

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book):
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary):

Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Year A - Proper 11, Text: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
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Verse 13:24: Jesus tells His hearers another parable that makes reference to sower, seed, and soil. This second parable addresses issues raised by the first in Chapter 13 (vv. 1–9). How can it be that any seed fails to yield? Is not the Son of Man the sower, and is not His work invincible? After all, both sower and seed are good.

Verses 13:25–26: However, an enemy is also at work. That enemy comes in the darkness and stillness of the night and sows weed seeds (possibly *darnel*, a noxious weed) among the wheat seeds. When the first blades of wheat pierce the soil, the weeds raise their ugly heads at the same time.

Verse 13:27: When this happens, the man’s servants (standing for Jesus’ disciples; see 10:24–25) reveal a loss of confidence in the owner by questioning the quality of the seed that he used.

In Matthew’s world, as in today’s world, it takes little talent to point a finger at members of the community who look like bad seeds. Where do they come from? What made it possible for them to appear on the scene? How are we to get rid of them?

Verse 13:28: The owner restrains his servants and places the blame on an enemy (see v. 39). The servants respond by suggesting that they rush out into the field and pull out every weed.

Verses 13:29–30: The refusal by the owner of the field to allow his servants to separate the wheat from the weeds while both are still growing is a warning to the disciples not to exclude sinners from God’s kingdom prior to the Final Judgment.

The *harvest* and *harvest time* referred to in verse 30 are terms used in Scripture to denote God’s final judgment (see Jeremiah 51:33; Joel 4:13; Hosea 6:11). In its present stage, the outward kingdom (the visible church) contains both good and bad. The judgment of God alone will finally eliminate the sinful. Until that Final Day comes, God’s messengers are to demon-

strate patience and to call their hearers to repentance.

Verse 13:36: Jesus leaves the crowds and returns to the house in which He is staying. The return of Jesus to the house and the dismissing of the crowds point to a break with the latter — who represent unbelieving Israel. Jesus now directs His attention to instructing the disciples. The rest of the discourse is addressed to them alone. In these verses, Jesus focuses on the fearful end of the wicked. In the parable itself (verses 24–30), He focuses on patience with them until the day of Final Judgment.

Verses 13:37–39: Jesus points out to His disciples that He, the Son of Man, is the Sower (the “Son of Man” is Jesus way of referring to Himself). The field is the world. The good seed are the children of God’s Kingdom. The bad seed are the children of the Evil One; the enemy who sowed them is Satan. The harvest is the end of the age. (The term “the end of the age” is found only in Matthew; see 13:40, 49; 24:3; 28:20.) Those who gather in the final harvest and deal with evildoers and all causes of sin are the angels of the Son of Man.

What happens in the history of the world and in every historical community (including the Church) all the way up to the end of the age is presented as the result of the working of both the Son of Man and the devil. Good and evil struggle to gain control over people and communities. Good and evil people live side by side in human communities. In Jesus’ parable, the good seed is not sown after the bad seed has been harvested; both grow together. The New Age has dawned, but the old age continues for a time.

Verses 13:40–43: A terrible fate is in store for all causes of sin — for all who cause others to stumble and fall away from God (Matt. 5:19; 16:23; 18:6–7). Throughout Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus warns of the “fiery furnace” (Daniel 3) or the outermost darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (see verses 8:12; 22:3; 24:51; 25:30).

On the other hand, the final state of the righteous will be glorious, and the final state of the evil will be dismal. “The righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father” (see Daniel 12:3; Judges 5:31; Sirach 50:7; Matthew 17:2). Although the present Kingdom of the Son of Man includes both good and evil, at the end of time the Kingdom of the Father (v. 43) will dawn. That end time will take place after the Son of Man has acted as Lord of the harvest to exclude all doers of lawlessness.

The many judgment scenes in Matthew reveal God’s hunger and thirst for human deeds of righteousness, mercy, and love — and God’s sharp criticism of lawlessness or indifference to the needs of one’s neighbor (4:10; 7:23, 24-27; 13:47-50; 21:28-32; 22:11-14; 25:31-46).

What finally is the secret of Jesus’ private teaching of the disciples in the house? It is a warning to the insider about the arrogance of focusing on judging outsiders and an encouragement to make good use of the privilege of being an insider.