

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

November 17, 2019

"Inquisition or Indulgence?"

8:00 ~ Service - Communion is for all Christians

9:30 ~ Fellowship & Adult Sunday school

10:30 ~ Service with the King's Kid's - Communion is for all Christians

NEWS

Giving Tree & Sheeran Care Package

Joint Elder/Deacon/Staff Meeting ~ Thursday evening, December 5, at 6:00

Church Christmas Party ~ Friday evening, December 13, at 6:00

Candlelight Service ~ Tuesday afternoon, December 24, at 4:30

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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- 1) God's sovereign choice is to allow opposition to His reign. Is it real?
- 2) Is it possible that God's desire, is to have sentient creatures who want to dwell in His love and embrace His reign?
- 3) What is it that Jesus' parable tells us to do?

MATTHEW 13:24-30 ~ ²⁴NASB Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven (_____) may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field (The man is: _____, the good seed are: _____, and the field is: _____). ²⁵"But while his MEN were sleeping, his enemy (_____) came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away (_____). ²⁶"But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷"The SLAVES of the landowner (_____, again) came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' ²⁸"And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The SLAVES said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' ²⁹"But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the

wheat with them. ³⁰‘Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers (_____), “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up (_____); but gather the wheat into my barn (_____).”’”

Jesus was basically saying that the reason so many people were “Rejecting God’s purposes for their lives,” was because His enemy, the _____, had infiltrated the field planting his people.

Biblically things operate on different _____. The Kingdom of Heaven is here and now, and yet... God is unopposed and yet...

The “Good seed” was God’s work, not the work of the seeds. Yet we also see _____ in His statement to His Own in verse 43.

I Peter 4:18 is one example, of a God, Who makes several expert rhetorical appeals specifically designed to _____ people.

1) Don’t press the parable for meaning, that Jesus never intended, Let it be what He made it and enjoy the _____ of it.

2) Evil is allowed to flourish with God’s beloved, because that’s the way He has _____ it to be.

Will you trust Him?

Christians perfectly obey now, through Christ – _____. As Spirit-filled Believers we grow in our actual obedience – _____. One day, we will literally obey perfectly – _____.

The first step called _____, is called that with an eye to the end. It means, it worked and that is not actual until the end. A person is either _____ or they are not – they cannot be both.

3) An honest self-reflection always leads to a focus on _____.

Focus on your own conformity and on the good of others, instead of focusing on your own good and the conformity of others.

So many Christians focus on their own good to the detriment of the group and simultaneously, focus on the conformity of the group, rather than on their own conformity. Such people are a _____ to say the least...

Why does it happen? Because fleshly people are _____ - _____.

If church, or anything else, is not working for them, they're not going to ignore it, because they're _____ and they're important.

Such people blame others for their _____.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

We are supposed to grow to the point, that we can focus more on the needs and desires of the group, to our own detriment. And simultaneously, focus on our own personal conformity to Christ so we can be a _____, rather than a _____.

For nearly 20 centuries some people have taken this parable to mean that, in the church, _____ goes – just let God sort it out at the end.

As a backlash, the church has often taken the parable as a polemic against lazy leadership and used it to mean the _____ of the natural meaning. Thomas Aquinas used it to justify religious wars and the Spanish Inquisition used it to justify torture and _____.

Nowhere, do we get even a hint, that we should try to pull weeds. Trust God entirely, do your best to conform to His reign personally and put the good of others ahead of yourself and it will all work out.

Does that mean we do nothing about the weeds? Philippians 2:1-16

We are told to _____ God, _____ the church and _____ the Lost. Within that is standing firm with integrity and gentleness. No Inquisition, but no Indulgence either.

Check all that apply – detach and place in the offering or the prayer box

_____ I want to talk with the pastor about _____

_____ I want prayer for _____

_____ I want to volunteer to _____

_____ I want more information about _____

_____ Other _____

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Alêtheia ~ Matthew 13d ~ 111719

Welcome Friends

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MATTHEW
A CLASH OF KINGDOMS

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

**STORIES
THAT
CHANGED
THE
WORLD**

The Parables of Jesus

Last week we read the Parable of the Tares and Jesus'

clarification of its scope. The original meaning had to do with why the Jewish people – God’s very Own kids – had, by and large, rejected Jesus.

If He was ushering in the Kingdom of Heaven that they had all been waiting for – why wasn’t that more obvious? Why wasn’t it working?

