

TCC Sunday 26th October 2014 – A spot of weeding for harvest – Matthew 13v24-30,36-43

Title: “A spot of weeding for harvest”

Purpose: For us to appreciate the real meaning of harvest and to take steps in the light of the final fulfilment that is still pending with the ULTIMATE INGATHERING at the end of time.

INTRODUCTION

It's Harvest Thanksgiving

Well here we are and it is, just in case you haven't noticed, our “**Harvest Thanksgiving**”.

Now:

- if you were to think a little about what we are doing
- if you were to think over just why we really hold a **harvest service**
 - you would probably conclude that it is **all about BEING THANKFUL**.

Harvest is also a time which brings together everything that is good and this morning we will see that that is true at a deeper and more spiritual level too.

Backward looking

We take this one occasion in the year **to specifically be backward looking** and consider God's faithfulness in giving us:

- rain and sun
- the various seasons
- so that we could all have food on our tables throughout the whole year

This morning

This morning I want to take up one of the **starter parables** that Jesus taught in the gospels – I call it a **starter parable** because these are the ones that come with supplied with an explanation as well.

The parable of the sower is probably the best known **starter parable** as Jesus works through the four types of people and their different responses to the word of God – represented by way of seed falling onto four different type of soil.

Today I want to do the next starter parable along – also found in Matthew chapter 13 and it is the one commonly called **the parable of the Wheat and the Tares**.

Clearly a harvest theme

Now clearly this parable is one which talks about seeds being sown and about a harvest and therefore it

definitely qualifies as being very much in line with our HARVEST THEME.

Having said that, where this parable takes a slightly different tack is simply because it is not really backward looking – stimulating us to be thankful – rather it is a parable that gets us to look ahead to the future and to respond in accordance with the reality that is painted there.

Q. But why choose this parable?

But even though this parable is to do with harvest –

Q. Is that the only reason that I am choosing this parable?

Well to answer that let me widen our horizons a little and let's look at the theme of harvest as it runs through the Scripture from OT through to NT.

Bible Survey of HARVEST

When you think about the people of God in the OT – the Jews, they were given through Moses a set of laws that set them apart as a nation and gave them a God-given order for their lives.

Part of this Law of Moses was to do with the calendar that they had on their walls.

3 times every year they would all make the journey from where they lived up to the designated place of God's dwelling and they would engage in a week-long festival.

Now the thing that binds these 3 different feasts together is that they ALL have a **direct connection to HARVEST**.

And I suppose that you could say:

"Well that is not really saying so much because back then so much of everyday life was centred around agriculture of one form or another."

Well, true as that may be, there is more to be said as we trace the significance of the 3 annual feasts:

- the FIRST feast of the year was one called the FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD.

the opening Sabbath was called PASSOVER and recalled the great event of Israel's EXODUS from the bondage in Egypt across the Red Sea.

But the rest of the festival was a celebration of the firstfruits of the early Barley Harvest in March/April time.

And this HARVEST FESTIVAL looked both back to the EXODUS and the Redemption/Release of Israel from slavery BUT ALSO it looked forward to the fulfilment of this in the NT.

Q. So when was this fulfilled?

Well in the death and resurrection of Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

Remember when Jesus was on the **Mount of Transfiguration** he was having a discussion with the OT representative of the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah) and the subject of the discussion was on Jesus and his “exodos” (as it is in the Greek) – it was a discussion on the most central of things – the fact that Jesus had set his face to go to Jerusalem and to lay down his life for the sin of the world.

We know that it was at the time of the Passover that Jesus was put on a cross and was offered as THE PASSOVER LAMB, the perfect spotless lamb of God would who take away the sins of the world.

So the **CROSS & RESURRECTION** was (for the people back in the OT days) the **FUTURE FULFILMENT**.

- the SECOND feast was called the FEAST OF WEEKS as it was 7 weeks (or 50 days) after PASSOVER.

As Exodus 34 Verse 22 says “Celebrate the Feast of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest...”

If Jesus was the fulfilment of the FIRSTFRUIT of the barley harvest – Q. Do we have a FUTURE FULFILMENT to be found for this FESTIVAL?

Well we do and this takes us from the gospels, and the cross and resurrection, through to the book of Acts and the history of the fledgling church.

Acts chapter 2 and the Day of Pentecost is where this fulfilment comes to pass. Pentecost was the Greek name for this Jewish festival (‘Pente’ meaning 50 for the 50 days since Passover) and once again the crowds of Jews and God-fearers have congregated in Jerusalem to carry out what they think will be just one more iteration of an 1500 year old covenant arrangement.

