

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

SERIES: PARABLES | WEEK 2 | 6.13.2021

Good morning, church. How are we doing? You guys all slept in, nice and refreshed. Yeah? So my name is Pastor John if you guys don't know me, I'm one of the pastors here. I will be teaching you the Word of God, it's a privilege, so turn in your Bibles to Matthew 13, we're going to be starting in verse 24.

If you're new to Calvary, we just want to say welcome to you. If you've been here a couple weeks or maybe it's your first time, we just want to get to know you so a couple things. One is in the seat back in front of you there is a little scan called Next Step, you can take your phone camera and scan that, you'll be able to digitally see all of our next steps, sign up for our newsletter, connect to our groups. I'd love to get your information and just follow up with you. If you're not a digital person, or not, and you just want to talk to a person—sometimes, you know, you call the operator you're like, "I just want a person!"—you can go to our Blue Wall after service. And so right outside these doors there's a giant blue wall that says "Blue Wall" and you could go there and go talk to some staff people. We're gonna connect you if you're interested; if not, just keep coming back until you feel comfortable and then we'd love to connect with you. Also, also a couple announcements.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

One is we have a Worship Night coming up June 23rd, and so it's all of what you just saw but awesome and more. And so it's called, uh, Worship Night, it's June 23rd, it's 7 o'clock, we're gonna be in here—bring your family, bring your kids, we love kids worshipping together. It's just gonna be an intergenerational worship night, it's gonna be awesome. So that's June 23 coming up.



SIGN UP

Also, men, uh, we have a weekend retreat in September but we're gonna have a sign up right now

because I know a lot of you have to plan, men, to get away. And so we have a weekend retreat where we go to Lake Champion, we haven't done it last year so we're going to start again this year to get away just with godly men, restore your faith, uh, just give you an awesome weekend. So make sure you sign up for that, go to the Blue Wall, connect online for those as well.



We also just want to take a moment real quick, last one, uh just to say thank you for your gifts and a lot of you give regularly and we want to take a time just to say thank you for your giving. If you are new with us, we just want you to feel comfortable. If you are a Christ-follower, this is your community, thank you for your gifts. We use them to fight back the darkness in our community and around the world and, uh, we desperately need to. And so we're going to talk a lot about that today, the need for us as a church to really use our resources to go and make a difference and so thank you for your gifts. We really appreciate it.

WORSHIP

NIGHT!



WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23



Okay, so did you guys turn to Matthew Chapter 13? All right. So before we get going I wanted to say a couple things. So this is our PARABLES series, it's week two of our PARABLES series, and it's really Jesus

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telling stories. He loved to tell stories and in these stories, today especially, in these stories they're kind of small stories but they're jam-packed with big truths. I mean, there are so many things that—how many of you have ever read the Bible and you think you know it and then you read something and then you go back and you're like, "I missed all of this stuff." Right? There's a depth to the Word of God. And so in this passage, man, when I was studying it I just got, like, Holy Spirit, like, punches in the face, it was like so amazing and so convicting. I can't believe some of the things that God uses in this parable to teach us profound, profound truth.

But before we do that, how many of you have ever seen *The Chosen*? I'm a big fan of *The Chosen*. Okay. So [SOMEONE IN AUDIENCE YELLS, "WOO!" / APPLAUSE] *The Chosen* is, like, you can clap for *The Chosen*. Okay. So *The Chosen* is a TV series and what I love about it is it just chooses, the director chooses to see the humanity in Jesus and the disciples. He goes that path. So a lot of Christian movies, they'll go the path of God being, like, Jesus being fully God, which He totally was, but the fully man part is so interesting. So in this last episode, I'm not going to give any spoilers away, Jesus is caught, like, by Himself with the Father, which He totally did, and He was, like, practicing The Beatitudes. And I remember being, like, "That's so awesome! I practiced my message!" And I remember just being, like, that's interesting, would Jesus practice? And I'm, like, well, He's fully man and, like, we would use examples.

But then what blew my mind is here's the God who created everything using the things He created in His human mind to, like, it's just a crazy thought. But in that world, I mean, all these Christians just like backlashed on the director, so he had to, like, get on and explain, but I thought it was awesome that Jesus would use these earthly examples. Like He's walking through the field and He sees the weed and the wheat and He's like, "That's gonna be a good parable. I'm gonna use that one." Like, it's just so cool to think about that. Meanwhile, He created it as well. And so maybe I'm the only one giddy, it seems like I'm the only one giddy about this, but it's really actually cool.

