

Wheat and Weeds; Heaven and Hell
Matthew 13:24-30;36-43
Sunday, July 26, 2020
8th Week of Kingdomtide
God's Absolute Truths Week 3

Our God is a merciful God, wanting all people to commit their lives to him. No one is excluded because God created all of us.

Our God is also a just God. There are times his justice reigns in this world and there are situations where it doesn't, but those are not eternal situations. Because our God is a just God, there is an eternal justice that happens for all of us.

Jesus describes God's eternal justice in the parable we heard in this morning's gospel reading. Some people are going to end up in hell when they die; some people are going to end up in heaven when they die. This is where God's ultimate justice is determined.

There are some misguided people who say and believe that because God loves us all and created us all, we will all end up in heaven. But this is not what Jesus taught. Jesus makes it clear time and time again that some people are saved and some people are condemned.

Consider Jesus' parable about the banquet feast. So many were invited, but they got tangled up in their responsibilities or self-centeredness that they lost their way and they were eventually condemned. Others were invited to the banquet, recognized God's sovereignty over their lives and they entered eternal paradise. (Matthew 22:1-14)

Jesus taught that our roles, jobs, stations in life will not save us. He said that there will be two men working in the fields and one will enter heaven and the other will be condemned to hell. They were both hard-working people living in the same station in life, but one will experience eternal joy and the other will experience eternal suffering. Jesus said that there will be two women grinding wheat together, and one of them will enter heaven and the other will be condemned to hell. Again, their station in life is not what saves them. It's their relationship with Christ that determines their eternal home. (Matthew 24:40)

Again, Jesus taught through a parable about bridesmaids that we are to be ready for Christ's return. Those who are ready and waiting will reap eternal rewards of life in the kingdom of heaven. Those who aren't ready will end up condemned and shut out from God's paradise. (Matthew 25:1-13)

In our gospel lesson today, Jesus refers to those folks who are being faithful to God as the wheat, and those who aren't being faithful to God he describes as weeds. We obviously want to be in the wheat group when our life ends. But who are the "wheat" people? What kind of qualities do they embody?

In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus tells the crowds that those who care for who are suffering from serious illnesses and diseases, the poor, the oppressed, imprisoned, refugees, and newcomers these caring people will receive their eternal rewards in heaven. Those who ignore or exploit those who suffer from serious illnesses, the poor, the oppressed, imprisoned, refugees, and newcomers will be condemned to hell. So we want to be the kind of people who are caring and compassionate.

The wheat are people who forgive, over and over and over again. (Matthew 18:21-35)

The wheat people are humble, hunger and thirst to be virtuous, are peacemakers, and will even experience persecution for being faithful to God. (Matthew 5:1-12)

The wheat people are able to be kind and respectful towards their enemies while not capitulating their beliefs, treating people fairly and being instruments of God's justice on earth. (Matthew 5:43-48)

Wheat people don't store up treasures on earth. They aren't greedy, but generous. (Matthew 6:19-21)

Wheat people don't judge others critically. Instead, they examine their spirits, motivations, hearts offer their sins to God. (Matthew 7:1-5)

Wheat people walk the narrow path which will include being good Samaritans along the way. (Matthew 7:13-14 and Luke 10:25-37)

Wheat people are humble, don't become spiritually proud. (Luke 18:9-14)

Wheat people will give their tithe, but also deal with important matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness. (Matthew 23:23-24)

Wheat people deny themselves, pick up the cross, and follow Jesus. (Mark 8:34-38)

Obviously if we hope and plan to gain eternal life with Christ in the kingdom of God, then we want to be "wheat" people. Now we need to revisit that first lesson in this sermon series today as we hear this lesson. It's important we recognize that all of us were created by God to become wheat people. We become wheat people because of the choices we've made. The above lessons reveal to us who the wheat people are, what they are like. We have the freedom to choose who we are becoming. We have the freedom to choose what we are going to value. We want to be the kind of people who are continuously growing to be finer wheat people the longer we live our lives.

If you feel like you are in the weeds right now, you have the opportunity to move from the weeds into the wheat fields.

If you feel like you are a weed, and that God doesn't care about you, then you have become a weed because you have been listening to Satan's lies about your identity. God doesn't create weeds. People become weeds because of the choices they make and listening and believing the lies that Satan whispers to you. God loves you, has good "wheat" plans for you and will give you a deaf ear to Satan's lies.

Heaven and hell exist because God has the final judgment on us. This is one of God's absolute truths. How we live our lives, will determine our final destination. The interesting thing is, we do have clues as to which place we are heading towards. If you are experiencing hell on earth, then that is a good clue of which place you are heading. Jesus taught his disciples that the kingdom of God has come near. When we surrender our life over to Christ, then we begin to experience some of the kingdom of God even in this life.

Because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, dying for all of our sins, when we surrender our lives, our sins over to Christ and ask for forgiveness, Christ will forgive us. In this moment we begin our transformation from being weeds and begin to become wheat. For those of us who may have some thorny briars still hanging around, we too, need to go to Christ, asking for forgiveness, so that we become finer grains of wheat. God has begun a good work in each of us. God loves us and will continue to transform us so that we will reap our eternal heavenly reward. But we need to trust God with the transformation process.

It is my prayer that this message sustains and nurtures your faith in our living God. Amen.