

GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

40 – What in the World?

Announcements:

9/7 @7:00 -

Prayer

9/8 @6:30 -

Grace Group

9/11 @8:30 -

Sunday School

9/10 @6:30 -

White Sands Full

Moon Fellowship

9/12 @6:30 -

Men's

Discipleship

- Chapter 21

ICE BREAKER: Who was your hero as a child? (either a real or imaginary person is an acceptable answer!)

READ: Matthew 13:24-30

Last week we noted that while not every picture in a parable *must* be made to mean something, there can be valuable truth if we think through those things carefully. This week we will be taking a slightly different tack. We will be looking at the dangers of not understanding the pictures correctly. Often, when we read parables, the difficulty lies in understanding which pictures are which. In the parable of the prodigal son, is the fact that he wants to eat the “pods of the pigs” of critical importance, or is it more the fact that the older brother “refused to go in”? Knowing which details are central to the point and which ones aren’t takes work - but is important. In the parable of the weeds, however, we are told by Jesus exactly which ones are important (and by extension, which ones are not), yet still we might miss the point if we are not careful. Specifically we see this when understanding what exactly the field the seed is planted into represents.

Jesus is very clear in his explanation of the parable that “the field is THE WORLD” (Matthew 13:38). But many people read this parable as if the field is THE CHURCH. The reasons why are fairly easy to see. The church grows out of the Gospel. We also know that the church is not always as pure as it should be, and that it is often filled with both good seed and bad. It is also true that there will be a harsh judgment for those who *seem* to escape from the world in the church but the truth is different (see the parable of the unclean spirit and his seven friends in Matthew 12:43-45). However, there are two reasons why reading this parable in this way is bad. The first is an objection in principle. If Jesus is going to take the time to tell his disciples *how* to interpret a parable, they should be careful to interpret the parable how he tells them to! If you just think: Ok this seems like the church and so I will read the church into it, that is not listening to Jesus. But the second objection has to do with the content of this parable in particular. In this parable we are told explicitly that those laboring in the field are told to “let the good and seeds grow together” (verse 30). However there are multiple exhortations in Scripture that the church should be made pure (Matthew 18, the entire books of Galatians and 1 Corinthians, just to name a few). We *should be* “weeding” the church and a misinterpretation in this parable can lead to disastrous consequences!

DISCUSS: In General, why is it that we are so quick to ignore the plain teaching of Jesus and insert our own thoughts? In what other ways can a misinterpreting of this parable lead to bad consequences?

With all that being said, there is a third reason why it is not good to read too much into the field and miss the thought that it is the world, and that is that it loses the true beauty of what Jesus *did* say here! If we immediately think of the seeds only growing in the church we do not see that this is a promise of protection and vindication as the gospel message goes out to the world. Also, this parable serves as a comfort to all believers. Sure you are in the world, and that is tough, but this is all part of God’s plan. It is God who is allowing the weed and good seed to grow so that the roots of the good seed are stronger. God is working all things about for his glory and, importantly here, our good. So as you struggle, as the world is all around you, trust in the Lord and his work and care. Ultimately he will make all wrongs right!

DISCUSS: Are there any other ways that a correct reading of this parable can be a blessing to believers?