



The King's Ransom

Matthew 20:28

Text

Matthew 13:24-58

Topic

Jesus informs us that as we are sowing the good seed of the Word of God, our enemy will be at work sowing weeds

Title

"Thistle While You Work"

Introduction

Top employers are known for providing an outstanding workplace environment for their workers.

If you work for Google there are on-site doctors and medical services to keep employees healthy. You're served free lunch and dinner. Massages, yoga, and car washes are also part of the package. Oh, and there's a bowling alley on-site.

Facebook employees get free transportation, dry cleaning, a company gym, and meals. In addition, there's a candy shop on-site, a vending machine filled with free computer accessories (in case you forget any at home), and free bike repair.

At SC Johnson & Son, the makers of such brands as Glade, Pledge, and Windex, there's an on-site employee concierge to handle all of life's chores. Concierges send packages and flowers, pick up groceries, shop around for the best deals on car insurance, take your car in for service including oil changes, and even stand in line for concert tickets.

Wherever **you** work to earn **your** daily living, all of us Christian are additionally tasked with what the New Testament calls "the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:12). We are equipped in the church to go out into the world to do the work of the ministry.

What kind of workplace environment is the world? While your particular conditions may vary, **overall you can expect an adverse workplace environment.**

I say that because of our text in chapter thirteen of Matthew. Jesus has just explained to His disciples that in-between His first and second comings, their work was to spread the Gospel. He expressed it as a parable, the Parable of the Sower, in which they were the sowers and the seed was the Word of God. He promised them incredible returns of thirty-fold, sixty-fold, and even one hundred-fold.

Their workplace environment, however, would be adverse. The devil was also going to be at work in the field, seeking to hinder the progress of the Gospel.

I'll organize my thoughts around two points: #1 The Kingdom Will Prevail Despite Your Adverse Work Environment, and #2 The King Prevailed Despite His Adverse Work Environment.

#1 The Kingdom Will Prevail Despite Your Adverse Work Environment

(v24-52)

Chapters twelve through fifteen of the Gospel of Matthew are a hinge upon which history turns. The nation of Israel rejected Jesus as their King and, with Him, they rejected the establishing of the kingdom on the earth. Jesus would return to Heaven to await His Second Coming when all Israel would be saved, receive Him as King, and enjoy the kingdom on the earth.

The question that naturally arises is, "What is going to happen in-between these two comings?" The answer is the mystery revealed through the seven parables of chapter thirteen. The Gospel will be seed spread by sowers into the soil of men's hearts until the final harvest at the Second Coming of Jesus.

But, as I already said, disciples are not the only sowers, and we should expect opposition and, therefore, adversity.

Mat 13:24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;

Mat 13:25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

Mat 13:26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

Mat 13:27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?'

Mat 13:28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?'

Mat 13:29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.'

Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." ' ' "

Rather than spend time commenting on the details of the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, let's get right to Jesus' commentary, beginning in verse thirty-six.

Mat 13:36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field."

Mat 13:37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.

Mat 13:38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.

Mat 13:39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.

Mat 13:40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

Mat 13:41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,

Mat 13:42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Mat 13:43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

We are not the only sowers at work. An enemy sows the seeds of weeds among the wheat. The enemy is Satan himself, who vigorously opposes the Word and the work of God. The weeds that Satan sows are called "the sons of the evil one."

Just as through the course of the age Christ will work through those who are "the sons of the kingdom," so Satan will work through those who belong to him and become his instruments to oppose the Word of God.

Earlier in Matthew's Gospel Jesus said He was able to "bind the strong man," referring to Satan. Had the Jews received their King and His kingdom, the devil would have been bound. In fact in the Book of the Revelation, one of the very first things Jesus does upon His Second Coming is have Satan bound with chains and thrown into the abyss for a thousand years.

In-between the two comings of Christ, Satan is unbound. He goes about the earth like a roaring lion, seeking to devour. He is a liar, a thief, and a murderer. And he's not alone. Fully one-third of the created angels followed him in his rebellion and are now organized like a military force to wreak havoc upon the earth.

A person doesn't have to be demon possessed to be a son of the evil one. In fact being possessed would make them easier to spot. The Bible says nonbelievers are taken captive by Satan to do his will. He is able to influence them to oppose what is good and godly and to thereby sow weeds.

