

Introductory

This reading is unique to Matthew. Mark 4: 26-29 is said to be parallel by my RSV Harper Study Bible, but it's not. There are similarities between the two texts, but the Mark text is different from the Matthew text and teaches a different truth; that we don't know – we still don't know – what makes seeds grow, and there are no weeds in Mark.

The first part of this reading, Matthew 13: 24-30, is the reading appointed for Epiphany 5 in the TLH one-year lectionary. In the LW three-year lectionary, this is the reading for Pentecost 9A, with the explanation (36-43) being (optional). In LSB, the similar reading from Mark (4: 26 – 34 is appointed to be read on Proper 6 in Series B.

Last week we looked at a parable that involved the same seed but falling on different ground. Following that parable, the disciples ask Him why He speaks in parables (10), but they do not ask Him what the parable means. Without their asking, Jesus explains to them the parable of the Sower and the Seed (18 – 20). Now this week's parable.

It's a parable that involves different seed falling on the same ground. They hear this parable, then two more, then many more, and then He and disciples separate from the crowds, into a house, and they ask Him what it means, and Jesus explains the meaning of this parable to them. After that, He doesn't do that anymore, neither do they ask.

But they don't ask for the meaning of the mustard seed or the leaven, or any of the unnumbered other (34) parables He spoke at that time. We further note that, "he who has ears, let him hear" is not said of Mustard and Leaven, but it is said of both Sower and Wheat. It would be just swell if the Christian religion started small and got larger.

By explaining the first two parables, Jesus is using a basic and tried pedagogical method; show them how to understand a parable, when they ask for it show them again, and then they should be able to pick it up from there. In addition to that, the meaning of this particular parable seems to be particularly susceptible to misunderstanding.

We conclude that by observing that it is in fact widely misunderstood. The explanation that Jesus gives to it puts to rest any and all of those misunderstandings. As noted, Jesus ends His explanation with "he who has ears, let him hear," an indication that this is a hard saying, and yet He has just explained it in a way that is very understandable.

While this parable is not a cultural favorite of Americans in our time, it is relatively well-known. But since it is so often misunderstood, I would make sure to speak clearly and at some length about the basic meaning of the parable, as articulated by Jesus and the Lutheran Confessions, and also specifically explain what the parable does *not* mean.

The quote from the Confessions is short and clear, and I will work it in to the sermon any time I preach this text. We should probably be moving away from the use of the KJV word “tare” in this context. In any language, the meaning of words will invariably evolve over time, and sometimes the change is dramatic. Such is the case with “tares.”

While the 1828 Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as, “A weed that grows among corn,” the same meaning that it likely would have had in 1611, today a tare is identified as a species of ryegrass, which a lot of people plant in their front yards because they *want* it to grow. For me the word “tare” is associated with weighing stuff, like trucks.

I must admit that even I therefore did not know the current meaning of “tares” as ryegrass until I looked up “tares.” We should use words that make what we are saying more, not less, understandable. Many translations are, in fact, leaving “tares” behind. Some even use the word “darnel,” but some name other types of weeds that are not the correct ones.

The point of comparison is the different kinds of seed sown in the same field. When I leave home and head for town, I drive past ten miles of cornfield, with the occasional soybean field thrown into the mix by a farmer for reasons known only to him. In either field, the appearance of a weed is a bad thing, sucking precious life from the good plant.

In preaching this text, use the scenery given by Jesus, but maybe modernize it to make it more understandable and to maybe even create some pathos in the hearer. Even more familiar to Americans than farming, which is observed by many but done by few, are things that they may actually do, like yards and gardens. Most people know about weeds.

It would be like if an enemy came by night and over seeded your Kentucky Blue Grass yard with Tall Fescue, or planted chick weed or thistles among your onions and beets. If last week you didn’t get around talking about the parables in general, then it’s still not too late. If did get around to it last week, then perhaps a brief review would be in order.

Textual Notes

24. The alliteration in the Greek is lost in the translation, “Ἀλλὴν παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς – He set before them another parable.” The word that repeats is the prefix “παρα – para,” and it means “to cast down close.” If a parable is to throw a story down next to a theological truth, then we see Him here “throwing down” the story in front of them.