Jesus said the reason was that God’s purposes were opposed by an enemy we all know as the Devil.



Matthew 13:24-30 ~ 24NASBJesus presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven (where God’s reign is embraced) may be compared to

a man who sowed good seed in his field (The man is Jesus, the good seed are people who embrace God's reign, and the field is the world). 25"But while his MEN were sleeping, his enemy (that's the Devil) came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away (Wheat is the good seed again and the tares are people who do not embrace God's reign). 26"But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. 27"The SLAVES of the landowner (Jesus, again) came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28"And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The SLAVES said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' 29"But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers (His angels), "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up (the Lake of Fire); but gather the wheat into my barn (The Kingdom of their Father).""



Again, Jesus was basically saying that the reason so many people were “Rejecting God’s purposes for their lives,” was because His enemy, who we know as Satan, Lucifer, the Devil, the Serpent of Old, had infiltrated the field planting people allied with him.

Biblically things operate on different levels. The Kingdom of Heaven is here and now, and yet, on another level, it is still future. Likewise, on one level, nothing can oppose God.

It isn’t like Satan, the demonic army, and all the evil people pose a legitimate threat as though they are some equal and opposite force to God. This is not a yin

and yang thing of balancing dualism. God's got this. His purposes will be achieved – have no fear.

Yet, on another level, there is an open war between the forces of Good and the forces of evil. The forces aligned with God and those opposed to His reign.

In fact, that's why the Kingdom is here and not fully here. The two things go hand in hand. The Kingdom is where God's rule is unopposed. In the grandest sense, it is already is unopposed, because nothing can thwart His Will. He can do anything He wants. Yet, due to His Own perfect plan, He has allowed both supernatural and human beings to actively oppose His Sovereign Reign... For now.

As a side note, you may ask why. Think on this... Is it possible that God's desire, is to have sentient creatures who want to dwell in His love and embrace His reign?

Back on track now... Since some embrace God's rule and others oppose it, the Kingdom is here, now, partially. It exists where people have surrendered to God's Will and it fails to exist where people "Reject God's purposes for their life."

Additionally, at another level, even among Christians, the embrasure of God's reign is imperfect. So, at 1) one level, no one is perfectly and permanently surrendered, 2) at another, all Christians are so, because Jesus has made us so, 3) and at still another level, all humans are obeying God's plan.

Regardless, the reality we find ourselves in, is one where the anti-God forces opposed to Him, are by natural extension, opposed to all who stand with God as well.

This is a war where it is impossible to be a conscientious objector. There is no Switzerland. Everyone is on one side or the other. Everyone is a combatant in the war, like it or not. Never be surprised when God's enemy attacks you.



Jesus was saying that He had come to earth and His very presence was a revelation of God and His purposes. Jesus was a manifestation in our physical realm of God and His purposes.

His very existence as a human was enabling a new reality. The Kingdom of Heaven where God's Reign was accepted and embraced was at hand. People could, through God's activity, become His subjects – in other words, fully accept His rule by accepting His plan of Salvation as offered in Christ Jesus. They were Good seed. They would grow and produce and be gathered into God's presence.

The way they became Good seed was Christ's sowing. It was God's work, not the work of the seeds. Yet we also see human responsibility in His statement to His Own in verse 43. There is a humble surrender by the seeds in order to reach the Harvest.