And so in that what I see in this parable, and we're going to read it, is there's a couple questions that I think Jesus answers using this parable and He does it in a way that's kind of neat because usually when Jesus teaches a parable we kind of have to say, "We think this is what Jesus meant by the parable." This one's easy for me because He actually tells the disciples later exactly what this one specifically means. So I got an easy job this morning because Jesus is like, okay, this is what this means. So with that we see three questions that I'm going to kind of wrestle with this morning and it's going to get a little bit deep and we're going to have hopefully some stirring and convictions, um, but also some laughter.

QUESTION #1

So here's the first question: **Why is there evil and suffering in the world and God doesn't do anything about it right now?** Like, that's a question I think Jesus is trying to answer. So you look around, you say, "Okay, there's evil and suffering in the world and if God is a good God, He could stop that evil and suffering. But some reason He sees evil and suffering He doesn't stop it right away, He lets it go. So why—if He can stop it and He's good—why does He not stop it right away?" This is a question that I think He's trying to answer.

QUESTION #2

Here's another one: **What's the difference between wheat and weeds?** So in this parable you're going to see that they both kind of look the same. We're going to dive into the difference and ask the question which one are you?

QUESTION #3

And then the last thing is: **What does this teach us about the Kingdom of God?** We just came from a series where we talked about what's going to happen in the end in Matthew 24 and 25, but this is going to reinforce what's going to

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happen, what's going to happen in the future. It's not a guess, we know, and so we're going to reinforce that, and we're going to maybe ask the question are you ready for what's to come.

So real quick, when we get into Matthew Chapter 13 we're going to start in [verse] 24, go to 30, and so this is the parable, and we're going to jump ahead to verse 36 and Jesus is going to explain to His disciples what the parable means. So follow along with me, Matthew 13, verse 24, here we go:

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ "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?'

²⁸ "'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

²⁹ "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'"

—And so this is the parable that Jesus speaks. And then go to verse 36:

³⁶ Then he left the crowd

— He talked about a couple of parables, we're going to talk about them in the weeks to come —
and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

³⁷ He answered, "The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom.

— the believers —

The weeds are the people of the evil one,

— unbelievers —

³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

⁴⁰ "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age.

⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear."

— MATTHEW 13:24-30, 36-43 (NIV)

And so, okay, so if you're not like, *This is interesting*, I don't know if you just read what I just read because this is fascinating. So context, Jesus is saying this, so anytime you see that red letter in your Bible, okay, perk up, pay attention. Also, He's talking about this idea of the Kingdom of God and He's using this example of the weed and the wheat, and so we're going to get into why that's so powerful but in the time they knew exactly what He meant, they knew exactly what Jesus meant.

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So He's talking about this and the disciples for some reason this parable is what stood out to them. So He goes on to talk about the mustard seed and all these things but this parable stands out. And the question I have to ask first is: Why do the disciples ask Jesus about this parable? I think when they hear these parables they're like, "Oh, that's really sweet. Oh, that's good." But when they start to hear about the fiery furnace and the gnashing of teeth and how weed and wheat, even though they look the same they have different destinations. I think the disciples were a little bit caught uneasy and they were a little bit concerned. Okay? What does this mean? Does this affect us? What are You talking about here? How do we apply this? And is this fire thing or what do we do with this? Is this people? And so they're asking this question and I think Jesus is going to answer with this parable. If we look at it, He gives us answers.

ANSWER #1

So here's the first question, let's go back to it: Why does God allow evil and suffering to exist in the world? Go back to verse 27. If you read these last couple verses in verse 27, the owner responds to the wheat and what does he say? He says no, because if you pull the weeds out you may harm the wheat. So in context, the field is what? The world. We know this, Jesus says it, the field is the world. The good seed is the people of the Kingdom, the good seed, the wheat are believers. We know the weeds are the people of the evil one, the weeds represent unbelievers. And then we know the enemy who sows them at night, sneaks in at night, is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are the angels. And so, okay, that's what the context is. How do we answer that question?

First, this is very, very important—it says because there's nothing left in the field, if Jesus would act on the evil and suffering right now in this world there'll be nothing left. Here's what I mean, is if you look at the world and you say to yourself, "Okay, I am a wheat, I am good, and I'm along with sinful people." Well, here's the truth – we are all weeds without the Gospel of Jesus. So if you want Jesus, like, logically, if you want Jesus to end the evil and suffering in the world – *you* bring evil and suffering in the world. *You do.*

One of the foundational lies in our world is that you're inherently good—that is against the Gospel, you're not inherently good, you're actually inherently sinful and broken. And so the idea that there are some weed and wheat apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ – no. Without Jesus we are all weeds. And so the idea of God—why don't You bring justice upon the world—we're saying justice upon me, but no-no-no, not me, *them*. But the truth is, the reason why God lets them grow together is because the weed can become the wheat if they accept Jesus and so He's patient. Justice will come.