Little do they realise that just as God fulfilled the Passover 50 days previously in their very midst centred around Calvary and a lonely cross followed three days later by an even lonelier empty tomb – now today they come to the very fulfilment also of the 2nd annual festival – the Feast of Weeks – that feast of firstfruits.

Q. So what happens? – Well you probably remember the story, but there is the sound of a blowing wind and the 120 disciples that are met to worship on the Lord’s day are now filled, every one of them, with the Holy Spirit of God, just as Jesus had earlier promised.

And on that day, there is a great gathering in of firstfruits – there is a tremendous harvest amongst the gathered Jews from every corner of the known world – and 3,000 get wonderfully saved at the preaching of the apostle Peter.

So the **CROSS & RESURRECTION** was the **FUTURE FULFILMENT #1 (for PASSOVER)**
The day of **PENTECOST** was the **FUTURE FULFILMENT #2 (for the Feast of Weeks)**

So the question that remains is this: Q. What about the 3rd annual feast where do we find its FUTURE FULFILMENT?

- This THIRD annual feast was called the FEAST OF INGATHERING.

Exodus 34 and Verse 22 again: “Celebrate the Feast of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and **the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year.**”

Once again this is all to do with HARVEST and comes in the autumn after the harvesting has all been done – hence the name the FEAST OF INGATHERING.

(Just for completeness, it also has the name the FEAST OF BOOTHS or TABERNACLES because the people were to construct makeshift shelters and live in them for the week to remember that period in their history following the exodus when they lived in the desert and God provided for them.)

Q. So looking ahead to the FUTURE – where do we find the fulfilment of this last feast of the TRIO?

Well this is where our passage for today comes in.

So turn with me through to Matthew Chapter 13 and the parable that Jesus told of the Wheat and the Tares.

Identifying the pieces

Coming to any parable it is important to be clear what the different things represent. This is particularly important here because we have just had the parable of the sower at the start of Matthew 13 we need to see, for example, that the seed that is being sown is ***NOT*** symbolising the same thing anymore in this parable.

So let's work through the different symbols and make sure we are picking up the connections correctly. (And as with the sower we are at a distinct advantage because Jesus provides for us the answer to the meaning of the parable and so there is not so much reading between the lines):

- FIRST OF ALL – **the SOWER.**

Now we need to realise that in this parable, there are ***not* multiple soils** (like the path, the rocky ground, the thorny ground etc.) no - here we have **multiple SOWERS.**

There is the SOWER OF THE GOOD SEED – this is the Son of Man –the name that Jesus frequently used of himself and the SOWER OF THE WEED SEED – is the evil one Satan.

- THEN – **the GOOD SEED** (the wheat) –this is ***NOT*** now the word of God – instead it is PEOPLE and these are the sons of the Kingdom, those who are truly saved, those who are born again of the Spirit of

God evidenced, as it always is, by repentance and faith in Jesus and on his cross work.

The WEED SEED – this is another set of people – people who are counterfeits – people who, in so very many ways, look virtually identical to the GOOD SEED, to the Kingdom people – and yet they are not.

- NEXT we have – **the FIELD** – this is the world.

I think that it would be easy to assume that when Jesus says world – he simply means the whole world – the world with no distinction, the world with no particular limits or definition.

If you read what's going on in the parable this does not actually make the most sense because if you look at your average secular, irreligious person – they do not have any real resemblance to someone who is a Christian or to someone who is a nominal Christian (that is someone who is only a Christian in name – not in fact in nature or in actuality).

So what then is the field? What then is the subset of the world we have in view? Well it would be best to see it as the Global Church in its very widest and loosest sense – what is sometimes called **Christendom**.

- LASTLY then we have **the HARVEST** and **the HARVESTERS** – that is the end of the age and the angels of heaven respectively.

So for the rest of our time what I want to do is:

- to say something about DYNAMICS that are at play
- say something about the DOCTRINES that are mentioned
- something about DELIVERABLES

#1 – Something about DYNAMICS

Now **the dynamics** of this passage are those things that give the parable its **thrust** or **impact**.

THE FIRST – is that it deals with the fact of **ULTIMATE FACTS**.

Jesus is the only one that can see what we cannot see:

- He sees what is actually on the inside of a person – he can infallibly tell the difference between the true and the fake.

Even in ordinary material things this can be quite tricky at times.

The art world is awash with fake masterpieces – earlier in the year a work hanging in **Glasgow's Pollok House** called **Lady in a fur wrap**, attributed to **El Greco** and imagined to be worth to the tune of **20 million pounds** has come under fierce scrutiny of an art expert who has written a 60 page article which claims to prove that it is a fake.

In the world of sport, no one ever seems completely certain as to whether those stepping on the rostrum to collect their medals are true athletes or whether they have been muscle enhancing drugs.