The verb is used here, and it is used later in this chapter (24) to refer to the next parable, and in Acts (16:34) to refer to the setting of a meal before people. Looking at the total of nineteen occurrences in the NT, the word is used to refer to a good or positive thing (Christians, evidence, et al) being given by one person, set in front often to another.

Using words, “λέγων Ὁμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ σπείραντι καλὸν σπέρμα ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ - saying, ‘the Kingdom of Heaven has become like a man sowing good seed in his field.’” The word “ὁμοιόω – is like or compared to” is in the aorist tense, meaning something that has happened in past. Is He talking about Israel?

The word only occurs fifteen times in the NT, firstly earlier in Matthew (7) when Jesus uses two short similes to talk about those who hear but who don’t follow His Word, saying that those who don’t follow the Word are “like” the man who builds on sand, and those who do hear and follow His Word are “like” the man who builds on stone.

Though He doesn’t *always* introduce parables with “the Kingdom...is like,” when we hear those words, we can expect to hear a parable. He is alerting them that He is about to tell a story, sort of like “I’m going to tell you a story” or even better “once upon a time.” When He said those words no doubt ears perked up, because we all like to hear a story.

There has been a lot written about the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God and their distinctions. Mark and Luke use the word “God,” and Matthew substitutes “Heaven” out of regard for Jewish sensitivities to the throwing around of the word “God.” For further study on that topic, read some of that which has been written by others.

The man, who is identified later (37ff.) on as “The Son of Man,” sows “good” seed, not bad seed, in his field. The good seed is later identified as the “Sons of the Kingdom” and the field as “the world.” Given that Jesus explains these things, it is incredible to me how often this parable is misunderstood and misapplied, so make sure to explain emphatically.

25. But “ἐν δὲ τῷ καθεύδειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους – in the time when men are sleeping,” from sundown to sun up, when it’s dark outside, “ἦλθεν αὐτοῦ ὁ ἐχθρὸς καὶ ἐπέσπειρεν ζιζάνια ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σίτου καὶ ἀπῆλθεν – his enemy came and sowed weeds in the middle of the grain and went away.” We are not told why the man is an enemy, but clearly, he is.

The sentence indicates that the good had already begun to grow when the weeds were sown. The KJV and about half of English translations call it “tares,” and the rest use the more familiar “weeds.” A “tare” would have been understood by a seventeenth century English farmer as a bad type of ryegrass that inhibits the growth of the good grass.

When I talk about “good grass,” I’m talking here specifically about wheat. Other grasses include corn and rice. The 1828 Merriam-Webster Dictionary entry has “a weed that grows among corn.” The word “corn” at that time meant any kind of grass. These days, the word “tare” means nothing to our people, who only hear it every three years here.

What the enemy sowed is called “ζιζάνια,” a word that appears eight times in the NT, all of the occurrences coming in this parable, identified as the seed of the darnel. Neither Anglican clergyman William Barclay nor Kansas part-time farmer Norman Grotheer are no longer with us, but before they left each of them taught me about the darnel.

Barclay did it in writing, Grotheer in person, with follow-up questions allowed. Lacking those two resources, or resources like them, WIK has an extremely informative article, complete with pictures. Barclay says,

The picture of a man deliberately sowing darnel in someone else’s field is by no means only imagination. That was actually sometimes done. To this day in India one of the direst threats which a man can make to his enemy is ‘I will sow bad seed in your field.’ And in codified Roman law this crime is forbidden and its punishment laid down.” (BCLY, 74)

Now if the enemies had planted dandelions, or daisies, or soybeans, you would have been able to see early on that there are intruders in the wheat field and maybe be able to do something about it. Not so the darnel, which looks exactly like wheat until one or the other, in this case the wheat, heads out and the plant produces a head, a cluster of grain.

At that point the difference between the one and the other becomes quite obvious. “The similarity between these two plants is so extensive that in some regions cockle (darnel) is referred to as *false wheat*. It bears a close resemblance to wheat until the ear appears.” (WIK). The “ear” on corn is essentially the same as the “head” on wheat or barley, et al.

When he had, under the cover of darkness, done his dirty deed, the enemy slinked off and crawled back into whatever hole he had come out of. The man is later identified as “the devil” (39), and the seeds are “sons of the kingdom” (38). As you preach and teach, there are a lot of things you can teach about things like Satan and how he works in the world.