Here's the first thing: If He brings justice without the Gospel, we're all going to Hell and we're deserving of it. This is the truth, and He's just in doing so. That's why the posture of the Gospel is I don't deserve this. I bring evil and suffering into the world, I contribute to it, but God gives me the gift of salvation. It's a gift, but I don't deserve it. That's the truth. And so why does God suspend His wrath? Because He loves you, because He knows that He can transform you if you place your hope and faith in Jesus and make you something that was broken to something that's fruitful.

But here's another truth, we know in this passage what happens at the end. There's a day coming where His judgment is going to happen. Here is another foundational truth, no evil in this world—think of the evil that was done to you or you have done to others—no evil in this world will go unpunished, nothing. And the God of justice, the God who is perfect, sees the evil, and He's more angry than you are because you're sinful and broken. So when you see



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the injustice of the world, imagine a perfect God seeing the injustice of the world. And so He longs to bring judgment and justice upon the world, but He loves the world so He offers it a gift. But listen, nothing will go unpunished. This is the Gospel: You will either have to be judged for those things, or you'll be under grace. But there's a day coming, church, where everything in this world will be judged either by justice or by grace and it all has to do with who you say Jesus is. And you deny Jesus you're going to be in judgment and there's nothing you're going to say that's going to get you out of it because you did it. It's only by the blood of Jesus that we're saved. That's why Christianity is not a works-based religion. It's not you go to the Lord and say, "Look, I have some good." No-no-no. No one is good, no one is righteous—we all need Jesus. But the idea that Jesus ignores suffering or He doesn't bring judgment on it, no-no, there's a time where the weed and the wheat are going to be separated and judgment's happening, and we know this, and so it's a suspension of His wrath but it's coming. It's coming.



Here's another thing we see, that there is no form of evil in this world that grace can't cover. This is why Jesus waits; this is why He sees this happen and He says wait. And we're gonna talk about this because oftentimes when people are growing we don't know the fruits of it yet, and often we don't know the hearts of people. You see, here's the truth, I don't know if somebody is saved because I don't see the heart. I can see behavior, I can see the way they look, but as we're just going to talk about here soon, we could look the same but our hearts could be very different. So as humans even when we look around the world and we say, "God, this looks bad, and this looks bad," what we understand is until the fruit is known—and only God knows the fruit—we're not going to know what's good and what's not good.

Because some of us we live in hypocrisy, we are wicked and dark. Some of you go home and the way you treat your wife, the way you treat your family, you are dark and dirty and sinful and you have no part in the redemptive work of Jesus in your life; you just do the religious thing. But Jesus is patient enough to say yeah, but if he gives his life to Me, I can make it work. Even in the end, even when he has a few days left I'm going to wait but the judgment's coming, but, man, I love them. I love them. I don't want to damage.

You notice if you pull the wheat you damage, I mean, if you pull the weeds you damage the wheat. So He's saying, yeah, you're gonna be around evil, you'll be around suffering, but remain in Me and you'll be okay because I know you are there and I know that you're surrounded by suffering. By the way, Jesus when He was here was surrounded by suffering and sin and pain and He wept and He spoke into it, but He experienced it as well. And so this is what is answering this question.

So let me just bring this to reality because I know some people when they hear pastors or Christians say suffering, *Oh, God is going to bring... Oh, you just don't really understand suffering, you don't know the depth of it. Man, if you've ever been in a situation where you truly suffered then you would be angry at God and not think He was a good God.* Listen, I've been all around the world. I've personally suffered great, but I have seen, like, here's the biggest one. I have been in a place where they had special needs orphanages where the special needs kids who had deformities would be driven by their parents when they were babies, pushed out of the car in front of this orphanage, and the orphanage workers would come pick up this baby, hope that it wouldn't be dead or starving, bring the baby in and raise this baby in the orphanage for the rest of their life. I've been in that environment. I've held this beautiful, beautiful baby boy and his name was Michael and He had deformed arms, deformed legs, and he's in his bed and he doesn't do anything but look up. That's all he's doing but you can tell he's in pain. And the nurse says, "Hey, can you spend a few hours with him? Just hold him, just stay there at the bed?"

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And I said, "I'll try. I don't know how to help him." So I remember holding him, just looking at God, praying, because I couldn't speak to him [the baby], and I'm wrestling with this reality of, okay, here's a child and he's in pain and I know he's in fleshly pain. And I'm praying to God and I'm saying, "God, this is the dilemma. You can fix him right now. You could completely take the pain away, but he has pain and it doesn't seem like You want to fix him, but I'm going to pray and say that You can." And here are the things that God reminded me during that time, a very real, like, struggle because you're in the flesh and even though the promises of God are true, it's hard in the reality of the flesh. But here's what the Spirit taught me in these moments. One is this, when I mourn and I weep and I see the pain of this child, I'm coming at it as a sinful, broken, selfish person. And I'm selfish by nature apart from God, but yet I care. Imagine how much God loves that boy more than me. Imagine how it grieves God to see His creation rebel against Him and the consequences of that rebellion. Imagine if I'm grieving, how much more does a God who loves him more grieve?

