
Judgment in the Kingdom

1. Intro: A world of evil – why?

- You don't have to watch more than 10 mins of the news or read the first few pages of the newspaper ... to know that we live with the presence of evil all around us
 - Mass shootings in US
 - Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse
 - War in the Middle East
 - Legalisation of abortion
 - Prevalence of family violence
 - Ice epidemic

- And it raises the obvious question doesn't it?
 - What's wrong with this world?
 - It seems to be getting worse, not better
 - Is there any hope of it coming to an end?

- It's most certainly an issue that we experience in our time and culture ... but its not a new issue
 - Because it was an issue present in Jesus day
 - And in his teaching on the parable of the wheat and the weeds, Jesus gives us an answer to the problem of evil in the world

2. Context

- Looking at Matthew's gospel
- Jesus teaching and preaching about the KOH and demonstrating that he is the Messiah ... the king of the kingdom
 - That's generating mixed responses from the people and the religious leaders
 - Some like the disciples are following Jesus
 - Some like the crowds are curious, but uncommitted
 - Some like the Pharisees are hostile to Jesus and rejecting him
- Ch 13 is teaching about the KOH using parables
 - Last week as we looked at the Parable of the Sower, we saw Jesus making that point the KOH will grow through the widespread scattering of the word but with mixed responses

- As Jesus has been teaching about the kingdom, he's been saying that
 - 4:17 – "... *the kingdom of heaven is near.*"
 - 12:28 – "... *the kingdom of God has come upon you.*"
- But the inevitable question that the disciples would have been asking is ...
 - "If the kingdom has come ... why is there so much evil in world?"
 - "Why haven't you overcome the enemy Jesus?"

- "Are you really the king of the kingdom, or are you just a pretender?"
- And so Jesus teaches this parable to teach the disciple and to teach us ... that while evil is a present part of this world, he's intentionally delaying his judgment for a reason
- But there will come a day when there will be a separation ... and he will judge those who have persisted in rejecting him as king
- This morning look at the parable under three headings ...
 - The presence of evil – Jesus waits
 - The punishment of evil – Jesus judges
 - The problem of evil – Jesus dies

3. The Presence of Evil – Jesus Waits

- Read
 - *"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. ²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' ²⁸ "An enemy did this," he replied.*
- We don't need to guess what's going on here in the parable because in v36-43, Jesus gives us the explanation
 - Sower is Jesus
 - Field is the world ... not the church as some people think
 - Good seed are believers, sons of the kingdom
 - This is different to parable of the sower where the seed was the gospel/message of the kingdom
 - The good seed here are those who belong to Jesus and his kingdom
 - If we go back to 12:30 ... that are those people who are 'with Jesus'
 - Weeds are the sons of evil one ... they are the ones who are **not** 'with Jesus' and therefore, against Jesus
 - Enemy is the devil
 - Harvest is the end of the age / day of judgment
 - Harvesters are the angels
- Here Jesus acknowledges the presence of evil in the world
 - The field contains both wheat and weeds
 - Good and evil co-exist in this present age
- **Application**
- And this is a helpful perspective for us to remember
 - Because time and time again throughout human history we have
 - implemented new systems
 - installed new leaders

- adopted new philosophies ...
 - Thinking that by doing so ... the world will be a better place because of it
- And sometimes it is better ... but new governments, new policies, or new laws will never remove evil in this present age

- Which means
 - Countries will always need governments
 - Societies will always need law courts
 - Police Depts will always need new recruits
 - Schools will always need to discipline systems
 - Test matches will always need umpires
- Evil and wickedness will always exist side-by-side with good ...
 - And try as we might, there is nothing we can do (humanly speaking) that will ever rid it from this world

- Now for the atheist or the agnostic ... that's a pretty bleak proposition ... because there is no hope of change
 - However, as we'll see later as we unpack the rest of the parable ... Jesus does promise to do something about it
 - And so for the believer there is hope

- Notice however that while Jesus acknowledges the presence of evil in this world, he deliberately delays taking action ... at least for a time
 - *28-30 "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'²⁹ "No," he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them.'³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest.*

- The weeds that Jesus is referring to in the parable are called 'bearded darnell' or if you are into these things – *lolium temulentum* [Tim?]
 - Now I'm no farmer and I'm certainly no green thumb as the dying azaleas in our front yard confirm
 - And so I'm in no position to tell you about the agricultural methods and nuances of first century Palestine
 - However, according to the commentators, they all agree that this 'bearded darnell' was very similar to wheat, and particularly in the early stages of growth it was very hard to distinguish the wheat from the weeds
 - However, when the two have grown up they are much easily identifiable

- So while a key point of this parable (and the parable of the net) is that Jesus **will** bring judgment on the evil of this world
- Before he does that ... he deliberately delays that judgment

- Why would he do that?
- Why not destroy all evil here and now?