26. Fast forward now to the time when “ὅτε δὲ ἐβλάστησεν ὁ χόρτος καὶ καρπὸν ἐποίησεν – when the seeds sprouted and produced fruit,” when the head or ear first appeared. The word “ἐβλάστησεν – sprouted” is an aorist active indicative, a word that occurs four times in the NT, three times in reference to things coming out of the ground.

Once (Heb 9:4) it refers to Aaron’s rod. We are told further that the wheat bore “kernels,” indicated by the generic Greek term for various grains, and that *it is at that point* “τότε ἐφάνη καὶ τὰ ζιζάνια – then the weeds also are revealed.” The weeds have been there all the time, but because of their appearance, you didn’t know it.

Even though almost every translation translates the verb ἐφάνη as “appeared,” the word “appear” does not capture the stunning and unexpected connotations carried by the word, connotations that can be seen by looking at the other four occurrences of that verb in that form, all of which contain some form of surprise or shock at what just happened.

The man had no idea that his enemy had done what he had done until the wheat headed out with wheat, while the darnel headed out with something else. Did the sower even know that the other sower was an enemy? One of the most exciting of all times, the bearing of the fruit of his labor, had for the farmer become a time of catastrophic disaster.

27. The servants are the ones who were in the fields, the first ones to actually see and note the problem, saying “Κύριε, οὐχὶ καλὸν σπέρμα ἔσπειρας ἐν τῷ σῷ ἀγρῷ; πόθεν οὖν ἔχει ζιζάνια – Lord, did you not sow good seed in this your field? How. Then has it weeds?” The rhetorical question expects an affirmative answer; yes, I sowed good seed.

Their surprise registers in their questioning. Having been the ones who would have planted, and knowing that they had planted good seed, they want to know what happened. Did the darnel seed get mixed in with the wheat? How would that have happened? Would it have been done in the barn, by accident? But who keeps darnel seed around?

28. The master answers, “Ἐχθρὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῦτο ἐποίησεν – an enemy man did this.” The answer says that no, it wasn’t an accident, and the man does not appear to know who the enemy is, but whoever did this is by definition an enemy, something that the servants could have figured out for themselves, so the master really adds no new information.

Do you know who your enemies are? All of them? Likely you have enemies you don’t even know about, and maybe never will know about, and you will be unaware right up to the point when he pulls a stunt like this. The servants, responding to this crisis like a servant would, suggest that they deal with the problem by ripping out the weeds.

They actually put it into the form of a question, because it’s not the place of the servant to tell the master how to go about his business, “Θέλεις οὖν ἀπελθόντες συλλέξωμεν αὐτά – do you want us therefore to go out and gather them?” Such a task would have been doable, in theory, but painstaking. Have you ever dug up a spade full of your yard?

Have you ever dug up a spade full of yard? Do you see the roots from the grass? Do you see how those roots are intertwined together? Now select one blade of grass from that spade full and trace its roots – not just one root – to the end. Now select another blade of grass and trace its roots to the end. How long would it take you to do that? A field?

29. The master, responding to this crisis in the way that a master would, takes charge and tells them not to do that, “Οὐ, μὴ ποτε συλλέγοντες τὰ ζιζάνια ἐκριζώσητε ἅμα αὐτοῖς τὸν σῖτον· – no, don’t ever do that, gathering the weeds uprooting with them the wheat,” a very simple rationale, and that’s why he’s the boss and you are not.

To be sure; the easiest and quickest way to get rid of the weeds is to pull them out by the root and throw them away. But if you do that, then you will also uproot the wheat, the roots of which would have been quite interwoven with those of the weeds. That would be very difficult, well-nigh impossible, and besides that, there’s a better way to do it. .

If you are in to object lessons, you could probably pull up a wheat plant or any other grass, including corn, this time of the year and note the very far-reaching root system common to grasses, and to a lot of plants. If you are not into object lessons, then just explain it and they'll get it. As for me, I won't be lugging any plants into the pulpit.

30. Master commands servants “ἄφετε συναυξάνεσθαι ἀμφοτέρω ἕως τοῦ θερισμοῦ – let them grow together until the harvest.” The first verb is the aorist imperative form of a word that is often translated “forgive” or “let go,” and it literally means “away from send.” We might say that the master told them to “let it go,” for now anyway.