But then I'm also reminded of this when I was holding him, I remember these things, God just put these thoughts in my head because they're true. God says that in Scripture He can give peace and comfort that you don't even know He's giving. So even in the midst of pain and suffering I'm thinking, *God, I don't know what's going on in this boy's heart. You could be there, You could do something that I can't even see because I'm limited, but You're not.* And I guarantee you in all the things I've done in my life, the suffering, the broken, the poor, the widows, the orphanage, God is aloud in that area, He is loud and alive in His Spirit. If anybody has ever been in there, man, the Spirit is active and working and you see the power of God and you're blown away.

And I just was reminded, *God, You're there, You're in the places that I'm not even in.* And I was just comforted knowing that even this young boy, even if this young boy is never healed of his pain and suffering, what's the destiny of his life? The destiny of this young boy is eternal glory with the Lord, where there's no more pain, no more suffering, he is going to be in the arms of Jesus forever. That's his destiny. And so if there's purpose in it then I have to trust that God knows, that God knows what's going on and He sees the end picture and it's worth it. And I don't know why, but I'm gonna trust in that. And so that's the very real application to this, is God *can* pull the weeds but it would damage the wheat, man. Okay?

So God is going to bring judgment but He's, like, I love you, I'm going to present Gospel, I'm going to present a way, and I'm going to come with judgment. And when judgment comes it's going to be too late. Listen, what judgment is—and Pastor Rob talked about this—when you think of Hell, **Hell is God giving you exactly what you want.** Follow me, church, if you live your whole life knowing that Jesus rescued you and you say, "I'm not interested in that, man, it's about my life. I'm going to worship myself. I'm going to do what I want to do." And then you're before the Lord and He says, "You never wanted Me." *"Yeah, but I want You now!"* "No, no, no, you never wanted my sacrifice. Here's what it looks like." And then He turns His face from you and you experience the satisfaction of finally being in His presence and then Him turning for the rest of your life, for eternity, loneliness.



Here's what Hell is: Human depravity manifesting itself upon itself forever. A soul without Jesus. We all experience common grace, when we stop that common grace – Hell. And so, man, God sees the heart and He's patient but, man, His desire is that no one goes to Hell. That's why He gives you the gift of the Gospel. This is the answer that Jesus gives for suffering.

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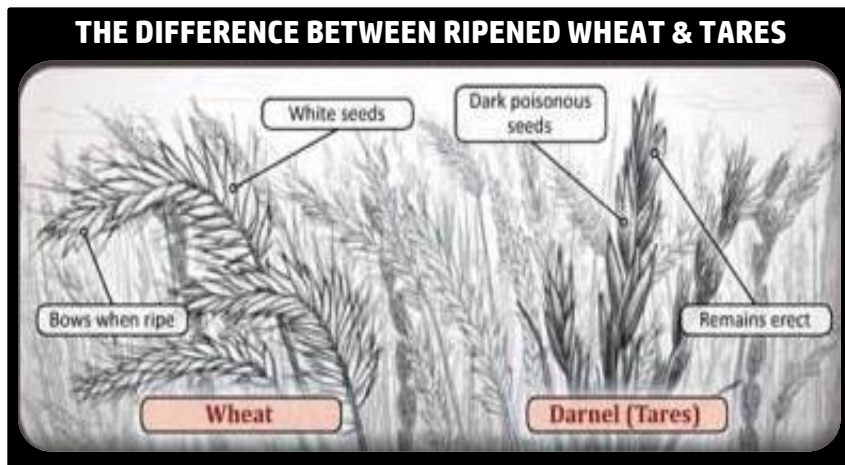
ANSWER #2

Here's another one, this is going to blow you away: What's the difference between wheat and weeds? Look at verse 26: **"When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared."** Okay. So this is actually what's – not weeds the way we think of it in a garden bed, it's called tares. Okay? Look at this picture behind me, this is gonna blow you away. So this is bearded darnel, this is what it's called, this is "tares." Okay? This is wheat. And so in the passage here's what we miss is that before it blossoms they look exactly the same, tares and wheat look exactly the same. Okay, get ready. When tares grow up they have nothing in them but black, poisonous seeds, so they don't bow like wheat bows. Listen, when wheat forms it's so heavy with wheat it bows. Come on, church, are you kidding me? So heavy with wheat it starts to do this [BOWS]; but tares stand freely like this [ERECT] and they're light, but when you break them open black, poisonous seeds are in them.



