





Weeds in the Wheat

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

Parables of Jesus

The parable is given in Matthew 13:24-30; and Jesus gives the interpretation in Matthew 13:36-43.

Jesus is teaching on this day from a ship. There are a great many people listening on the seashore, and Jesus is sitting in the boat just off the shore. People have found the place where it was believed that Jesus spoke. There was a cove here, and the land was u-shaped around where Jesus sat in the boat. This created a natural amphitheater, making it easy to be heard from off the water for quite a distance.

He tells several parables. He begins with the parable of the sower, and follows with this parable of the weeds in the wheat.

Jesus begins his parable by saying that “the kingdom of heaven is like...” a man who sowed good seed in his field.

Discuss: If you are going to plant a garden or a crop, what kind of seeds would you plant?
Would you make sure they were seeds of the foods that you wanted to grow?
Would you make sure that the seeds were not damaged, and they were healthy seeds of good foods?

This man knew exactly what he was planting, and he planted good seeds, expecting certain plants to grow.

But while the men slept, this man’s enemy came and sowed tares, or weeds, in the wheat field.

If you look up the original Greek word that was used here in the book of Matthew, that word is “zizania.” It actually is very specific. It is a plant called darnel, which looks almost exactly like wheat. It is almost impossible to tell the difference between this plant and a wheat plant until the fruit grows, and the grains of this plant are black.

Discuss: Do you think the man knew about the tares (weeds) that were in his field?
Probably not. It took them a while to figure out what happened.

When the plant grew, and it the fruit was produced, you could see that it was not wheat. The servants of the man came and asked him, Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where did the tares come from? And the man realized what had happened. He told them, an enemy has done this. But the servants asked, Do you want us to go and gather them up?

But the man said, “No, or when you pull the tares you will also rip up the wheat with them.”

Discuss: Have you ever weeded a garden?
Have you ever planted a garden and had weeds come up near your fruit or vegetables? What did you do?
What happens if the weed is growing very closely to the good plant?

Sometimes if you pull a weed, it can damage the good plant. Sometimes it can rip up the good plant too because the roots are growing so closely together that they have grown around each other.

The landowner said, Let both of them grow together until it is time to harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to gather the tares first, and tie them up in bundles to be burned. But the wheat will be gathered into the barn.





Weeds in the Wheat

After the crowds had gone, the disciples came to Jesus and asked him to explain the parable of the tares in the field.

Jesus said, the man that sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. Every time scripture speaks of the Son of Man, it is speaking of Jesus.

The field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the weeds are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed the tares is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, and the angels are the reapers.

Just like the weeds were gathered and burned in this story, it will be the same at the end of the world. Jesus will send his angels to gather everything that causes sin and them that do evil and cast them into the fiery furnace where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Be gentle telling this story to young children; do not try to scare them to believe in Jesus.)

Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom. If you have ears to hear, let him hear.



Jesus in the Story



Jesus sowed this seed. The “kingdom of heaven” was not on this earth until Jesus brought it here. That is why he was always saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” He was trying to tell people that things are different now that he had come into the world.

Jesus is very clear in the interpretation of this parable. The devil has positioned some of his own people in the kingdom. They are living among the Christians, going to church and acting completely like believers. They infiltrate from the inside and like a spy in a nation, it can be more effective to appear to be in agreement with the ones you are trying to deceive than to simply openly oppose them. When the evil one is out in the open, he is easier to identify than one that hides among us.

Jesus presented this concept in Matthew 7:15 with false prophets as an analogy of “wolves in sheep's clothing.”