The second verb is a compound of two words “with” and “grow” and the adjective “both” is syntactically and grammatically not necessary. It is meant to indicate how close and closely connected are wheat and weeds.. How closely is the Christian connected to the world in which he dwells? You can't swing a dead cat without hitting a weed.

But harvest will come, “καὶ ἐν καιρῷ τοῦ θερισμοῦ ἐρῶ τοῖς θερισταῖς Συλλέξατε πρῶτον τὰ ζιζάνια – and in the time of the harvest, I will say to the harvesters, ‘gather together the weeds.’” This gathering will be done by cutting off the plant above ground, using a scythe or other tool. There will be no intertwined roots involved, only individual plants.

Then the harvesters will “δήσατε αὐτὰ εἰς δέσμας πρὸς τὸ κατακαῦσαι αὐτά – bind them into bunches to burn them,” and that is never a good thing in the Bible, and it sounds a little bit hellish. As for the good seed, “τὸν δὲ σῖτον συναγάγετε εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην μου – gather together the wheat into my barn,” a place of shelter, safety, and security.

After telling two more parables specifically recorded for us by Matthew, he tells us that “all this Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, He said nothing to them without a parable (35).” Matthew further tells us that His speaking in parables is to be seen as the fulfillment of the OT, Psalm 78:2, “I will open my mouth in a parable” et al.

36. After that, “Τότε ἀφείλκε τοὺς ὄχλους ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν – then He released the crowds and came into the house.” The verb “aphiēmi – to let go” is the present active participle form of a verb we noted earlier (10). Perhaps He uses the word here as a double entendre to indicate that the “crowds” are the weeds, as distinct from “disciples.”

Compared to the crowds, the disciples were much more consistent in their interest in Jesus. They were on some level committed to the things that He was teaching, some more than others, sometimes more than others. We note that, while the crowd is sent away, the disciples now have access to the house where Jesus is, a quite intimate setting.

Inside the house, “προσῆλθον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες Διασάφησον ἡμῖν τὴν παραβολὴν τῶν ζιζανίων τοῦ ἀγροῦ – the disciples come to Him saying, ‘explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.’” The verb “λέγοντες,” is a present active participle, and it means that they “began to say” or “kept saying” making their request.

The verb translated “explain” is “διασάφῃσον,” the aorist active imperative of διασαφέω, a verb that occurs only twice in the NT, here and in Matthew 18:13. The word had been common, but was falling into disuse by the time of the NT (MM), but before that was used to express that somebody wanted something to be explained or clarified.

WP has the meaning as “make thoroughly clear right now,” and they are asking for clarification specifically on the parable of “the darnel of the field.” Coming on the heels of the Sower and the Seed, which has already been explained to them, and which they probably understand – but what’s this business of weeds being sown into that field?

37. Jesus is happy to oblige, and explains first that “Ὁ σπείρων τὸ καλὸν σπέρμα ἐστὶν ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου – the one sowing the seed” is the Son of man,” an apocalyptic term for the Messiah, an appropriate moniker for Jesus, given the apocalyptic nature of this parable. The verb is a participle, it’s what sowers do, he sows until he is done.

38. Next, by way of continued explanation “ὁ δὲ ἀγρός ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμος – the field is the world,” and here is where many err, making the field into the Church and the bad seed to be individual “hypocrites in the church” or various false teachers. To be sure, it is manifest that there are indeed hypocrites in the church, and false teachers abound.

Those things are taught all over the place in the Bible. They just aren’t taught here. The Lutheran Confessions agree with me and Jesus, where they reference this verse and point out the obvious, “the field is the world, not the Church” (Apology, Article VII, 17). The point is the Confessors knew how to read the Bible, but the context is also interesting.

I do not see any reference to this verse in the Roman Confutation, the document between the Augsburg Confession and the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, so probably when the Lutherans bring it up they are *not* responding specifically to that document in AP VII and VIII, the Church. They seem to be responding to the entire document.

That document articulates many things, including the Roman misunderstandings of Church in general. The topic is wicked people in the church, one of the realities that caught the attention of Martin Luther early on. The Lutherans are making the argument made that “since the wicked belong to the kingdom of the devil, they are not the church.”