Jesus here is able to speak at an **ULTIMATE LEVEL** – differentiating Satan’s forgeries and His true sons.

THE SECOND – dynamic is that this parable deals with not just **ULTIMATE FACTS** but **ULTIMATE HISTORY**.

Jesus can go where we cannot go:

- Jesus sees not only the beginning of things but their end as well and this parable has that real sense of **FINALITY** about it.

This parable, this fulfilment of the **FEAST OF INGATHERING** is not just one more event that will happen one day – this is an event that will conclude things, that will form the **MUSICAL CODA** of the **SYMPHONY OF ALL OF TIME**.

It is something **ULTIMATE**, something **CLIMACTIC** – there is never going to be another chance to do this again.

#2 – Something about **DOCTRINES**

If you are wondering what a doctrine is, the word simply describes what the bible teaches, as a whole, about some particular subject.

So let me give you certain doctrines that come up here by way of this parable:

- the **FIRST DOCTRINE** is that of **FINAL JUDGMENT** – we are reminded that there is going to be a judgment to come.

Clearly this is not the only part of Scripture that tells us this – Hebrews 9 verse 27 says “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,...” or take [Jude Verse 6](#) “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.” and there are many more examples we could use.

- the **SECOND DOCTRINE** that comes up is that of **ETERNAL PUNISHMENT** – the bible does not teach, as some would like to believe, that God simply destroys his enemies and all the ungodly when we reach **FINAL JUDGMENT**.

This parable uses two pictures – that of a fiery furnace and that of weeping and gnashing of teeth. You might say well surely a furnace burns something to nothing – but why then the weeping and gnashing?

Remember this is pictorial language that we should not push too far or too literally. So Q. How far are

we to take it? Well simply look at other scriptures that make the points more clearly and obviously – so take [Revelation 14 verse 11](#) where we read “And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.”

- the THIRD DOCTRINE is closely related to the second and is *not* ETERNAL PUNISHMENT *but* ETERNAL BLESSEDNESS – if you wanted two different, closely related terms you could just talk about the doctrines of HELL and of HEAVEN.

[Verse 43](#) in the parable states, after the separation of wheat and weeds that “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father...”

There truly is a “well done!” for the man that does the will of God in this life: (Matt 25 verse 21) “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. **Come and share your master’s happiness!**”

Something about DYNAMICS, about DOCTRINES

#3 – Something lastly about DELIVERABLES

Here we are looking at what sort of DELIVERABLES ought to result from such a parable.

The end of the parable says “He who has ears, let him hear.” – Q. So if we DO HEAR this parable – what sort of fruit would Jesus expect to find?

- So DELIVERABLE or APPLICATION #1 – we come to recognise that what we are is ONLY MADE APPARENT over a long time.

The Wheat and the Weeds were only distinguishable after a long time.

How you live out your life, how you set out your stall over your lifetime – this is the real indicator of your confession.

- DELIVERABLE #2 – we come to recognise that this side of glory, the church is not some pure metal, it is instead an alloy.

Q. What do I mean? Well simply that we do not have the luxury to believe that our church, or any church, for that matter, is a pure environment – a pure subset of God’s kingdom now.

The church is a mixed field – understand that Satan’s counterfeits pray the same prayers, go to the same churches, give in the same offering box and live alongside other Christians.

- DELIVERABLE or APPLICATION #3 – we all have a choice.

A day is coming – and the very fact that we are still here and Christ Jesus has not yet returned – then there is still time.

If we choose to stay at a distance from Christ then when that day comes – Jesus will say “Now you receive what you have wanted.”

It will be a case *not* of us saying to Him as we should “YOUR will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” *BUT* of Him saying to us “Your will be done – you will no longer have any part with me – I will be out of your hair for ever and for ever.”

They will reap *not* perhaps what their lips have uttered *but* what their lives have made clear.

It will turn out exactly as Jesus predicted in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7 (verses 21-23) ““Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”-

CONCLUSION

So this morning:

- If you thought HARVEST was about THANKSGIVING – then you were right
- *BUT* – if you thought HARVEST was only to do with “loaves of bread” and “tins of produce” you’ve forgotten that the BIBLE is one whole SEAMLESS GARMENT.

HARVEST and 3 OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS:

- Passover, The Feast of Unleavened Bread was **THE FIRST** fulfilled by way of **SALVATION** procured on the Cross & the Resurrection
- The Feast of Weeks was **THE SECOND** also fulfilled by way of the **SPIRIT** poured out at Pentecost
- The Feast of Ingathering was **THE THIRD** now awaiting fulfilment by way of a **LAST SEPARATION** pending

So the question is:

Q. Are you READY?

Q. Ready for the final fulfilment of HARVEST?

AMEN