

The stories Jesus told.



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Matthew 13:24-43 | 6.25.17

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I. Introduction to this Study

Our summer series, The Stories Jesus Told, continues as we look at three short parables that help to teach us about the kingdom of God.

II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever misjudged someone's character? Has anyone ever misjudged you? What happened? How did you feel?

III. Study the Text

- a. Read Mark 1.14-15. When Jesus said "The kingdom of God is near" he wasn't saying that it was "coming soon." Rather he was talking about proximity. The kingdom of God is "near to you" or "among you" is a better understanding. He was referring to himself, the one who was ushering in this new kingdom. Keep that in mind as you read these three parables of the kingdom.
- b. Read Matthew 13.24-30. What surprises you about this story?
- c. Common in the time of Jesus was a weed called darnel, which looked very much like wheat until it matured. Why doesn't the owner of the field want his servants to uproot the weeds? What are they to do instead?
- d. Matthew 13.36-43 gives an interpretation of the parable by Jesus. Read those verses. What do you notice in this interpretation?
- e. This parable is both about the judgment of God and the grace and patience of God. What does this tell us about the kingdom that Jesus inaugurated?
- f. Notice that the weeds, though present in this story, do not choke off or destroy the wheat. What does this tell us about the ultimate power of evil in creation?
- g. Read Matthew 13.31-32. What does an insignificant, little mustard seed teach us about God's kingdom? How do you see this parable being fulfilled over the centuries through the Church of Jesus?
- h. Read Matthew 13.33-35. How does yeast mixed into dough describe God's kingdom?
- i. Understanding that verse 34 is probably a bit of hyperbole on Matthew's part, why do you think Jesus taught so often in parables (stories), other than to fulfill prophecy?

IV. Reflect

- a. It is very tempting in this life to pass judgment on others as “weeds.” Why is that? How does the parable challenge that impulse?
- b. Read Psalm 103.8. This is one of several descriptions of God’s patient grace throughout scripture. How can you grow in patience and grace toward others as you live the Christian life?
- c. There is much that is evil in the world. How can the parable of the wheat and the weeds help us to hope rather than despair?
- d. One cannot watch a mustard plant grow, or a child grow—at least not in real time! And yet they do grow. Why is it helpful to take the long view when considering the purposes of God for creation and for our own lives?
- e. The work of God’s kingdom, through the Holy Spirit, is often mysterious, almost invisible, like yeast working in dough. What are some ways in which you have seen the “bread rise,” the kingdom purposes of God grow?
- f. Often we want God to hurry up and act in ways that reflect our understanding of how life should be, according to our timetables. We see pain or evil or brokenness and we want something done, now. How do these parables speak to those desires?

V. Pray (If you are in a group, perhaps take 5 minutes—or more—to individually and silently pray the steps below.)

- a. Settle yourself comfortably in your chair...focus for a few moments on your breathing...become aware of God’s presence with you...
- b. ...find one characteristic of God to praise, perhaps relating to these parables... praise God...
- c. ...acknowledge to God your sins...is there judgment toward others within you... is there impatience...lack of grace...lack of trust...confess to the Lord and receive forgiveness from the One “abounding in love”...
- d. ... let the Spirit take your mind to those people and situations who need your prayers...lift them into the light of God’s love...
- e. ...end by committing yourself to the kingdom way of Jesus, asking God to strengthen and empower you, and bring you traveling companions for the journey...Amen.