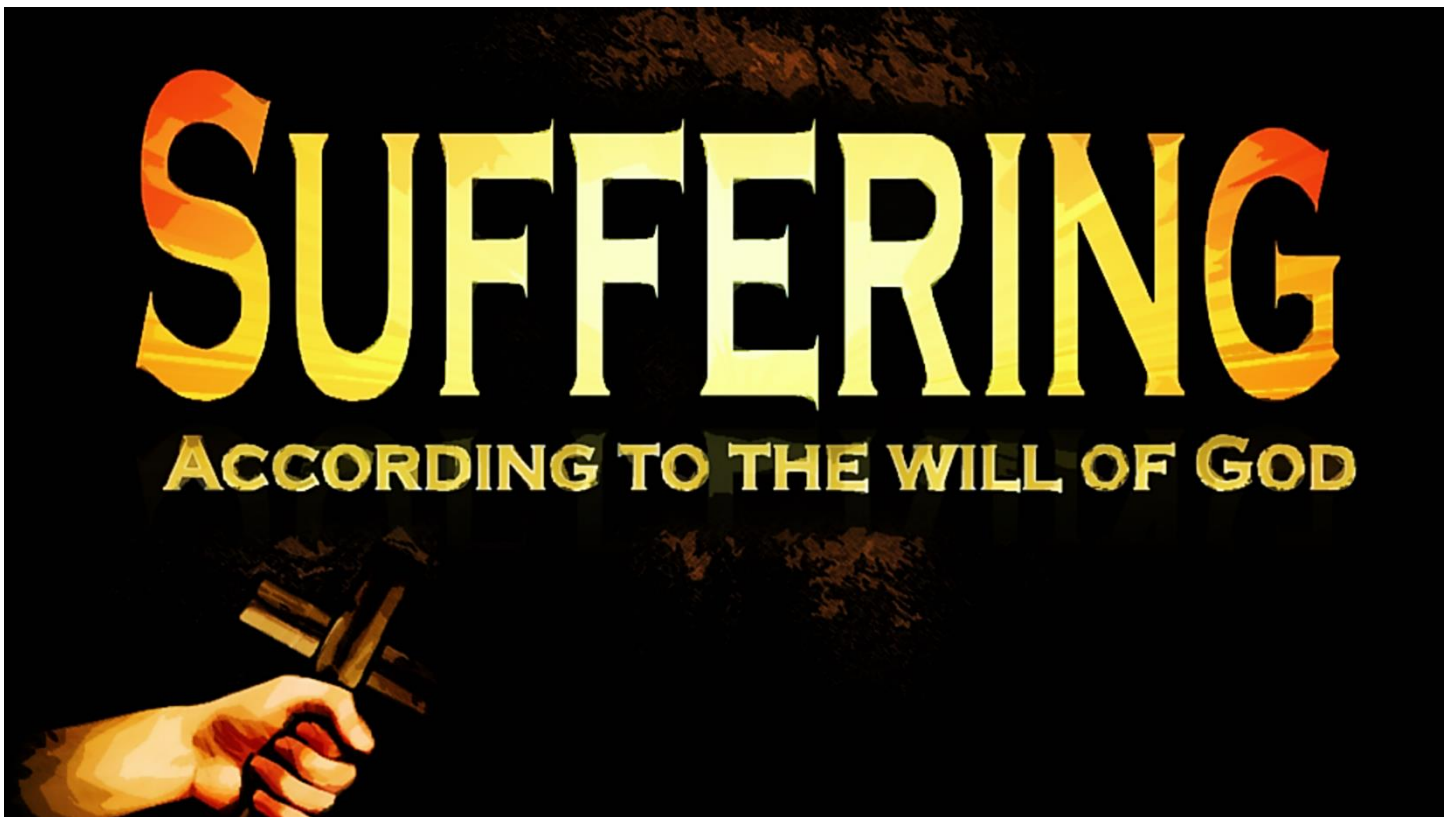
Who were those able to accept the Messiah that God provided? Biblically, as we saw last week, only those who were humble enough to say, "Okay God – that's not what I expected, but okay."



There's a great scene in the movie Rudy where he's seeking advice from a priest. The priest says, "In 35 years of religious studies, I've come up with only two

hard incontrovertible facts. There is a God, and I'm not Him."

"I'm not Him." When we allow God to be God, we have entered the Kingdom of Heaven.



You may say, I don't see where the Good seed is doing anything. The Ladies Group had a question from I Peter 4:18. That entire chapter consists of the Apostle Peter making several expert rhetorical appeals specifically designed to persuade his audience.

Since it's the Bible, we can easily say that it is God Who makes several expert rhetorical appeals specifically designed to persuade His audience.

Who is the audience? Christians. Biblically, even Christians, who are already eternally saved and already indwelt by the Spirit of God, are persuaded, cajoled, encouraged, motivated, exhorted by God to do something. In that particular place it is to persevere through the persecution they are experiencing.

If it is all determinism where every human is a robotic automaton only doing what God forces them to do like a puppet on a string, why in the world, does He waste time, energy and resources, trying to persuade people to do, the very thing determinism says they have utterly no ability to do?

God has orchestrated all things for the greatest possible good but has also, from our perspective, given us choice. It may be an illusion, it may be difficult to reconcile, but whatever the particulars, it is all we know. And since that is true - since it is all we know, we must, in fact, choose! We must do.

