixed up.

The workers notice and go running to the master - v27. “Boss, have you seen the state of your field? What’s happened? I thought you had just planted wheat in your field? Why is it that there are weeds everywhere too?”

Imagine them scratching their heads in confusion. ‘We planted wheat...why are there so many weeds?’. Well the master sits them down and explains v28 – *“an enemy has done this”*. The man seems to know what’s gone on. These seeds are not of his doing. This is the work of someone else – an enemy. But the servants are concerned and they want to sort out the problem now. They say – “Boss, why don’t we go and sort the field out for you, we can go out now and rip out all the weeds.” They’re putting on their boots to get back out in the field but the master looks at them - and says very sternly. Well look at what he says v29. *‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them.’*

He’s concerned about the wheat. He knew that weeds and wheat looked very, very similar, especially in those early stages. Even if you could spot the weeds, well you might pull out the wheat too.

So the man appoints a time where the field will be sorted out – at harvest time. He says v30 *‘Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’*” He is emphatic that this mixed-up field will be sorted out – just not yet.

Jesus interprets the Parable

Now Jesus parable is not just some gardening advice or an excuse to not weed your garden until August. He’s talking about what his rule and reign will look like in the world. You might like to sum up it like this, it will be mixed up now, but sorted later. Mixed up now, but sorted later.

Jesus goes on to interpret this for us. v37.

v37 - *“The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰ “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father..”*

Mixed up now.

This is perhaps an unexpected picture of what the world will look like under Jesus’ rule. He is the son of man, the name for the one whom God has given all authority and power. But though Jesus rules over the world, in its present state, like the field, **it’s mixed up**. This mixed-up field of wheat and weeds is a picture of a mixed-up world, mixed up with just two groups of people. On one-hand you have people of God’s Kingdom and on the other, those described as people of the devil.

Here Jesus is talking not about good people and bad people. The Bible is very clear that ‘no-one is good not even one’. He describes them in terms of their relationship with the King. People of the kingdom or people of the enemy.

People of the Kingdom are those who Jesus has brought them into his Kingdom and under his rule. Those who have listened to and applied the message of King Jesus’ - to ‘repent’.

They are those who have gone humbly to Jesus like a patient goes to the doctor, knowing they are sick with sin and desperately in need of his forgiveness and pardon. They are those who have been made righteous through faith in the Lord Jesus and who now in response are seeking to live his way.

The people of the enemy on the other hand are those who rather than repent, continue to rebel. They refuse the command of the Jesus and his offer to make them righteous through faith in him. Now some people are obvious rebels – the evil and brutal terrorist. Others, are like the Pharisees, look religious and regular church attender, but they quietly and stubbornly refuse Jesus' Kingship over their lives. And we see the devil is behind this. That of course has been the devils scheme ever since the garden of Eden - convincing Adam and Eve and everyone since, to refuse the command of God and to set themselves up against God. He's the one behind rebellion against the Kingdom, the one behind this field.

Crucially this parable tells us that though the King has come, these two groups still live together now.

Often, we can expect more than what Jesus promised. Perhaps we might have the idea that if Jesus is really in charge he'll bring about an *instant* deep clean of rebellion against God or evil across society. Or perhaps we think that if the church can just be godly enough or influential enough we will gradually and completely transform society in this world. Jesus says it won't be like that. His Kingdom now will be mixed up with those who serve him and those who reject him – those seeking to do good and those seeking to do evil - and it will continue to be like this mixed-up field right up until the harvest. But then it will be sorted.

Sorted later.

The harvest, Jesus says, is judgment day – and it's described in very vivid and frightening language. Just like the weeds in the parable were pulled up and burned, so too will Jesus, the one with all authority, sort out his Kingdom, rooting out evil and rebellion once and for all.

V41 - Everything that causes sin and all who do evil will be brought under his eternal judgment. Everything and everyone set in rebellion to him. Thrown into a blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. It's a dreadful picture of suffering and anguish that Jesus paints. Yet that is the eternal destination for all those who continue to rebel against the Lord Jesus.