I'd say having sons of the evil one, who we cannot always distinguish from believers, makes for an adverse workplace. At the very least we must be constantly on our guard, being led by the Holy Spirit, so as to not be deceived by those who may even profess to be Christians but remain dead in their sins and are tools of the enemy of the Gospel.

I should mention that the parable is *not* teaching that we should tolerate sin among the people of God. There are clear directives in the New Testament that tell us to pursue holiness; and when and how to discipline sinning believers.

OK, so this sowing mission is not going to be as easy as we might have been led to believe by the promise it would succeed. The other parables emphasize the same idea.

Mat 13:31 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field,

Mat 13:32 which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

You might hear criticism that the mustard seed isn't really "the least of all seeds." Well, it was the least of all the seeds farmers worked with in the first century in Israel. And, if that's not a satisfactory answer, I'm told the word for "least" doesn't have to mean "smallest" but can mean "smaller."

Jesus had just told the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares which put His disciples on notice they would face serious opposition. Nevertheless the kingdom of Heaven, which is the rule of God in men's hearts spread by the Gospel, will grow and cannot be stopped.

Like a mustard plant, it will grow from meager beginnings into something unexpectedly great.

We have the advantage of history and can see some of what Jesus meant:

- Eleven men met in the upper room with Christ on the eve of His crucifixion.
- One hundred and twenty gathered to pray between His ascension and the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost.
- In Acts 2 it increased to three thousand.
- In Acts 4:4 the number was about five thousand.
- At the close of the Book of Acts it could be recorded that the whole world had heard the Gospel.

With the incredible growth, however, comes opposition and adversity, represented by "the birds of the air" who come and "nest in its branches."

While it is possible to interpret the birds as something good, it seems unlikely that is what Jesus intended. I say that because, in the Parable of the Sower, birds were evil - the agents of Satan used to snatch away the Gospel. Thus it's unlikely they would be something good just a few verses later.

The seed's growth attracts the presence of evil - depicted as birds - to dilute the church while taking advantage of its benefits.

The work we have been given, the work of the ministry, will succeed; but our workplace will be infiltrated by evil.

Mat 13:33 Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

While it's possible to interpret the leaven as something good, it again seems unlikely that this was what Jesus intended. In other passages, Jesus Himself used leaven to represent the false teaching of the Pharisees, and the unbelief of the Sadducees.

The Parable of the Leaven, then, continues with the theme of these parables, namely that efforts will be made by our enemy to contaminate its growth and health from within.

You might summarize these last two parables by saying that the devil attends church. He gathers with us in order to divert our resources and to try to corrupt us from within.

Mat 13:34 All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, Mat 13:35 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES; I WILL UTTER THINGS KEPT SECRET FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."

The Scripture Jesus referred to was Psalm 78:2. We saw in our last study that parables were a kind of secret language meant to reveal truth to believers while concealing it from Jesus' enemies.

Jesus wasn't trying to keep anyone from getting saved. He was talking to the people who had heard His preaching and who had witnessed His miracles, signs, and wonders, but who hardened their hearts to reject Him. To them no further revelation would be given than what was already sufficient to have saved them.

Drop down to verse forty-four:

Mat 13:44 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

In the Old Testament, Israel is called God's treasure:

Psa 135:4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for His special **treasure**.

Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special **treasure** to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.

It's not hard to see Israel as God's hidden treasure in-between Christ's comings. Could it not be said that by scattering the Jews all over the world that God "hid" them for Himself? For many centuries it looked like Jews would be exterminated. Certainly very few people held out any hope they would be preserved and be a nation again in their ancient land.

But that is exactly what happened.

Mat 13:45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls,

Mat 13:46 who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

If the treasure is Israel, the pearl represents the church. Commentators point out that, just as a pearl is something beautiful formed from an irritation in the oyster's flesh, so the church is formed from the wounds in Jesus' flesh as He died on the Cross.

While building His church, composed of Gentiles and Jews, The Lord is also preserving Israel as His chosen nation and will return to fulfill all of a His promises to them.

The Parable of the Dragnet depicts His Second Coming in the light of the devil's activities to ruin things.

Mat 13:47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind,

Mat 13:48 which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.

Mat 13:49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just,

Mat 13:50 and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

We've already said that an angel binds Satan and casts him into the abyss. Now we see that angels will separate believers from nonbelievers.

Believers who are alive on the earth at the time of the Lord's return will enter into the thousand year kingdom as its citizens. No unsaved person will enter the Lord's millennial kingdom.

