

## The Weeds, the Seed and the Yeast

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12 months on from the lockdown brought about by the spread of the virus called Covid-19. In our own country it is an anniversary that we can mark with a level of confidence and security that is just not the reality for most nations around the globe.

The follower of Jesus in this country should recognise this anniversary with a deep sense of gratitude and thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for his sustaining and strengthening. Many of us live with the grief of loved ones in other places around the globe still very much at risk from the pandemic.

The English bible does not contain the word perspective but it delivers it in spades. So let me ask this question. What is sustaining you now?

The realities of the present? Or the certainties of the future?

Jesus answered that question when he said earlier in Matthew's Gospel:

***So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' Or maybe even 'When can we sing?'<sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***

What is more important for us? The realities of the present, or the certainties of the future?

In God's kindness, he has a concern for both. And he shares that concern with us today in three parables. The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds. The Parable of the Mustard Seed. And the Parable of the Yeast.

We read last week in v 11 of chapter 13 that the purpose of the parables Jesus shared was to reveal the secrets of the Kingdom. I am going to take a 3-2-1 approach to our passage this morning.

3 Secrets. 2 Kingdoms. One God.

### 3 Secrets

Three parables that reveal for us what the Kingdom of Heaven is like.

Vv 24-30. The Kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. While he was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed seeds among the wheat. When the wheat sprouted, the weeds also appeared.

The owner's servants came asked why weeds came up after good seed was sown? He told them that an enemy had done this.

'So should the weeds be pulled up?' the servants ask in v 28. No, because the wheat might be rooted up at the same time. Let them grow together until the harvest, at which point the harvesters will collect the weeds to be burned, and the wheat for the barn.

Somewhere in there is a secret to be learned. And it's not about farming.

The second parable is much shorter. Verses 31-32:

***"The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup> Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."***

Somewhere in there is a secret to be learned. And it's not about gardening.

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The third parable is the shortest. Matthew orders them in reverse order of brevity. V 33:

***“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”***

Somewhere in there is a secret to be learned. And it's not about cooking.

Stand with the listener here. V 36 says Jesus is with a crowd. Everyone is present. Those who oppose him. Those who aren't sure about him. Those who have decided to follow him. Very much like we are today.

All of us are being asked 'What is the kingdom of heaven like?' When God provides the dwelling, what should you expect?

We want to jump to the explanation we know is coming about the first parable. But Matthew has carefully ordered these accounts so that we might learn to listen rather than jump to conclusions.

I remember my father once trying to deal with the weeds that had sprouted around the dozen or so rose bushes that lined the front fence of our Adelaide home.

My brother in law is a farmer and decided he could assist his father-in-law deal with the problem with some industrial strength round-up. Designed for use on farms, not domestic properties.

This certainly dealt with the weeds. Surprisingly, there were no roses in flower that coming season. Nor for any coming season. Dad did suffer judgment for this act. A troubled relationship of mother with son-in-law reached new levels.

The secret of the Kingdom of Heaven is about sorting. Two seeds. The good seed. And that of the enemy. One produced wheat and one weeds. They are to grow together until the day of sorting, where there will be one of two outcomes. Burnt. Or barned.

If the first secret about the Kingdom of heaven is sorting, the second is about size.

The Mustard seed becomes the largest of the garden plants, a tree in which the birds find a home. The Kingdom of heaven seems insignificant when first viewed, but its growth is exponential, providing refuge to any who seek rest in it.

Sorting. Size. And thirdly, spread.

The key word in this third parable is mixed. Literally it means 'hidden'. You can't see it when mixed, but its influence is obvious.

That's what the Kingdom of heaven is like. Expect it to be spreading.

Three parables. Three secrets. Sort. Size. Spread.

## **2 Kingdoms**

3-2-1. Three secrets. Two Kingdoms.

Before Jesus graciously provides an explanation of the first parable about sorting, Matthew inserts a reminder about the power of Jesus parables.

Firstly, v 34, he used them often. In fact, every time he spoke to the crowds. Every time Jesus' spoke he was inviting the listener to discover the secrets of the Kingdom.

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Secondly, these secrets were eternal. They were of lasting consequence. The Psalmist who wrote Psalm 78 from which Matthew quotes said he was telling to the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.

Why? So their children, and their children's children, would put their trust in God. That they would not be like their ancestors – Psalm 78:8 – a stubborn and rebellious generation.

As much as this second point is entitled '2 Kingdoms' it might easily read '2 Outcomes'. That's what parables do. They either harden or soften your heart.

The hidden hardens. But the secret softens.

Jesus confirms this in his explanation of the parable from v 37. A parable about sorting.

***“The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.***

There are two kingdoms. Of the Son of Man. And of the evil one. While the seed was the Word of God in the parable of the sower, here the seeds are the people of the world, the field.

While we like to think that God assesses our lives by the balance of the good and the evil we might perform, that's not what this parable indicates. God views humanity by which kingdom they belong to. It's a question of allegiance.

Now Jesus is speaking to the disciples. Those who desire to take his word seriously and live in and for his Kingdom.

Listen to the secret. Here is how to make sense of the world.

God is allowing good and evil to co-exist. For a time sin will have its mark. But not for ever. There is a limit.

The weeds and the wheat remain *until the harvest*. V 38, the *sons of the kingdom of heaven* and the *sons of the evil one* exist together *until the final harvest*, which is the end of the age.

Remember that as seeds, the wheat and the weeds are indistinguishable, in time they become intertwined. This too is a present reality. In a broken and shattered world, there is one who is operating to undermine God's plans. To cast doubts. To undermine your confidence. He infiltrates the wheat with his weeds.

The evil one will throw all he can against us - even death - but in Christ he has no power.

For now, God waits. He has set a time when the final harvest will come. It's not for judgment to be made before then. Until then is the time of grace, where God calls on all to repent.

Those in the kingdom of heaven are to be a light shining in the darkness. Nothing sabotages Satan's activities like preaching the gospel!

### **One God**

Three secrets. Two Kingdoms. One God.

What sort of world do we long for? Everything that causes sin removed. A world without hate. Without hurt. Without harm.

These are not easy things to remove are they? Because they are attitudes. And attitudes always come with attachments. They are called people.

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God will remove the evil. He will judge. You can't escape the meaning of this parable. Judgment by One God at the end of the age, here depicted by the Son of Man sending his angels to sort the weed from the wheat.

Until that day sin and evil co-exist. We can't say "why does God allow evil to happen?" and then at the same time reject what he intends to do about it. so comprehensive is his judgement he even intends to remove the reality of death when his Son returns.

If you have entered the Kingdom of God, if you have accepted Christ, then this is not the time for self-satisfaction, as if you have worked God out.

It was an act of grace that you have understood the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, and given your life to the king of heaven. It was a gift of God.

Mark Twain once said "**Heaven goes by favor; if it went by merit, you would stay out, and your dog would go in.**"

This is the gospel of grace shared with you so that you might share it with others. You are part of a Kingdom of increasing size and spread. Beware the behaviour that looks like weeds rather than wheat.

Don't miss the secret of secrets when it comes to the Kingdom. The gospel doesn't invite you to judge Jesus. The gospel reveals that Jesus is going to judge you. There's no neutral.

Jesus makes it patently clear which kingdom he is aligned with. If you desire to shine like the sun – v 43 - now is the time to share with the Son.

3 Secrets. 2 Kingdoms. One God.

What is more important for you? The realities of the present? Or the certainties of the future?

Get things sorted **now**. Be gathered into the Kingdom of heaven **then**.