But compare that with the picture of the righteous.

When the world is sorted out, Christians, those who have trusted in Christ will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. It's been a while hasn't it since we've seen the sun, but remember those days back in summer or September. *At the moment we don't see much of the sun do we, it's easy to forget how incredible and glorious it is. We sometimes say GLORIOUS sunshine.*

It's glorious. When Jesus describes Christians here – he is talking about an even greater glory, an ETERNAL glory of everlasting life that they will enjoy in heaven – where there will be no more evil and injustice - no more crying, or tears or pain. It's a glorious picture. More wonderful than we could ever imagine or dream.

So, though world is mixed-up now, it will be sorted later.

Application

We may of course be asking why the delay? Why not just completely sort out rebellion and evil now? That was what the servants wanted to do. Well like the master, God delays his judgment for the sake of those who are to be part of his Kingdom. Our problem is that in a mixed-up world, it's not always obvious to us who has or who will be part of his Kingdom. And often our judgment is too quick and often misplaced.

Think of the apostle Paul. He was the equivalent of a modern-day terrorist in his time, organising and plotting the strategic persecution of the early church. He looked like he was a weed – a rebel. Well he was. But God worked in him - and he changed - from being a rebel to one who repented.

Imagine if God allowed his people to judge when they thought this mixed-up world should be sorted out. I'd imagine the churches back then that heard about Paul stoning Stephen, and all the things Saul planned to do to the church, they would have probably thought then that it was quite a good time for God to sort out the evil in the world. Like us and others through history always think that our little time in history is the time that God should sort things out – yet we simply don't know who God will call into his Kingdom. Imagine if God had called time on Saul. None of us would have even heard the gospel.

As Augustine helpfully once said: "Those who are weeds today, may be wheat tomorrow."

Our judgments can be misplaced and too quick. But unlike us – God is incredibly patient and kind. He is being patient because he wants none to perish but all to come to repentance. This mixed-up period is a time of God's patience when rebels are still able to repent. And if you're a Christian – aren't you glad that God was patient long enough to wait for you to repent? Aren't you thankful that he not only delayed his judgment so you might repent, but that in the Lord Jesus he took the judgment you deserved when Jesus died on the cross – AND he gave you his righteousness, so that you might be a son or daughter of his Kingdom, with that glorious hope of that glorious eternal life? Aren't you glad that he waited for you?

Or maybe you are the person who refuses to take seriously the idea of God's judgment. Well if that is you, can I urge you to listen to what Jesus is saying here. The world will not stay mixed up forever. God will not be patient forever. Judgment will come. And he will judge you. And so you need to turn back to him. Every single day God is holding off his judgment precisely because he loves you, because of his patience with you. He's desperate for you to repent. So rather than look at the world and think God isn't doing anything, he is. He's being patient with you.

But what if you're a Christian who still struggle with seeing such evil in the world – or maybe you face injustice. If that's you – notice that God does not simply shrug his shoulders at the evil in our world. The world is mixed up yes – but Jesus will sort it out. He deeply, deeply cares. And he will bring **every** evil and injustice to account. Every unrepentant rebel. Even those in this life who seem to have got away with horrific crimes.

Now often, God bringing judgment is seen as a negative nasty thing. But doesn't it make God so incredibly good - that he will not leave evil unpunished or overlooked? Those things that you thought of earlier, he won't let them be gotten away with. And so as we live and struggle with evil in this mixed-up world we must entrust ourselves to the one who will one day sort it out – the one who will judge justly.

As we live in this mixed-up world waiting for God to sort it out in final judgment, let us be those who live with the right expectations, and with the right response to the Kingdom, waiting for the one who will rightly and perfectly sort his mixed-up Kingdom out.

The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you. Under Jesus rule the world will look mixed-up, but he will sort it later.

Let us pray.