The destiny of the wicked ultimately will be “the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus meant the wicked would be cast into “the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14-15). The wicked, however, will not immediately be consigned to the lake of fire; initially they will go into Hades, evidently by experiencing physical death.

The wicked will be detained in Hades until they are resurrected for judgment before the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11–15), after which they will be consigned to the lake of fire for eternity.

Mat 13:51 Jesus said to them, "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."

I think it's cute that when asked if they understood, they said, "Yes." Even after Jesus rose from the dead, they were still unsure of these things - they were still asking The Lord if He was about to establish the kingdom even though He had been preparing them for its delay.

I'm not suggesting they were lying. They understood what The Lord was saying on some level. It would make greater and greater sense to them as time progressed; and especially as they were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

We are similar to the disciples in that we could say we understand all these things, while simultaneously we know that there are multitudes of things we have yet to discover about The Lord.

Mat 13:52 Then He said to them, "Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old."

Jesus considers His disciples to be trained "scribes." It means we are to be teachers and interpreters of the Gospel. We draw from what was old - the Jewish Scriptures we call the Old Testament - as well as the new revelations that accompanied the new age in between the two comings of Christ that we call the New Testament.

You don't have to be a scholar, or to have letters after your name that indicate further formal education. Teach what you know about Jesus and be growing in that knowledge.

The current form of the kingdom, while Jesus is in Heaven, will prevail. The Word that is sown will produce thirty-fold, sixty-fold, a hundred-fold. It will grow - it has grown - from a meager beginning to include people throughout history from every nation, tribe, people and tongue. When The Lord returns He *will* find faith on the earth and saints will be welcomed in to the kingdom on the earth.

Along the way we must expect the activity of Satan opposing us at every turn. Our work will succeed, but our workplace can be filled with adversity as our enemy sows alongside us, sits next to us, and seeks to undermine the work.

No one said it was going to be easy. It wasn't easy for Jesus, either.

#2 The King Prevailed Despite His Adverse Work Environment (v53-58)

The chapter ends sort of abruptly with the story of Jesus' last visit to His hometown of Nazareth. I see a little of what could be called *pathos* in it - meaning, it causes me to feel sympathy or sadness for The Lord.

Fully God, He was fully man, and His time in Nazareth was adverse to His work. Nevertheless He prevailed and completed His mission.

Mat 13:53 Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there.

Mat 13:54 When He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?"

Mat 13:55 Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?

Mat 13:56 And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?"

The Winter Olympics are happening. As always there are a lot of human interest stories as you get to know individual athletes.

Erin Hamlin took home the bronze for the United States in women's luge singles. She became the first American to medal in the luge as a single.

I was reading an article about her. It said,

It happens all the time to Ron and Eileen Hamlin. They go shopping someplace around their home, pull out a credit card and get asked the same question as soon as somebody sees their name.

"Do you know Erin Hamlin?"

Those questions won't go away anytime soon. Not now. Not after what the pride of Remsen - a little town with no stop lights and where everybody knows everybody else - did Tuesday night.

It's inspiring. Small town pride in one of their own excelling on a big world stage.

Why wasn't Jesus 'the pride of Nazareth?' His fellow citizens had watched Him grow-up and lead a perfect life. They knew firsthand His humility as they traded with Him in the carpenter shop.

After leaving Nazareth He had performed miracle after miracle, sign after sign. He defeated demons by the legion. He taught with authority as no one before Him ever had.

Upon His return you'd think there'd be a banner... A parade... The key to the city.

Mat 13:57 So they were **offended** at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house."

Mat 13:58 Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Maybe Jesus' thirty years of ordinary was too much for them to overcome.

I mean, if you're an olympic athlete, you've been training all your life. Your friends and neighbors recognize your talent and hope you can represent them in the Olympics or as a pro athlete in some league.

Jesus never did anything that indicated He was the Messiah. What He did was necessary - learning obedience, living a perfect, sinless, quiet life. But to suddenly burst on the scene as the Savior of the world. Well, it was too much for the people of Nazareth to digest.

Not forgetting for a moment that Jesus was fully God, as fully man, this was hard. I know guys in the ministry who have thrown in the towel for things way, way less than what Jesus endured at the hands of family and friends.

"Thank you, Lord, that you prevailed - that You went to the Cross, died for our sins, rose from the dead, ascended into Heaven, and are coming again."