What is it that Jesus' parable tells us to do? It tells us to reflect on the fact that not only does Good and evil coexist in this present world, not only does God know all about it, God has a plan to deal with it, once and for all.



Therefore, it is first about trusting God. Will you trust Him with in the midst of this craziness – in this present world, field, environment, of rampant bad weeds?

See how much faith it requires? Especially with the weediness in the church and within ourselves. How easy it would be if Jesus returned today, destroyed all evil and handed "Over the Kingdom to God who is our

Father” (I Corinthians 15:23-26 My Translation). When Revelation 21:3&4 is fulfilled as, “3NLT God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. 4He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

How easy if that was the way things were today? It is that way, in a sense, but that’s not what we see with our physical eyes and so it requires faith – it requires trusting in the Father, through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.



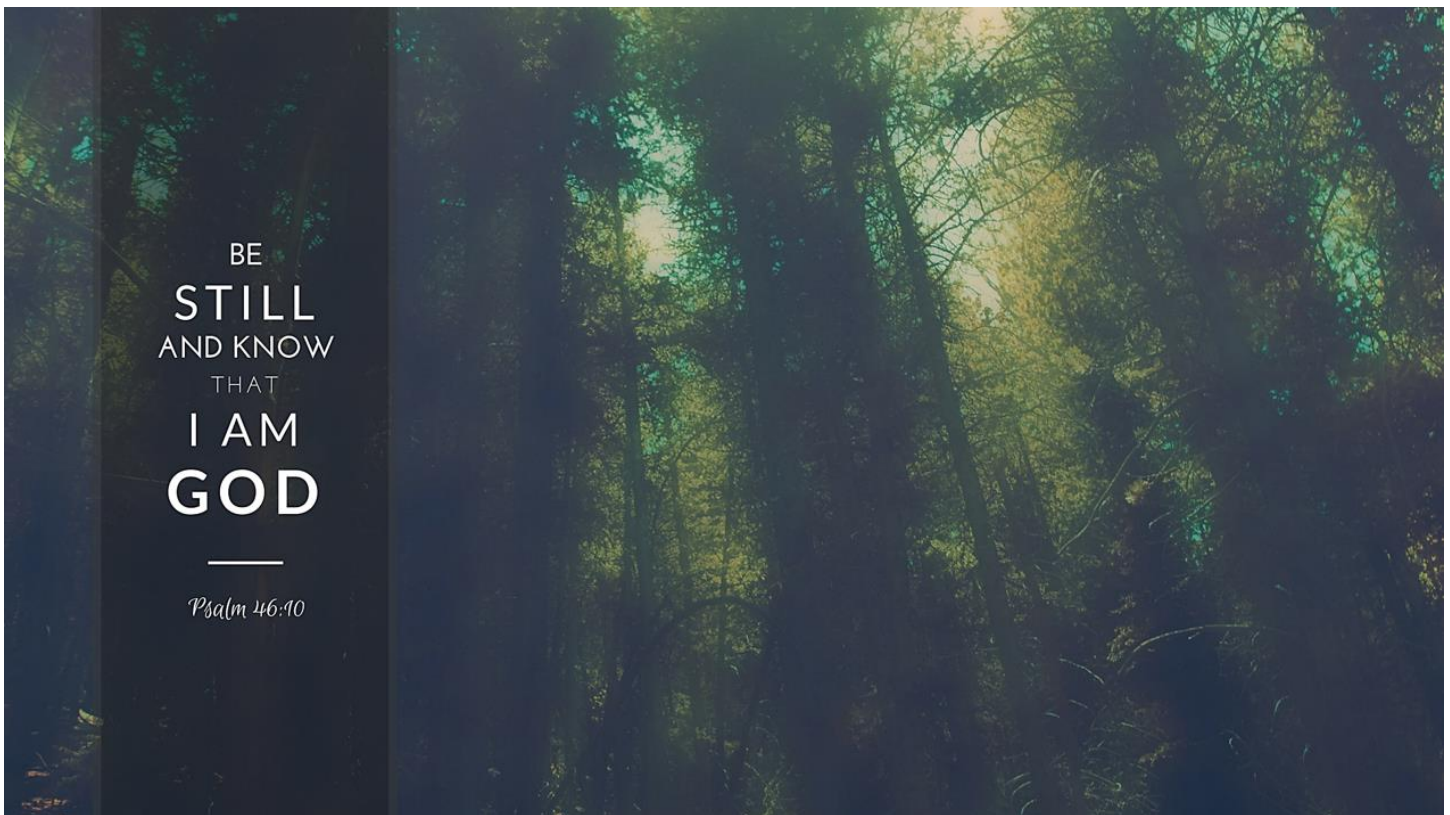
Beyond that, or secondly, Jesus' parable implies a self-reflection... Which are you – a seed sown by Jesus, or a tare sown by Satan?