Bearded Darnel

Wheat



Jesus, come on. Seriously? I was, like, You... of course! Of course it's like another layer of awesome example. And I asked myself this question: Okay, here's what's terrifying, this is what I think got to the disciples, if that's true, if they look exactly the same but then when they noticed that when it actually started to bloom, one was bowing one, was standing strong, and they're like, "This isn't wheat." Here's the question – is which one are you?

Because there's passages in Scripture that says you look like a Christian because you were raised in the church, your parents were Christian, you know how to speak Christianese, but then you do not have any posture of humility because you're not dependent on the Lord. It's what you produce, it's just self-worship, just death because you stir up treasures but it's not eternal. And here's what's terrifying is you think you're wheat and then you're going to go before the Lord and He's going to say, "I never knew you, because you never let Me in."¹

You want to know if somebody's a believer? Look at the fruits of their lives. Here's the good news though, we know that we all are weeds but when we trust in Jesus we become wheat. Right? But, man, this is why you see in the church – listen, I'm just gonna answer this question: Why do you see hypocrisy in the church? Because there are people that are weeds that look like wheat and they forget. Why is it there are pastors and leaders that fall away and we're so shocked, but when you dig deep there's black, poisonous seeds. That's why your kids are not interested in the Gospel because they see the fruit of your life. So though you take them to church you scream at them on the way home, you're watching pornography when they're not looking, you're slandering them, demeaning them, you're

¹ JOHN 7:21-23 (NIV): **"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"**

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chasing after the world and stuff, so they're seeing the black, poisonous seeds—they're seeing no fruit in your life.

You know the greatest testimony—we're talking about why teenagers desperately need this, church—do you know what the greatest picture of Jesus is? Being on your knees in your living room saying, "God, I can't lead my family without You." "Jesus, I need You to help me love my wife." "I need You to help me know that..." For your children to see you weeping on the floor bowing, posturing before the Lord saying, "I need You" – I can't tell You how much that's going to draw them towards Jesus. But the hypocrisy of looking like a Christian but bearing no fruit in your life is going to say I don't want to produce this, I want any part of this. And here's the danger is they're going to think they're the same thing. So they're going to say I'm going to run from the field, in general, because there's nothing there. Come on, church. Seriously.

And so I think about this idea of humility and I'm like, "Okay, what is... what does that look like in my life?" I told the youth this on a retreat, this is just my story, so there's a man named Jim Cox. I grew up in a church of like 50 people, very small, there was some theological issues that divided the church. And so when I was in high school it was me and the pastor's son named Chris. That was it. And there was this sweet, old man named Jim Cox and he went to Bible school, godly man, kind of dry, right? Kind of, like, you know, Bueller, Bueller, like, that guy, like, dry, but he loved the Lord. And I remember on Sunday mornings we would have Sunday school with Jim Cox, me and Chris, and we would have a couch and it was to me to the front row [MOTIONS DISTANCE FROM HIMSELF STANDING ON STAGE TO FRONT ROW OF THE AUDIENCE], this was the distance of the couch, and it was just us.

Now Chris would bail quick, he would fall asleep. And so – God bless his heart, he'd teach Revelation, so he would be teaching Revelation and Chris would be falling asleep, and I was like having to represent, it's like, *I can't fall asleep from this guy*. But did you ever fall asleep and not remember you fell asleep, and so then you wake up and you try to like pretend you're in that moment and you kind of shake your head. You have no idea. Okay. That was just how it happened. And so the reality was here's this man teaching the Bible looking across—I mean, picture this, with me as a grown man I just think this is horrible—looking across and seeing two teenage boys just dead asleep and you're just teaching, you're just teaching the Word, and you look up [MIMICS BOYS ASLEEP, SNORING], just sleeping, and he just keeps teaching and he never stopped, never stopped teaching, he's just teaching the Word.

And I think to myself the humility that that must have required, not to just take like a bucket of water and just be like [GESTURES THROWING THE BUCKET OF WATER ON THE SLEEPING BOYS] or just be like, "Forget you!" and storm out. Like this is what my flesh would do, like, "You ungrateful!" Right? But no, he just taught. And every time I opened my eyes he would keep teaching and I'd go [AWAKENS MOMENTARILY] and I'd just fall asleep again. This is what happened and I think to this day, I think, man, what an actual picture of Christ. Like, what an amazing thing. This man is humble enough to see this, but yet know, yet know that these young boys need to be planted truth in their lives. He was willing to not be seen as worthy so that so that he can plant seeds.

