

=THE PARABLES=

Lesson 7

The Tares

Objects to have:

An ordinary sheet of paper

A chalkboard or posterboard and chalk or marking pen

A globe or a world map; have taped to the map on the left side a sign reading DEVIL; on the right side a sign reading ANGELS; in the center a picture of many people

Covering the entire globe or world map: a picture of a field of wheat; in the center of that a picture of a farmer

A picture or a model of a house

Your Bible.

Introducing the lesson:

We remember that last Sunday we heard about two words that sound alike, are spelled differently, and mean different things. Remember that I was sewing with needle and thread. That's one word: sew. Then, Jesus the best Storyteller there is, told the story about the man who sowed seed in the ground. We know how to spell those words. So, there are the two words—sew and sow—that sound alike, are spelled differently, and mean different things.

Jesus told about the man who sowed the seed. The seed was the Gospel, God's Word. The Gospel lets us know how to go to Heaven when we die. It's very important that we know that, and Jesus told us that. Jesus told us something very sad, however; He told us that not everybody who hears the Gospel trusts Him as his or her Saviour. That's so sad! Some of the seed fell on stony ground. People act like they are getting saved, but they really are not. Some of the seed fell on ground where it was soon choked by thorns. Some people who truly trust Jesus as their Saviour won't live for Him. And then some of the seed fell on good ground; we remember. I hope that all of you are like good ground—that you have trusted Jesus as your Saviour and that you are living for Him.

Jesus told this story that I just talked about while He sat in a boat on the Sea of Galilee. Then His disciples came up close and asked Jesus for the meaning to this parable or this story that had meaning.

Then Jesus started to tell another story! How exciting! Everyone grew quiet and listened to Him.

(Pick up your sheet of paper and begin to tear it.) First, tell me what I am doing. Yes, I am tearing this piece of paper. I am going to tear it some more. (Print "tear" on the board.) There's that word—tear. There is another word that sounds just like it, is spelled differently, and means something different. That word is tare. (Print "tare" on the board.) Now, there's a word that sounds like t-e-a-r. It is a word that is spelled t-a-r-e. That tare does not mean to rip the paper. T-a-r-e is a thing, not what I am doing. T-a-r-e is a weed. It is a very deceitful weed, however. It looks like a good plant, but it is a weed. It could even be a harmful weed.

Telling the story:

The water was lapping gently against the boat. The boat was moving ever so slightly in the water. Jesus was sitting in the boat, facing a big crowd of people. The people were standing on the seashore by the Sea of Galilee. What a pretty day it was, and what a good time the people were having listening to Jesus as He talked!

(Hold up your prepared globe or world map.) Jesus told this story—called a parable.

A farmer had a big job to do. He had to work in his field. The field was a huge field. The ground was all soft and plowed up. The farmer had a big bag. In the big bag was some seed—lots of seed. It was a certain kind of seed—it was wheat seed.

The farmer went into his field. Starting at the edge of the field and in the corner of the field, he started to drop the seed. He knew exactly how much to drop at each spot in the field. He walked and dropped seed. He kept on walking and kept on dropping seed. He was dropping the seed in nice, straight rows. He was dropping the seed just far enough apart so that when the plants would grow, they would have room to get as big as they should. All day long he walked in the field and dropped the seed as he walked, up one row to the far corner, then turning and walking back down the next row to the end of that row and the edge of the field. Then he turned and went back up another row. As he walked, he always was careful to drop the seed exactly far enough apart and in nice, straight rows. It was a hard day's work. Night came when he could not work any longer; it was too dark to see where he was going and what he was doing. The next day he got up and did the same thing again—walking in straight rows over all the field. Perhaps it took more than two days to plant the entire field. All the seed was planted and the entire field had seed in it.

As days came and went, the farmer watched his field. He prayed for the right amount of sunshine and the right amount of rain. Soon the seeds had burst open, and they were growing roots. One day the farmer saw little plants growing in the field. In straight rows were the little green plants. Day after day they grew taller and taller. The farmer was so pleased with the crop of wheat that was growing in his field.