God never asks us to reflect on something if there's no hope of changing it. If you are not a seed sown that is producing fruit, or in this case, grain, it's likely because you're not wheat. What are you going to do about that?

We discussed what fruit, or grain, is, a couple of weeks ago. In general, 1) it can be seen as a love for God and others that is not changed by circumstances or emotional state. 2) It can be seen as the transformation of a person's mind and actions towards godliness. 3) It

can be seen as the beneficial ministry of God to others through a person.

Are you wheat, as evidenced by supernatural Good grain? If not, what are you going to do about that?



Beyond that, what does Jesus tell us to do from this parable? Nothing. The answer is nothing, my friends and because people don't like that answer, they come up with something. Please don't. There are things, we as Christians, are supposed to do regarding God, ourselves, the church and the Lost. We find our marching orders regarding those things in other passages of Scripture – this is not one of them.

Remember, Jesus does not define the workers, or slaves in His parable. Technically the workers and the slaves are one and the same, and they are the guys who actually sowed the seed provided by the Sower. While they're also the ones who fell asleep, they're also the ones who recognized the problem in the first place and they're the ones who offered to pull the weeds without delay.

Jesus didn't define those guys and yet, as I mentioned last week, Christians have been correcting that oversight for millennia. It's funny, because it's ridiculous. We're going to clarify for Jesus. We're going to put words in the mouth of the Word.

Anyway, the common interpretation has been that the workers are the clergy. Church leaders over the centuries have been asleep at the wheel and allowed Satan to infiltrate Christ's "Field."

I hope you can see right away, that for that interpretation to work well one must see the "Field" as the church. A similar, less popular version is that the "Field" is the individual Christian person and through

our own lack of alertness we allow Satan to sow evil within us.

Jesus defined the “Field.” It is the world, not the church and not the individual. Therefore, the sleeping workers cannot be the lackadaisical clergy, or the unwary Christian.

Who then are the workers? We could plug in the Prophets of Old, or John the Baptist, or the Apostles, or even the Early church Fathers. None of those ideas are without problems, but the biggest problem, in my mind, is why are we trying to figure out what Jesus left ambiguous?

It cannot possibly be important, or Jesus would have defined it. The Good Seed stands for all Christians, regardless of their role.

Knowing what we do, how can we properly apply the parable? Just as we said, but now adding another important step...

1) Don't press the parable for meaning Jesus never intended or assigned. Just let it be what He made it and enjoy the simplicity of it.



IN CHRIST

2) That brings is to our original first point. The Kingdom of Heaven has come in the sense that because of Jesus' completed work, human beings can obey God. People can enthusiastically and perfectly embrace the entirety of His reign – in Christ. In other words, Christ has done it for us. The Kingdom is here, now.

Yet, that's not what we experience physically.

How can that be? Why don't all people embrace Christ and get onboard the Kingdom train? Why do those of us who are onboard, still disagree with how things are, still disagree with how God reigns?

That's the point of the parable – Evil is allowed to flourish side by side with God's beloved because that's the way He has ordained it to be.

Will you trust Him?

Trusting Him is more than just believing that one day this world, with its pervasive weed problem, will end. It means that you trust God with your eternity despite evidence that seems contrary.

As I alluded to earlier, we perfectly obey God right now through Christ – we call that SALVATION. As Spirit-filled Believers we grow in our actual conformity to His reign as we yield to the work of the Spirit in a maturation process called SANCTIFICATION. There will come a day, when we will truly, literally, obey perfectly. When we will be entirely in harmonious conformity to God's reign forever. That day will be when the fullness of the Kingdom comes and for us it is called GLORIFICATION.

Again, that's how the Kingdom is already here and not here yet.

Just to put a bow on that, let me say that the first step called SALVATION, is called that with an eye to GLORIFICATION. SALVATION means that a person is saved. No person is actually saved until they are glorified forever. You cannot correctly call a person saved, if at the end of time, they weren't.