Little does he know I'm trying to find him today. To be, like, "Jim," like, "thank you for teaching a punk kid like me and planting seeds." And I want to have a theological discussion about the end times with Him and be like, "Can you just tell me what you told me then because I was sleeping, but I really want to know what you had to say." Because I'm so grateful that he was humble enough to say, "It's not about me, it's about the Lord," and he humbled himself in front of these students to model Jesus. And he understood that even if they weren't hungry for it yet, this is the answer, this is the hope that we needed. This is the truth regardless if we don't want it now, this is still the truth. And I'm going to still continue

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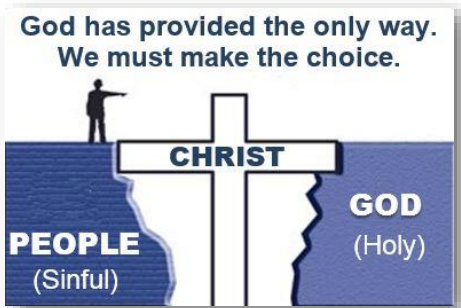
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to say it. And I'm so grateful for those servants that exist in the church, that aren't glorified by people, that aren't on stage, but have the posture of humility in their walk. Those are the people that bear the greatest fruit in my opinion. So I'm so grateful for him because he modeled the idea of being a wheat—being humble, being postured before the Lord, not thinking they know everything but quickly going to the Lord for the ability to do the things that He's calling them to do.

ANSWER #3

Here's the last question: What does it teach us about the Kingdom of God? Look at verse 40, it says that He will pull the weeds and burn them in fire. It says as the Son of Man will send out His angels and weed out the Kingdom everything that causes sin and suffering, and then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. What does it say about the end? We just went from a series, if you guys are new with us, talking about the end times. Here's what we know: That God will weed out the Kingdom of all evil and sin. So evil and sin has a destiny and it's destruction. It will no longer exist. When the consummated Kingdom happens, when eternal Kingdom happens, evil and Satan is destroyed. So here's the lie that the world says that even if you believe in Heaven and Hell, Satan owns Hell. He doesn't own Hell. He doesn't own Hell.² In the end evil is destroyed. So the idea is God sees the suffering but we know – right? – the Kingdom knows that there's good news, that in the end God is victorious. He wins. Jesus wins.

Here's another thing we see that unbelievers will be punished for their sins. Listen, I know that churches try to water down Hell, **but it's very important to understand that if you do not call Jesus your Lord**



and Savior you are going to have to atone for your sins. This is the Gospel. So the Gospel is Good News for those who receive it. It's terrifying news for those who don't because here's what the Gospel says – you make a horrible God and one day you're going to realize it, and it's going to be too late. And if you right now think that your resume for Heaven is good enough, there's no resumes in Heaven. There's no, *Look at my life, I have 60% good, but yes, I rebelled against You in all these things.* That's not how it works. Heaven is who do you say Jesus is?

Does the blood of Jesus cover your sins OR do you have to atone for them? This is what we know is going to happen. This is what we know is going to happen.

So it doesn't matter. Yes, ["WORLDLY VOICE"] "There's many religions." Okay, that's fine. ["WORLDLY VOICE"], "Yeah, but we can't offend many religions." Okay, that's fine. But there's one Jesus, there's one Gospel, there's one hope, there's one truth, there's one life. And so yes, there's many religions, but there's one truth, there's one hope, and it's not even in religion. Religion's just a response to that; it's man-made, it's corrupt, it's hypocrisy. Sure, you're gonna see hypocrisy in the church because it's sinful people in the church, but that takes nothing away from the Gospel. The Gospel is the hope of man. Men aren't the hope of man. We know this because in the end God's the judge, you're not, and He tells you what He's going to judge and how He's going to judge.

**TRUE CHRISTIANITY
is not a religion.**

**Religion is HUMANS trying
to work their way to God.**

**True Christianity is GOD
coming to us through a
relationship with Jesus Christ.**

² See Matthew 25:40-42 – Satan doesn't own Hell, it was prepared *for him* and his angels. And Revelation 20:10 (NIV), the final judgment of Satan: **And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.**

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And so the righteous—this is the good news for those who put their faith and trust in Jesus—your destiny is that you will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of God. That even in the midst of your pain and suffering right now, where you are in life, there is an end to this world and there's a beginning of the next. And in that world there's no pain or suffering and you will be with the presence of the Lord, you will be satisfied in that relationship so much so that you don't even need marriage. How does that blow your mind? That you'd be so in love with the Lord and so satisfied in Him that there will be nothing that you'll need, you'll just love people, which is how we're called to do right now, that's how we're called to live our lives. Be completely satisfied in the Lord so we're just overflowing in our love. We've died to self, God has satisfied us, this is what we're called to do. But this is our destiny for believers.

