

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

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Kingdom of heaven – *the* message in Bible

- Allusions in the OT prophets
- John the Baptist, “Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand!”
- Then when he’s silenced, Jesus and the apostles take up the same message

So what do they *mean*, “Repent, the kingdom is at hand”?

- The battle has been won and a new kingdom is being established
- Life is very different in this new kingdom, so if we want to find a place in it we need to repent and leave the ways of the old kingdom behind

That’s what Jesus is describing in this series of parables, and that begins with how we look at the world around us.

- 1st parable of the sower described God as sowing love everywhere and emphasized our need to receive it generously so that it can take root.
- Today we have the 2nd parable, which warns that love isn’t the only thing being sown in the world.

It seems like this is the parable that would *have* to come next,

- because once you say that God is sowing love at all times and in all places, the obvious question is,
- “Well, what about all of the things in the world and my life that don’t seem loving at all?”
- That’s one of life’s biggest questions, and so Jesus gives us some important things to remember.

1. God sows good seed in his field, the weeds come from the enemy.

- God left the ground fertile for love when created us with the capacity to choose to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others.
- But the same capacity exists for choosing to act selfishly and use others to serve ourselves, which leaves the ground fertile for sin too.

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2. Now that those weeds have been sown, they're a part of creation and God's plan of salvation.

- While the impulse to start ridding the world of all evil is the right one, there are some big problems we need to consider.
- One is that we're only seeing above the surface, not how when things grow together their roots get all tangled up.

Another is that we can't even be totally sure of what we're seeing on the surface.

- The word translated as "weeds" is actually "*darnel*," which is a specific kind of poisonous weed that looks almost identical to wheat until it matures.
- And it's simply a fact that we often can't fully evaluate something without giving it time to develop.

It's also true that some things in the world only happen through suffering.

- Think of the fears or anxieties of a child on the first day of kindergarten, someone going away to college, or starting a new job in a new city.
- Think of the sacrifices of exercise, study, and practice that allow people to become world-class artists, Olympic athletes, and make medical breakthroughs.
- Think of the sacrifices of marriage, friendship, and family life.

As soon as you start thinking about suffering that way, you realize that we sacrifice a lot more if we're not willing to suffer.

3. God is still in control of everything.

This is the big takeaway for us adjusting to life in a new kingdom – having a living faith in the king.

- It's easy to get discouraged and frustrated by the evil we see and experience in the world around us.
- But God calls us to trust him and be patient as his plan unfolds, recognizing that there's so much more than what we can see.
- Jesus' parable reminds us that God is sowing so much love in the world that even the worst of the weeds can't choke out the wheat.

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That's not easy, though, and God knows that.

- So when we struggle with being able to reconcile the presence of evil in the world, God has given us the cross to look at.
- No one has been more victimized by the evil in the world than God himself, but he used it for the sake of bringing about an infinitely greater good.

It's here that we find hope in another promise:

- While we're stuck with the weeds growing right alongside us and even working their roots into the midst of ours, Jesus has come specifically so that we can be freed from their grip.
- So instead of being defined by our worst moments and uprooted from the kingdom, we can repent and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, bear fruit and glorify the Father.