SALVATION is not a concept that can be temporary. A person cannot be saved today and unsaved tomorrow, by definition. A person is either saved or they are not – they cannot be both.

It's because saved means saved into eternal life – anyone not entering eternal life was, again, by very definition, never saved. So, the term SALVATION incorporates the entirety of the process from start to eternity – You're not saved until you're saved. Because the work is Christ's and because through Him we have reconciliation into right relationship with the Father and because we have received the surety deposit of the Holy Spirit we trust God with the entirety of our eternity and correctly call ourselves saved. Hebrews 5:9, 9NASB And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.

Anyone who is unsure of their salvation or thinks that they can lose their SALVATION, trusts God far too little, and trusts in their own ability, far too much.

Will you trust Him?



3) Now for the next thing – an honest self-reflection always leads to a focus on fruit, or grain. Here's the deal, focus on your own conformity and on the good of others, instead of focusing on your own good and the conformity of others. Here's what I mean.

So many Christians focus on their own good to the detriment of the group and simultaneously, focus on

the conformity of the group, rather than on their own conformity. Such people are a burden to say the least... Really, they are a curse upon the church. In some churches they say that 10% of the people do 90% of the work. It's as true to say that 10% of the people require 90% the pastor's attention. Some people are a lot of work. Let me caveat that... Please hear this... Pastors are happy to spend time with people who are trying. I'm talking about people who are always complaining – always wanting things to change to suit them better.

Why does it happen? Because fleshly people are self-centered.

If church is not working for them, they're not going to ignore it, because they're right and they're important. At the same time, such people blame others for their failures. If I'm not conforming well to Christ, it must be because I have a bad pastor, bad church, or bad Christian friends... Something, because I know it must be an outside influence preventing me from being all that I can be. I'm plagued by the Devil, I have a rotten spouse, my kids are the spawn of hell. It can't be me.

Speaking of kids, such people will invariably blame someone or something else, when their kids get into trouble. It was the other kid who was a bad friend – a bad influence on my kid, it was another parent, it was the school, it was our society, it was the video games.

Such people focus on themselves, except when it is negative, and then they focus on others.

Be the opposite. Focus on others, except when it is negative, and then focus on yourself. As Spirit-filled people we are supposed to grow to the point that we can focus more on the needs and desires of group to our own detriment and simultaneously, focus on our own personal conformity to Christ so we can be a BLESSING to the church. When we focus on our own needs and desires to the detriment of the group and simultaneously, focus on the group's conformity to Christ – we act like spiritual infants and are, in fact, a CURSE to the church.

Be humble, take responsibility, be self-controlled. Strive to build up the group by focusing on what it needs and wants, while focusing on your own behavior and attitudes.



For nearly 20 centuries some people have taken this parable to mean that in the church anything goes – leave everyone alone and let them do whatever they like and let God sort it out at the end.

As a backlash to that idea, the church has often taken the stance that the parable was a polemic against lazy leadership and so this parable has often been used to mean the opposite of the natural meaning. Thomas Aquinas used it to justify religious wars if the weeds threatened the wheat. The Spanish Inquisition was justified by saying, that at the edge of the field one could “Pull out two or three, on occasion six or eight or

even ten or twelve, indeed, even a hundred weeds without damaging the wheat.”

The “Field” is the world at large, that contains within it the Jewish audience Jesus spoke to, as well as the church through the ages, and, as well as the individual Christian person. Each thing is part of the whole.



While the world contains those things, it is not those things, specifically and so we must be cautious in our application. As such we can recognize that the parable gives us insight into why evil still exists, it gives us assurance that God is well aware of the problem and that He will fix it in His timing and it implies that we

should ensure that for our part, we are wheat producing a Good crop.

Nowhere do we get even a hint that we should try to pull weeds. Trust God entirely, do your best to conform to His reign personally and put the good of others ahead of yourself and it will all work out.

Does that mean we do nothing about the weeds? No, it means we do the best thing we can do about the weeds, that is to be the best wheat possible. We, ourselves, for our part, stand firm in Christ

Do not allow bad company to corrupt your good character. Resist weeds always, make no peace with weeds – love them, bless them, pray for them, but do not make peace. In other words, never get the idea that since God allows weeds to flourish, it's okay to be a weed, or okay for you to act like a weed.

One day, “Soon and very soon,” God will deal with the weeds. Until then... be wheat!