But I'm gonna get real. Okay? I'm gonna challenge the church, we need to – this is the right, I was telling the pastors, this is the right time to have this conversation. Listen, the Good News is the Gospel of Jesus, that's the Good News. This is what we offer, nothing else, this is the offering when you come here. This is what we offer – Jesus. We offer Jesus. And what you'll see are people who are either trusting in that or about to trust in that or are pretending they're trusting in that. This is what you're seeing in this place when you meet these people, but this is what we offer is Jesus.

And here's why this matters, church, and I'm gonna preface this by saying this, I have spent a decade of my life before I went into a different part of this church as an executive pastor, I spent a decade of my life discipling young people in Chester County. It's what I spent all my time doing. I have discipled thousands of young people in Chester County, thousands, and I want to say this before I get into calling the church to act. I know right now that there are a lot of young people in our community that are taking their lives and we need to care about that.

And I want to say something, too, to the principals and the administrators and the teachers that are there every day with their kids, it's not a slight on you, it's a hard job and you're in a tough situation, and all I have to say to you is as a church we are praying for you, praying for the right words. I know you're surrounded by people that don't believe in Jesus, and so if you're a believer that's a minefield to walk through and I get it and I love you, but as a church here's what you need to hear: It does not matter if they get good grades, it does not matter if they are good at sports, if they're popular, it doesn't matter if they don't get into that college you want them to go into, it doesn't matter if they're not an engineer—if they do not know Jesus you are distracting them, it's a distraction. Listen [APPLAUSE], I want you to hear this, the people that know about Jesus know the answer to the question that the world is asking.

Again, thousands of students, we are teaching our children you are random, you are ultimately random, you ultimately don't matter as much as that tree. If anything, you matter just as much as that tree. You're random, you were evolved, you're not really special, you're just kind of in this world to kind of help this world survive. But you matter. Hey, yeah, I know you're struggling so be the best you, solve all your problems by just believing in yourself even though it was self that caused you to have all that anxiety because you're worshipping yourself. But no, no, believe in yourself. This is the message we're saying but here's the thing, the truth is this and this is what the church needs to speak because we know the truth: You are not random. You're not. You actually were formed by God.³ You're an image bearer of God, you are an eternal being.⁴ He knows every hair on your head.⁵

³ Formed – see Psalm 139:13-18 in END NOTES.

⁴ Image bearer – see Genesis 1:27 in END NOTES.

⁵ Hairs – see Matthew 10:30 in END NOTES.

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In fact, you have a spiritual gift that only you have, that no one in this world who has ever existed has, and it is for the Kingdom of God.⁶ God's seen you valuable enough to put you in this world for something eternal. So you don't even have to fit into this world, you are uniquely made in this world. And in fact, you are an image bearer, that's why you can create. That's why you can self-reflect. That's why you can think the way that animals can't think. You can do things the animals can't do because you are loved fiercely by God. And not only that, but He rescued you.⁷ So that feeling that you're never enough, that feeling that, *Oh, I can't do these things, and if I get this thing, if I become the class president, or if I get into this job – then I'll have a satisfied soul.* You know why you don't have a satisfied soul? Because those things are never meant to be worshipped. The only way you find a satisfied soul is in Jesus, it's not in those things.¹

Listen, that's why you are feeling anxious even though you have stuff, even though you have a BMW, even though your parents are wealthy. The reason you're feeling that's not enough is because it isn't because nothing in those things are going to satisfy your soul. That's why you're chasing. You know what the answer is? It's in Jesus, it's in a relationship with Him. When you are found by Him then all of those things become tools, not to worship but to use because you found your answer.

That's what they need to hear, church. They need to hear they're loved, redeemed, set apart, chosen. And that these battles they're facing – there's victory in Jesus. And here's the conviction, the community desperately needs to hear this message—the people who know about that hope are in this room. I want you to feel that the way I felt it. The people that know the hope are sitting in this room so here is what I need to say: If you're too busy – stop. If you're too busy, you don't have time – make time. If you're too scared – be bold. If you don't have enough knowledge – learn.

Because here's what we should do as a church, we know the answer is in Christ Jesus. We know that the world is going to produce all these answers that are going to be a self-worship solution that's not going to work. And so in our lives, this is what we should do as a church. An assistant coach opening happens – we're there. The lunch is in desperate need of just some sweet, godly people, maybe retirees, that can just watch the kids because the teachers need a break – we're there. Man, the school just needs resources, they need help, they need counselors that love – we're there. Because when they're suffering and they look around they say we don't know how to fix this, we say, "We know who can. We can't, but we can point you to who can and we can show you in our lives how He was the answer.