They continue,

In this life, nevertheless, because the kingdom of Christ has not yet been revealed, they are mingled with the church and hold office in the church. The fact that the revelation has not yet come does not make the wicked the kingdom of Christ. What he quickens by his Spirit is always the same kingdom of Christ, whether it be revealed or hidden under the cross, just as Christ is the same, whether now glorified or previously afflicted. Christ’s parables agree with this. He clearly says in Matt. 13:38 that ‘the

good seed means the sons of the Kingdom, the weeds are the sons of the evil one.' The field, he says, is the world, not the church. (AP 171:19)

That sort of settles that, and you wonder how a reader of these verses in the Bible can think that the weeds are "hypocrites in the church." I think that they can't think of what else it can mean, in spite of the clear words of Jesus telling us that it doesn't. Just how would we go about removing unbelievers and opponents of Christianity if we wanted to?

The same way opponents of the ruling religion have been removed for most of human history; you simply persecute, drive out, or exterminate them. You might give them a chance first to convert to the ruling religion. It's not the way Christians do things, but it is the way the rest of the world historically and today have done and do it.

I think that Americans, who are very familiar with our experiment with religious freedom, cannot get their heads around the idea that it would be *possible* to rip the non-believers or false believers from our midst and expel them from our society. We just don't do that, and in fact in our political context we *can't* do that. Maybe we'd like to...

I can't call the cops and have my neighbor ripped out of the country for the crime of being a Buddhist, but I can get him ripped out of the church for any number of things. The idea that church and state are one, the norm throughout history, and that such ripping can and has been done by the state is to Americans foreign. Maybe we'd like to...

I also think that there have always been Christians, even in America, who would just as soon be rid of all the non-Christians who live with them in the same society. If not always, then most surely at certain times and places there have been Christians like that. This parable specifically tells them specifically not to do that. And yet, it's been tried.

Non-Calvinists in Reformation Geneva were, by means of fines, imprisonment, and execution, encouraged to follow the rules or to leave. Many left or were shown the door, and many more toed the line, and for a while Geneva was outwardly very Christian and had less manifest sinning and more manifest good works done than any city in Europe.

Calvin's death signaled the beginning of a transformation that would end with Geneva owning the reputation – it did not take long – for being the most manifestly sinning city in all Europe. That pendulum swing from legalism to antinomian has happened often in the Church, including in our own LCMS, and it may be swinging back even as we speak.

According to WIK, "The term "**Banned in Boston**" was a phrase employed from the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, to describe a literary work, song, motion picture, or play which had been prohibited from distribution or exhibition in Boston, Massachusetts." Today, there, the pendulum has swung full-circle.

Anne Hutchinson was punished several times and then executed by the Massachusetts Separatists for the crime of being Baptist. The Baptists were supposed to live in Rhode

Island, not Massachusetts, and besides that the very presence of Hutchinson was polluting the Calvinists' otherwise pure "City on a Hill," where enforced legalism abounded.

It is noteworthy that these same people failed to kill their own offspring when those offspring ceased and refused even to be Christian. See modern Massachusetts to behold the fruit of the Separatist jumping the gun on separating wheat from darnel. That state is perhaps the most wide-open, liberal of the fifty, and not just in terms of their politics.

The *Nat Turner Diaries*, that dead and in rotting in hell terrorist's inspiration for Oklahoma City, put into words the thoughts of many of our fellow countrymen today, the same ideas held to by the KKK; America is for white people who believe in God and who call themselves "Christian," but not for blacks, Jews, Catholics, et al. Get rid of them.

These ideas are ugly and repugnant, and when they are connected to the Church, they make our religion seem ugly and repugnant to others and to ourselves. We could write, and people have written volumes on the strange ideas false teachers have pulled the Bible, and the surprisingly few, rare, and short periods of forced conversion.

In those instances where Christians have attempted to pull out the darnel, the result has been not only to destroy the darnel, but also to destroy much good wheat. There is something incipiently not very Christian at all about what went on in Geneva, Massachusetts, and in the fictional, but real mind of Nat Turner and the like.

Those things may even cause the Christian to abandon his religion, the pulling up of the good plant with the bad, and as a matter of fact, contrary to the common perception, perpetuated mostly by university professors, the Christians have been a lot better than other religions at living at peace with their non-Christian neighbors, like Our Lord says.