- The reason he delays his judgment is
 - So that the wheat can grow
 - That is, so that those 'sons of the kingdom' those who are 'with' Jesus ... can be identified and grow
 - Jesus deliberately delays the harvest for the identification and growth of God's children
- Evil is not rooted out until the final judgment because Jesus is waiting for his wheat to grow and so people can still turn to Jesus the king

- The Apostle Peter picks up on this in his letter
 - *2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*
- He delays his judgment in order to call into his kingdom those he has called to be his children

- **Application**
- Don't put hands up ... but how many of you turned to Jesus as king in the last 35 years
 - Aren't you glad Jesus didn't return in judgment before 1983
- How many of you turned to Jesus as king in the last 25 years
 - Aren't you glad he didn't return in judgment before 1993 ... but he waited for you to grow and be identified as one of the sons of the kingdom
- How many of you turned to Jesus as king in the last 5 years
 - Aren't you glad he didn't return in judgment before 2013
- What about the last 2 years, the last 12 months, the last 6 months?

- Jesus is like a patient farmer ...
 - waiting, waiting, waiting ...
 - delaying his judgment

- If you **have** turned to Jesus as king ... then aren't you glad he delayed his return long enough for you to be considered one of the sons of the kingdom
 - Aren't you so thankful for his patience, grace, compassion and mercy that he would delay the harvest for you?

- If you're here this morning and you haven't yet turned to Jesus as King ... then I want to urge you to do that today
 - For you do now know what tomorrow brings

4. The Punishment of Evil – Jesus Judges

- That Jesus allows good and evil to co-exist doesn't provide much comfort to us in a world surrounded by and experiencing evil and wickedness

- And we might be left wondering ... if evil will **ever** be overcome
 - The country under the tyrannical rule of a dictator
 - The suburb ruled by criminal gangs
 - The customers being ripped off by finance institutions
 - The wife in an abusive marriage
 - The student at school being bullied into depression

- And we are often left wondering ...
 - Will God do anything about it?
 - Can God do anything about it?

- Well in the rest of this parable, Jesus says he will
- Because after the delay ... Jesus says there will come a harvest
 - *30 – 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."*
- The image of a harvest is often used as metaphor for the return of Jesus and the Day of Judgment
- This is confirmed for us when Jesus explains the parable in
 - *39-42 – 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 fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

- You see what Jesus is saying
 - He is the one in charge of the harvest
 - He is the one who sends out the harvesters
 - And he says to them ...
 - There will be a great separation of the wheat and the weeds
 - Or in the parable of the net, of the good fish from the bad fish
 - All evil will be identified ... removed ... and destroyed

- Just like on a farm where the growing season comes to an end with the harvest ... so too will this age come to an end ... and Jesus will remove evil and wickedness from this world once and for all time
- There will be closure

- What's the basis of that separation
 - Not based on your morality ...
 - Not based on whether you've done more good than bad
- No the clue is back in 12:30

- Jesus said ... *"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."*
- It will be a great separation ... and the separation is based on where you stand with Jesus
 - Those who are with Jesus are sons of the kingdom ... and they will be brought into Jesus eternal kingdom
 - Those who are against Jesus ... are by definition sons of the evil one ... and therefore will face destruction¹
- Like with any crop ... once the harvest starts ... its too late!
 - There's no way back > no second chance > no court of appeal > no probation > no suspended sentence
 - No purgatory
 - that is not a biblical teaching
 - Rather endless, helpless, hopeless weeping and gnashing of teeth for those who've persisted in rejecting Jesus
- **Apologetic on Judgment**
- A lot of people recoil at the idea of judgment
- They will say
 - "I don't like the God of the Bible that judges, I like to think of God as the God of love"
 - "How can a God of love condemn people?"
- Think about this ...
- Imagine you're a parent and the relationship with your two sons is deeply fractured [not a family counseling session okay! Just thought I would clarify that!]
- They're alienated from you
 - They're hostile to you
 - Stealing your money to fund their addiction
 - Abuse your hospitality
 - Treat you with contempt
 - Show no respect for you, your property, or the people you love
- As a parent you do all you can to show grace, and love them, and forgive them, and keep door open and call them to return
 - Because you love them and want them back
- Imagine one responds to your love and grace comes back to you
 - He treats you with respect
 - He turns away from his old ways
 - He shows he wants to be in relationship with you again
 - What joy that would be for you as a parent!