**Jesus answered,
"I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father
except through me."
– JOHN 14:6 (NIV)**

Yeah, but every way, we just need to make sure that every way is included. No-no-no-no. God, Jesus is **THE WAY**, we either believe that or we don't. He is the truth. He is the life. If that's true, we hate them if we don't say that. So we have to posture ourselves to say, "This is the answer." If you have questions, if you're in a battle, we're here and we're going to be knowledgeable, we're going to be equipped to speak

truth in love and represent our God well. This is what we need to do.

⁶ Spiritual Gift – 1 Peter 4:10 (AMP): **Just as each one of you has received a special gift [a spiritual talent, an ability graciously given by God], employ it in serving one another employ it in serving one another as [is appropriate for] good stewards of God's multi-faceted grace [faithfully using the diverse, varied gifts and abilities granted to Christians by God's unmerited favor].**

⁷ Rescued – Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV): **For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

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So church – move. We have to move. We have to move. We just spent our last year where we had a world around us that were afraid to die and because they were afraid to die they froze. And church, we froze with them, let's be honest. But in that freezing the enemy was not stopping, was he? Not stopping. And so in that freezing there were family relationship tensions and marriage tensions and children struggling because they didn't have peer relationships and they had abuse. There's all the enemy working and the church is good to be quiet? What's gonna happen?

And so I looked at my wife and I'm like, listen, I'm not the youth pastor anymore but I have to pursue this community with truth. I have to be in the lives of these kids. And not because I have anything to offer but Jesus, but Jesus is worth me being there. Because in the midst of everyone saying something that is the enemy, guys, any answer outside of Jesus is the enemy's lies. Any answer outside of Jesus is the... if it's Jesus plus – lies. If it's not Jesus – lies. So we need to be in those conversations. We need to be in those rooms. And we need to say, "Listen, I don't care if the consequences is that I'm laughed at, I love you too much not to scream Jesus, and to show you the answer to these questions." Right? This is the conversation that we need to have because when Jesus is talking about this He makes it very clear that He is the hope of the world. He is the hope of the world.

And so here's what I want to just respond to in conclusion. One is this—why does God allow evil and suffering in the world? He doesn't, He's suspending His wrath because He loves you, because He wants to give you the way and that way is through Jesus. Who do you say Jesus is? Is He your Lord and Savior? Is He some spiritual teacher? Is your faith just a family definition? *Oh, I'm a Christian because my parents are Christian.* Come on, you may be a weed. Here's another one—if you really think about it in Scripture, it makes it very clear that the difference between a weed and a wheat—remember?—is the fruit. So I'm going to ask you as parents, listen, they don't, again, thousands of kids I've talked to they don't care if you have a promotion, they don't care. They don't care if they drive a Honda or a Mercedes, they don't care, maybe for the first week but after that it's just a car. What they care about is you being in their lives.

Listen, right now—this is the truth—there are children that are being led by the enemy to think they're not worth it in our homes, you're a neighbor of one of those kids, you're a grandparent of one of those kids, and you're spending 5½ hours looking at social media stuff a day and you're like, "I don't have time." And the enemy's like [APPLAUDS] keep being distracted. And we can't. I'm tired of it. I'm tired of it because everyone in this room has something to offer this community that they desperately need which is Jesus and how He's transformed your life. So we gotta move.

So this is the lesson that God convicted me on this week is we've got to ask ourselves a question: Are we a church that's responding to those things? Are we a church that's loud in the time of suffering? We need to be. Or do we not believe it? Are we just a bunch of weeds sitting here pretending to be wheat? I hope not because I don't want to go before the Lord and say I knew that You were the hope but I just stayed quiet about it. Because there is a judgment day coming. Right?

So let me pray and I want us to rejoice because right now there's two truths. One, there's many of us in this room can rejoice because we are found. We know our Savior. And two, we can rejoice because God's gonna give us everything we need to do this, what we're called to do, He's gonna give us everything. Here's the only thing I'm gonna ask you to do this week is be intentional and watch what God does. Be intentional. If you're retired, pursue the schools with your heart willing to serve. If you have skills, pursue people, your neighbors, with an intentionality; love them and point them to Jesus. Be intentional and God will use the church. He will. Let me pray.

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Father,

We love You and we ask you right now to humble us. Let us be wheat before You, Lord. And Father, we know that any impact is going to be through your Spirit out of this place. So Lord, let the Gospel be loud, give us boldness, give us time, let us restructure our priorities to make things matter with our family. Some of us, we need to lead our families in godliness. Father, help us to bring about a repented heart, maybe even during this time of worship, we need to bring our repentance before You, Lord, confess that we have been distracted. Lord, help us to be renewed in our minds in our love for You. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

WATCH OR LISTEN



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END NOTES

¹ Formed – Psalm 139:13-18 (NIV): **For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.**

Image bearer – Genesis 1:27 (NIV): **So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.**

Hairs – Matthew 10:30 (NIV): [Jesus speaking] **And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.**