The main point of reference is to our own Western Civilization, made up historically and mostly of Europe and the Americas. The idea of religious freedom, which includes religious toleration, originated and was done first here and lately and often begrudgingly by the Europeans. Not so much in other civilizations and by other religions.

From the time that Constantine issued the Edict of Milan, other religions have generally been tolerated, as has non-Christian behavior on the part of Christians. Church and State were from that point separate, and the Empire was never even close to being all Christian, and various forms of paganism lingered on throughout the medieval period.

In Christendom, Jews and later Muslims were tolerated then, and are accepted more today than at any other time, and any attempt to rip them was generally short-lived and relatively minor. That doesn't mean we're perfect, and we're not. People don't always do what the Pastor says, and sometimes the Pastor doesn't do what the Pastor says.

England issued the *Edict of Expulsion* against the Jews in 1290, and they were not allowed back in until the 17th Century. In 1396, 100,000 Jews were expelled from

France, and in 1421 many from Austria (WIK). Probably the most famous expulsion was brought about by *the Alhambra Decree*, issued in 1492 by Isabella and Ferdinand.

The decree expelled all Jews from Spain and Spanish territories. Such expulsions by various countries were not uncommon. Notable by its absence from this list of expellers are Germany, who was among the most tolerant of the Jews among all the Europeans, right up to the time they acquiesced to, and some participated in, Hitler's Final Solution.

So that's the field, and continuing to explain, "τὸ δὲ καλὸν σπέρμα, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας – the good seed, these are the Sons of the Kingdom," the Christians, and "τὰ δὲ ζιζάνια εἰσιν οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ – the weeds are the sons of the Evil One," everybody else. Satan being who Satan is, doing what Satan does, spoiling a perfectly good field.

39. In case you missed it, allow Him to clarify who is doing the sowing, "δὲ ἐχθρὸς ὁ σπείρας αὐτὰ ἐστὶν ὁ διάβολος – the enemy having sowed them is the devil." The sower of bad seed is Satan, and those seeds are the weeds that come from his sowing. The real enemy is not your non-Christian friend or family member. The enemy is Satan.

Indeed, when we talk of the "unholy trinity," we mention the Devil, the World, and our Flesh, not our fellow humans. Having said that, The World is made up of humans, and it is a collective assault – not primarily individual – with which our attackers attack. Society is the enemy, to be sure, but society is made up of individuals just as surely.

Harvest is always a good time, the payment for all your effort, so take heart, look forward to the harvest, "ὁ δὲ θερισμὸς συντέλεια αἰῶνός ἐστιν, – the harvest is the consummation of the age, and the angels are the harvesters." The word is συντέλεια, an apocalyptic word used several times here and in Matthew 24 and 25, of the Second Coming of Christ.

40. When that time comes, "οἱ δὲ θεριστὰὶ ἄγγελοι εἰσιν – the harvesters are angels" a point made other places in the NT. Other cultures have death personified in various forms, including Banshees, various animals, and gods, but The Angel of Death, also known as The Grim Reaper, seems to be a Christian thing with origins in the OT.

The "[Angel of the Lord](#)" smites 185,000 men in the [Assyrian](#) camp (II Kings 19:35). When the Angel of Death passes through to [smite the Egyptian first-born](#), God prevents "the destroyer" (*shâchath*) from entering houses with blood on the lintel and side posts ([Exodus](#) 12:23). The "destroying angel" (*mal'ak ha-mashhit*) rages among the people in Jerusalem (II Sam. 24:16). In I Chronicles 21:15 the "angel of the Lord" is seen by [King David](#) standing "between the earth and the [heaven](#), having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over [Jerusalem](#)." The biblical [Book of Job](#) (33:22) uses the general term "destroyers" (*memitim*), which tradition has identified with "destroying angels" (*mal'ake Khabbalah*), and Prov. 16:14 uses the term the "angels of death" (*mal'ake ha-mavet*). The angel [Azra'il](#) is sometimes referred as the Angel of Death as well (WIK).

41. Purification and separation will now take place, as “ποστελεῖ ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ - the Son of Man will send forth His angels.” The One who has “sent out” Apostles, who are often called “ἀγγέλους – messengers,” whose message is of love and forgiveness, will now send out the same to exact judgment on unbelief.