One morning some men who worked with him came running to him. They were running fast with worried looks on their faces. They said, "Sir, we have looked at your field of grain today, and we have discovered something terrible." As the farmer looked at these men, he wondered what terrible thing could have happened. Was the field full of locusts or grasshoppers that were eating his wheat? Had there not been enough rain and the field was all cracked and dried, and the plants were dying? What terrible thing could have happened? As the men were talking to the farmer, the farmer was pushing past them and running toward his field.

"Look, sir. In that field of wheat are some tares. Those weeds—those tares—were sowed there when none of us was looking."

As Jesus was telling this story, He said, "The enemy had come in the night and had sowed tares in the field." Oh, who could the enemy be? Who could hate the farmer so badly that he would come when no one was looking and in the dark of the night sow seeds of weeds?

"Sir," the farmer's helpers said, "may we please go into the field and start pulling up the tares?"

"Oh, no," said the farmer, "the tares look too much like the wheat. If you start pulling up the tares, you will doubtlessly pull up some of the wheat. We must not let that happen. When the wheat has grown as tall as it is going to get, and when the actual wheat has grown on the plants, then it will be time to pull up the tares. Let them grow together."

Many weeks went by. The wheat and the tares grew little cups on the stems. Out of the cups, growing straight up, were little heads of grain. By careful inspection one could then tell the difference between the tares and the wheat. The farmer said, "It is time now. It is time to pull up the tares and to destroy them."

The farmer and his helpers gladly went into the field and, working very carefully, pulled up the tares. As they pulled them up, they tied them into bundles and threw them on the ground beside the field. After the tares were all pulled from the field and piled high beside the field, then the farmer took a torch of fire and lit them. A giant fire burned, burning up the tares.

Then the farmer and his helpers went into the field again, and they got the good wheat from the good plants that were left. The good wheat then was pounded and made ready for people to use in making flour for bread and cookies and cakes and cereals and all kinds of good things to eat.

Jesus said that the kingdom of Heaven is like that farmer and like the good plants called wheat. Then Jesus told a couple more stories, saying that the kingdom of Heaven is like the stories that He was telling them.

After Jesus told these parables, He stood up in the boat, stepped out of it, and onto the shore. Some of the people had puzzled expressions on their faces; they wanted to hear the meaning of the stories that Jesus had told. Other

people did not care to know what the meaning of the stories was—they simply walked away and probably went back to their houses or their places of business.

The people who wanted to know the meaning of this story followed Jesus. He walked until He came to a house. He went into the house (pick up your picture or model of a house) and sat down. Then it was that the people who had followed Him—those who truly wanted to know the meaning of what Jesus was saying—asked Him, “Jesus, what does that parable of the tares mean?”

(Put down the house and pick up the map.) Jesus said, “The field is the world.” (Tear away your top picture, revealing the world, etc.) “The man who sowed the seed is the Son of man.” When Jesus said the Son of man, He was talking about Himself. “The Son of man sows the good seed which is the Gospel, but the enemy does not like it. The enemy is the devil.” (Point to that word on your picture.) “The devil does not want anybody to listen to the Gospel, and he does not want anybody to believe it. If they do believe it, the devil tries to choke it out. The devil loves to have some people pretend to be saved so that they can cause trouble. The devil is the enemy, and he sneaks around in darkness—not only in the darkness of the night, but in the darkness of evil thoughts—and has some people pretend to be saved. These pretenders cause trouble.

“Now,” said Jesus, “these pretenders look just like the saved people. They look just like Christians. Nobody can really tell the difference for sure. Only when the Son of man comes again”—meaning Jesus—“will anybody be able to tell for sure which are Christians and which are not.

“Then the Son of man will send His angels into the world. The angels will be able to tell the difference. They will grab those who have pretended to be Christians and are not and will throw them into the lake of fire, which is Hell. Those who are truly saved will live on with Jesus in His kingdom.”

That was a very serious parable, wasn't it? No one should pretend to be saved. Everybody should listen very carefully to the Gospel, admit he is a sinner, and ask Jesus to be his Saviour. In that moment, he can truly be saved. In that moment, he can be like the good plants—the wheat—and not like the tares—the weeds.

LEARN OUR BIBLE VERSE: Matthew 13:38, “The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.”