¹ **Hebrews 9:27 – man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment**

- However, the other son remains hostile
 - And all the time you remain hopeful he will return and you can once more have a real relationship with him
- However, eventually, there will come a time, when you're old and not far from death, when you will have to finalise your will
 - Most parents would divide their inheritance evenly among their children
 - But if you have a child who has constantly been hostile, abusive, disinterested and dishonouring of you ... as much as it pains you to do so, you know it's only right that they don't share in the inheritance
 - Their life, their actions and their choices make it clear they never wanted to be in relationship with you and that your decision to exclude them from it is absolutely right, fair and justified
- It's the same with God
 - We have no right to point the finger at God when it comes to judgment ... if we've lived our life like that second son
 - If we continue to reject God, and show contempt towards him
 - If we are disinterested, disrespectful and do nothing to show we want to be in relationship with him
 - How can we get angry with him for judging us?
 - There's no intellectual integrity in that!
- Therefore ...
 - the sons of the evil one ...
 - the ones who are **not with** Jesus ... he says are therefore **against** me
 - Such a person shows by
 - their life
 - their actions and
 - their choices
 - that it is clear they never wanted to be in relationship with him
 - And therefore, his decision to separate out and excluded them from God's inheritance is absolutely right and fair
 - He is giving them the separation they wanted
- Not only is God's judgment just ... but God's judgment is good
- Because if there's no ultimate judge ... then what hope is there for the world that is filled with evil and wickedness?
- In Christianity Explored, Rico Tice gives this illustration
- **Illustration – Schindler's List**
- The book, Schindler's List tells of an instant in Poland during World War II when the SS guard is moving Jews from their ghetto in a town to a labour camp outside

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- Oscar Schindler, the hero of the story, sees a mother and son brutally murdered by the guards
 - What shocks him most is that it all happens in full view of a young girl about three years old who he notices because she's dressed in red
 - He writes ...
 - *"Later in the day after he'd absorbed the ration of brandy, Oscar understood the proposition and its clearest terms. They permitted witnesses, such witnesses as the red toddler, because they believed all the witnesses would perish too"*
 - Do you see the implication of that?
 - The Nazi guards did what they liked, because they thought that they would never have to give an account of their actions
 - As far as the guards were concerned, there would be no day of reckoning ... no accounting for what they'd done ... no judgment!
 - They could do what they liked ... and nothing mattered because all those with the power to condemn them, would be dead

 - But this parable shows us their understanding of reality is wrong
 - The parable of the weeds and the net assures us that evil and wickedness **will not** be left unaddressed
 - Ultimately, there will be justice
 - It's a sobering thought ... but the alternative is much more terrifying
 - Do any of us really want to live in a world
 - where nothing matters ?
 - where even the most extreme cruelty is met with vacuous silence?

 - But Jesus makes it clear ... while he will delay judgment for a time ...
 - There will come a harvest
 - Justice will be done
 - Jesus will weed out *'everything that causes sin and all who do evil.'*

5. The Problem of Evil – Jesus Dies

- So in one sense we can be encouraged that one day Jesus will deal with evil and wickedness in this world
- We have hope that one day it will end
- That life in this world is not a meaningless, fait-a-complete

- However, if we recognise there is an ultimate judge ... then it begs the question ...
 - "What hope is there for us, who have done so much wrong?"

- You see when we look at the world and see all the things that are wrong with it ... the instinct is to point the finger at others
- But Jesus says the problem is much closer to home

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- The reason the world is not the way it's supposed to be ... is because **we** are not the way **we're** supposed to be
 - If we were trace all the evil in the world back to its source ... Jesus says Matt 15:19² that the place we'd end up is the human heart
 - Yes in the parable Jesus points the finger at the enemy for planting the weeds
 - But in reality ... all Satan does is exploit the sinful nature within us
 - C20 writer GK Chesterton famously wrote a letter to a newspaper editor responding to an article titled 'What's wrong with the world?'
 - Chesterton wrote this ...
 - *"Dear Sir: Regarding your article 'What's Wrong with the World?' I am. Yours truly, GK Chesterton"*
 - And so presence of evil presents a problem for all of us
 - Because ...
 - If Jesus will judge evil
 - If there will be a great separation
 - The dilemma is ... how can any of us avoid being bundled up and cast into the fire
 - The only reason you and I can stand on that last day of the harvest ... the only way you can I avoid the fire ... is because
 - On the cross Jesus Christ went through the fire himself
 - On the cross Jesus endured Hell so you and I won't have to
 - When Christ died ... he was separated from the kingdom, so you and I can become sons of the kingdom
 - And to the extent you know that and believe that ... then that is what is going to shape and mould your heart
 - to be the good seed
 - to be one of those who is 'with Jesus' and not 'against Jesus'
 - And therefore, you have the certainty and the hope that come the harvest, Jesus Christ will gather you up and bring you into his eternal kingdom ...
 - Where there is
 - no more evil
 - no more sin
 - no more wickedness
 - and therefore no more crying, pain or tears
 - Only eternal joy
 - Which leave us asking the question of v43

² For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony and slander

- Do I have ears to hear?
- Have I come to the king?
- Or am I still willfully rejecting the king and his rule
- For if I am ... then I face certain judgment and inevitable destruction

PRAY