Using the, “καὶ συλλέξουσιν ἐκ τῆς βασιλείας αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα καὶ τοὺς ποιοῦντας τὴν ἀνομίαν – and He will gather from His Kingdom all causes of sin and those doing lawlessness.” To talk about σκάνδαλα as “causes of sin” is not strong enough. The word means things that lead Christians into faith-destroying sin.

It’s the active act or acts of turning CHristins, particularly “little ones,” from destination of heaven to destination of hell. To talk about ἀνομίαν is to talk about the most vile of crimes against God and His creation, things that are often referred to as “abominations.” They are manifestly wrong to the natural man and even to the most hardened unbeliever.

42. At this time, not before, these will get the come-uppance that the servants wanted to give them when the presence of the bad seed was first discovered. Justice will be served, the field will be cleansed; they will be thrown into that fiery furnace, where “ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων – there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

According to my *Phrase Concordance of the Bible*, that “weeping and gnashing” phrase occurs five times in the NT, four times in Matthew and once in Luke, and a quick perusal of those occurrences shows that the idiom refers to people who are on their way to or in hell, and they all knew better. It didn’t have to be like this but look at me now.

If hell is a nasty place for the likes of Saddam Hussein and that dead 911 terrorist the Navy Seals offed, how much more for people who knew better. They will be the ones spending eternity weeping and gnashing and dwelling on how they knew better. I think lots of Americans will spend eternity like that. Lots of them bear the name “Christian.”

43. The separation having taken place, “τότε οἱ δίκαιοι ἐκλάμπουσιν ὡς ὁ ἥλιος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Πατρὸς αὐτῶν – then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father.” In the NT, the word “righteous” means Christian believers, who may by their good works and words be more or less actually righteous.

The verb “ἐκλάμπουσιν – shine forth” is a hapax in the NT, so we can’t compare it with other occurrences in the NT. The literal meaning is “out of a lamp,” and I think we get the picture. Darkness is a bad thing, and light is a good thing, and the Christians will dwell in the place of light and life, a place that will drive away all darkness and death.

Finally, “ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκούετω – the one having ears, hear,” an idiom that appears six times in the NT, three in Matthew, “John is Elijah to come,” (11:5), The Sower, and here. In their parallels Mark and Luke have Jesus saying it of the Sower. The final occurrence of the phrase is in Luke 14: 35, the saying about salt losing its saltiness.

Some commentators think that “He who has ears” is used of things that are very clear, and some think that it is used of things that are very unclear. What does this mean? Here the saying comes at the end of Jesus’ explanation, and if the meaning of the parable were not clear after it had been told, then it should be after it is explained.

The saying seems to be not so much that the words of Jesus are hard to understand, but that the clear meaning of the words of Jesus are hard, not to comprehend, but to accept. It sounds like Jesus wants Christians to live side by side with unbelievers, pagans and other assorted riff-raff until He comes to sort it all out, and sometimes that’s hard.

Why can’t we just call down fire from heaven, Jesus?

Law/Gospel

Bad Seed/Good Seed – Throughout the world, all around us, even in our neighbors, friends, and relatives, we see that there are many who are in the Kingdom of the devil. For reasons known only to Him and beyond our understanding, God has, by Word and Sacrament, planted us as the good seed, and He sustains our lives.

Now/Then – Right now, we are a few wheat plants surrounded by a lot of darnel. This causes us some degree of anguish and hardship. On the Last Day, we will be taken from this place of anguish and hardship, and while we wait we can find comfort in the sanctuary of Divine Service.

Our Hands/God’s Hands – Like those who have gone before us, we would rather live in a place surrounded by Christians, or at least by more Christians than surround us now. I personally don’t know where that place would be, and don’t think about it very often. It is not to us to establish a “City on the Hill” or Utopia, but to God to do that later on.

Sermon Titles

Same Soil, Different Seed

An Enemy Did This

Living in America

The Field is the World

Life Among the Weeds

Hymns

On What Has Now Been Sown – LSB 921

Spread the Reign of God the Lord – LSB 830

Almighty God, Your Word is Cast – LSB 577

Rev. Steven L. Anderson
Pastor, Immanuel Lutheran Church
Grand Mound, Iowa

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Project Wittenberg - www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/wittenberg-home.html