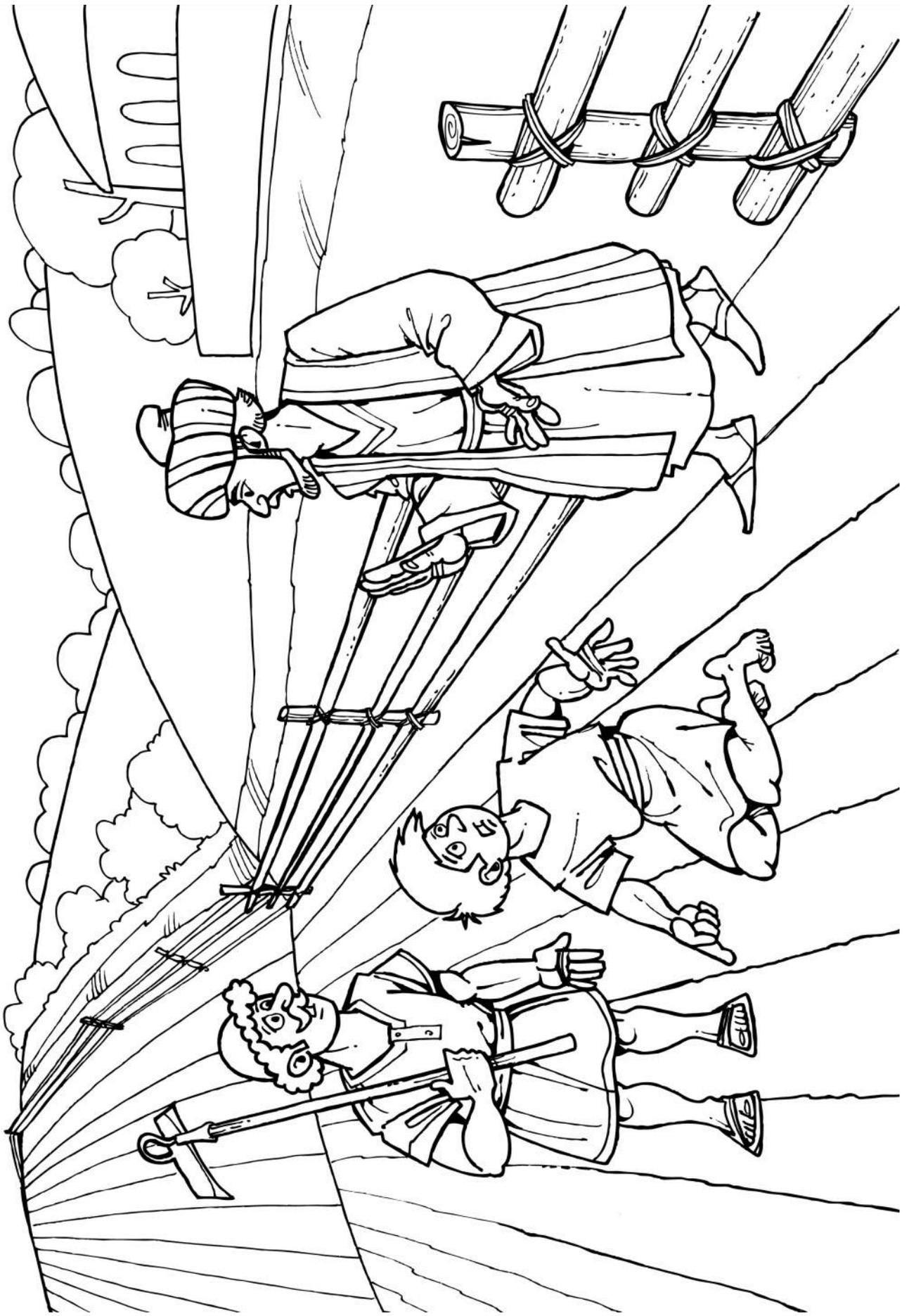
It can be difficult to identify these people. They look just like the “wheat,” or believers, until they produce fruit, then it might be possible to know who they really are. But even if you are able to discern their true identity, it can be more damaging to try to remove them from the circle of believers, or kick them out the church. This could be harmful to some Christians who are not as discerning and could cause their faith to waver. There could be others that are even harder to identify that remain in the church until the end of the world and then God will expose their true identity.

The devil planted these people in the church intentionally. Weeds in a garden take the nutrients out of the soil that the good plants need for growth. In the same way, these people that have been “planted” in the church can divert others away and distract them from true ministry of the church body. These people can wrap their “roots” around true believers, and if the people who are tares are forcibly removed, they would take the true believers with them who are deceived.

Some of the people themselves may be surprised when this happens. (Matthew 7:21-23) Jesus says there will be people who will come to him calling him Lord, Lord, and tell him they did things in his name, but he will tell them “I never knew you.”

We need to examine our own hearts and pray for God to search our hearts. (Psalm 139:23) Sometimes we don't even fully understand our own hearts because they are hard to discern (Jeremiah 17:9). Keeping a heart for God requires humility, and we can ask God to prepare our heart. (Psalm 10:17)





Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

29. On the Rock

1. How many types of people are in the story?
2. What kind of person does what Jesus says?
3. Which person does not do what Jesus says?
4. What did the foolish man build his house on?
5. Whose house did not have a foundation?

Psalm 62:6-7

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of strength and my refuge, is in God.

30. Weeds in the Wheat

1. When could the servants tell that there was something else planted in the field?
2. Why could they not tell sooner?
3. What was the only thing that was different?
4. Why did they not pull the weeds when they could first tell what they were?
5. What do the weeds represent?

Matthew 7:15-16

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?

31. Two Kinds of Yeast

1. How many measures of meal did the lady in the story use?
2. Is it possible to remove the yeast from the dough?
3. What do you have to do instead?
4. In your own words, what is "leaven of the Pharisees?" (Luke 12:1)

Acts 5:38-39

"...For if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but it is of God, you cannot overthrow it - lest you even be found to fight against God."

32. The Heart of Man

Read Proverbs 4:20-23

1. To what should we give attention?
2. To what should we listen?
3. Where should we keep the Word of God?
4. What is the Word of God to our bodies?

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life.