I thought this passage would help... Philippians 2:1-16,
1NASB Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any

fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion (in other words, if you've gotten anything good from being a Christian within the Body of Christ... At all, Paul says), 2make my joy complete...

By being of the same mind,
maintaining the same love,
united in spirit,
intent on one purpose.

3Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

5Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

8Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.


12So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling (contextually, respect and honor God enough to obey His command to love one another, in meaningfully genuine ways, just as we've been discussing);

13for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (It's too difficult for a fleshly human to love that way, but God's Spirit will enable you... You must act, but it is God Who acts through you).

14Do all things without grumbling or disputing;

15so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation

(the world is full of the children of the Devil – there are weeds growing everywhere around you, but), among them, you appear as lights in the world



Shine among them like stars in the sky

(As the NIV says, “In a warped and crooked generation... You will shine among them like stars in the sky. How is that done? As you hold firmly to the Word of God. It is by holding fast to Jesus and allowing ourselves to be conformed to Him, that we are lights in a field full of weeds – a sky full of darkness) ...

I think most of us understand what Jesus wants from us here. But humanly and historically we don't. People love to define themselves in ways and in areas that are important to them.



Perhaps politics, religion, sports, work, lifestyle, culture, nationality, etc. So, a person may define themselves as a fiscally conservative Democrat. Perhaps as a Pentecostal Christian, perhaps as a New York Jets fan, as a sheep rancher, an archery wild boar hunter, a vegan hippie, an American.

Then they recognize that other people, not only don't fit in the same categories, they claim rival categories for themselves. That scares people. It might seem weird, but fear takes over at that point, like it, or not. Both sides and really all sides jockey to promote their thing, while diminishing opposing things. It's not enough to

say what you're for – you must say what you're against.

In several polls, liberal Americans consistently say that while they don't even really like the Democrat Party, they hate, despise and loathe the Republican Party. Likewise, conservative Americans consistently say that while they don't even really like the Republican Party, they hate, despise and loathe the Democrat Party.

It is a conflict where we equate our beliefs with our person. Those who disagree with us, because they aren't just fellow human beings made in God's image who happen to have a different opinion – they are vile, reprehensible, evil agents trying to destroy us. So, we defend our choices and have learned that the best defense is a strong offence. We attack because we fear, and fear turns hate. Because of that, we begin dehumanizing those we see as threats to our way of life.

John Howes: Too dumb to understand science, try religion!

Len Van Den Berg: The problem with religion is that it keeps people enslaved in ignorance. People are being fooled into thinking they are following Jesus while they are following the fabrications of Paul.

I post audio sermons on the church Facebook page. How our page ends up on someone's feed is beyond me, but I know that if you don't like something you can scroll past it. I know that if that's not enough, you can put a general block on such content. I know that if that's not enough, you can block that specific entity that bugs you from ever appearing in your feed again.

Evidently that's not enough. Comments left on our Facebook page show what I'm on about... It isn't enough to ignore, it isn't enough to disagree, it isn't enough to enter into a debate, it must be an attack. "You're too dumb for science." "You're fooled by fabrications of Paul."

People with different ideas are not just misled, they're not just stupid, they're not just the enemy, they're evil, they must be attacked and, if possible, they must be destroyed.

If you're honest, and I know many people refuse to be honest, because they're so afraid, but if you're honest you will admit that both sides in our political debate, whether Republican or Democrat, actively vilify those of the other party... As just another example.

Once we begin the negative process, we are on a road that leads to separation, divorce, war, murder, atrocities and genocide.

It can be any relationship – your relationship with your church, your employer, your fellow American, your spouse... Trust me my friends... Negativity is so much easier – so much faster – so much more momentum is involved, once it's moving, it's nearly impossible to stop.

The Bible tells us to Trust God, to actively seek to be the best Christian we can be, to grant grace to others

as you try to see them through God's eyes – allowing them to be who they are.

Their relationship with God is theirs, not yours. It is perfectly fine to disagree and still love. How insane that we now think if people disagree with us, they must be our enemy – how un-Christlike.

We are told to love God, love other Christians and to love the Lost. Where are we told to hold our own Spanish Inquisition and purge people from our life who don't measure up to our standard?

I wanted to respond to these people commenting on our church page. After much consideration, I did. My response? I prayed for them. Let God deal with the weeds, my friends, just make sure you're not one of them.

What
kind of
wheat do
you choose
to be?

