

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-42

When I was in high school, we went on a field trip to a Jewish synagogue. We met a real life rabbi and had a question and answer session with him. I went to a Christian high school so this was 75 Christian kids asking a Jewish rabbi questions. At first the questions we asked were kind of mundane, "Where do you go to school to become a rabbi?" We even asked about the windows in the synagogue. But finally the rabbi said, "Come on, ask me what you really want to ask me." My friend Brad Heiges was brave enough to raise his hand and ask, "What do you think about the Christ?" The Rabbi said, "You mean Jesus Christ." We said "yeah." He said, "The Old Testament says that the Messiah is going to get rid of all evil. There's still evil around. So Jesus wasn't the Messiah."

It's a good question. If Jesus is the Savior of the world, there's even a Bible passage that says that "Jesus came to destroy the devil's work," (1 John 3:8) if all of that is true, then why is there still evil in the world?

The people at Jesus' time thought that when the Messiah came, that he would get rid of all evil. Even John the Baptist (you remember John the Baptist? That crazy prophet out in the wilderness?). John the Baptist said there is one coming after me and he is going to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12), he's going to get rid of all evil and all evil people. But then John got put in prison by an evil king. And in prison John thought, "Hmmm...evil is obviously still around." And so he sent messengers to Jesus to say, "Are you the one who was to come? Or should we expect someone else? (Matthew 11:2-3) Evil is still around, I don't see you burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

And so Jesus tells this parable to say, "John the Baptist is right. I am going to burn up the chaff. I am going to get rid of all evil, but not right away. **"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field," (13:24).** That man is Jesus. **"But then an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat," (13:25).** The enemy is the devil. Evil in this world is the work of the devil not the work of God.

"The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied. 'The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'" (Matthew 13:28) The servants are thinking like John the Baptist or like that Jewish rabbi, they have the perfectly reasonable thought, "Why don't you get rid of evil right now?" And Jesus says, **"No, because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest," (Matthew 13:29-30).** The harvest is the end of the world when Jesus comes back. **"At that time I will tell the harvesters: first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned."** When Jesus comes back, he is going to get rid of all evil and all wicked people. When he's explaining the parable Jesus says, **"The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man (that's Jesus) will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.** There it is, Jesus is going to get rid of all the evil in this world when he comes back. **They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**

Now at this point some of you might be getting nervous. OK, I want him to get rid of evil from the world and I want him to get rid of truly evil people. But then you have to ask, "What qualifies as an evil person?" OK Hitler. Hitler is an evil person. But then where do you draw the line? And on which side of the line do I fall?

That's why it's so important that Jesus came the first time. When Jesus was on the cross he took all the punishment for *our* evil on himself so that anyone who believes him would **"shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43).**

When Jesus comes back, those who believe in him **"will shine like the sun"** forever and ever. What's that going to look like? Well, one time there was a man with a crippled hand and Jesus completely restored the man's hand. It's going to look like that. After Jesus died, three days later he rose from the dead with a glorious new resurrection body. It's going to look like that. There's a lot of evil in the world right now, but in the resurrection God is going to fix it. God is going to lovingly and graciously restore and renew his world and his people.

But it's been 2,000 years since Jesus told this parable and he still hasn't brought down the hammer. Why not? Because he's patient. He's patient and he lovingly wants people, even evil people, to come to repentance. Remember the story of the flood? The world became so evil that God decided to destroy the world with a flood. But if you read that story carefully God tells Noah, "Noah I'm going to destroy the world with a flood," But then he waits 120 years until he actually send the flood! God is patient and he delays his judgment hoping that more will come to repentance.

I can't answer all the tough questions about God and evil, but I do know the Biblical story about God and his world. That God's world tragically rebelled against him. That God is lovingly seeking to win back his world. And that God will ultimately restore his world in the resurrection. Where do you fit into this loving story of God and his world? Trust in Jesus and you'll be among those who shine like the sun forever and ever. Amen.