

Present Realities and Future Certainties

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[0 : 00] Good, well we're going to turn to our reading for this morning and it's in Matthew chapter 13. Please do turn your Bibles there to Matthew 13 and we're continuing our series here.

And we're reading a selection of paragraphs here, so we'll begin from chapter 13 verse 24 and we'll be jumping a little bit through the chapter but I'll keep you posted on where we're going.

So let's first read from Matthew 13 and verse 24, the parable of the weeds. Jesus put another parable before them saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his fields.

But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.

And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds? He said to them, An enemy has done this.

[1 : 14] So the servants said to him, Then do you want us to go and gather them? But he said, No, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest. And at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned. But gather the wheat into my barn.

Look on down to verse 36. Then Jesus left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples came to him saying, Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.

He answered, The one who sows the good seed is the son of man. The field is the world. And the good seed is the sons of the kingdom.

The weeds are the sons of the evil one. And the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the close of the age and the reapers are the angels.

[2 : 23] Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with the fire, so will it be at the close of the age. The son of man will send his angels.

And they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers. And throw them into the fiery furnace.

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

He who has ears, let him hear. And then down to verse 47. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind.

When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the goods into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age.

[3 : 26] The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Amen. May God bless to us his word this morning. May God bless you.

Let's see what the Lord Jesus teaches us and all his followers here in this chapter of Matthew's gospel. About both present realities and future certainty.

As regards his kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, so much of Jesus' teaching and the teaching of the whole New Testament is focused precisely here.

Because we so badly need to grasp both of these things. If we're unrealistic about the present, then it will lead to all kinds of false optimism and triumphalism even in the church today.

[4 : 54] And true Christian faith will tend to be eclipsed by false religious fantasy. But if we're uncertain about the future, then faced with all the realities right about us, we will so easily find ourselves spiraling into cynicism, into despair.

So that true Christian hope is buried by disappointment and heartache. And so Jesus' teaching here is vital for all disciples both then and now.

For those first disciples, it was important to explain why they were seeing and witnessing such confusing realities in response to Jesus' earthly ministry.

And of course, we're all followers of Christ today in a confused world, in a hostile world. Then we need not to be confused that we're not seeing the things that we long for.

We're not always seeing the things that we hope for in our gospel mission. And you see, the Lord Jesus wants all of his followers then and now never to be confused about what to expect now.

[6 : 12] And about what will only be revealed at the very last day, the day of final judgment of this world. And you see, if we get confused, if we get mixed up about these expectations, as many Christians very often are today, then it will be disastrous for our Christian witness, as it will for our Christian lives, and for our ability to persevere in the midst of hardship and battles which will surely assail us.

And that's why this whole chapter is so very important. It's all about these very issues. We saw that last time in the first parable of the sower.

It tells us that God's word, God's gospel is his instrument of judgment. It's a double-edged sword that separates the righteous from the wicked.

And it tells us that we will see that separation, that judgment of God in action as the gospel is proclaimed.

And it's either accepted by people or rejected. And that is the present reality of kingdom mission. But now in these two parables, which are a pair, the wheat and the weeds and the parable of the net, the focus is very much both on the nature of the present reality, where the separation is at work, but still, to some extent, it's partly hidden, it's partly indistinct, but also on the absolute clarity of the final, complete separation, which will surely be revealed one day in the consummation of all things on the day of judgment.

[8 : 03] And that future, says Jesus, is utterly certain. After the sower, remember we said that the remaining six parables form three pairs.

And the arrangement of these parables is deliberate. These two are like brackets at the beginning and the end. And they emphasize the great division of God's kingdom from this world, as it looks now and as it will one day be seen to be at the last.

And in between those two parables, we have another two pairs, the mustard seed and the leaven that speak about the great growth of the kingdom, even now, although it's hidden, and the treasure in the field and the pearl that speak of the great value of God's kingdom, even now, although it's so hidden to many people.

And of course, we have, as we read in verses 36 to 43, we have a full explanation of this one parable of the wheat and the weeds, which is given, notice, and not to the crowds, verse 34, but to Jesus' followers alone, so that they will be in absolutely no doubt about the message.

So we're going to focus today on these two parables that begin and end the section, so that we get really clear in our minds what it is that Jesus wants us to know about the present realities and the future certainty of his kingdom mission, and all the implications that that has for our lives today.

[9 : 38] Now, the parable of the wheat and the weeds there, in verses 24 to 30, is simple enough. And of course, we've got Jesus' explicit explanation, too, in verse 36 to 43.

And the focus, you see, it's on a deliberate act of sabotage. The farmer says good seed, all the expectation is for a good crop, but, verse 25, an enemy, no doubt an envious competitor, an enemy engages in a secret campaign of sabotage.

Well, it happens all the time in the world, doesn't it? A competitor spreads rumors about a company's product causing problems, causes the share price to collapse, and perhaps they'll be prey to a takeover.

Or maybe it's governments somewhere that have been caught out by their campaign and being rather ineffective with their vaccinations.

So they start to spread rumors about vaccines being ineffective or harmful, or whatever it is, to cover up their own failings. Or you get disgruntled members of the royal family, junior members of the royal family, who want to sow sabotage by saying nasty things about the royals.

[11 : 02] We live in a world that's full of deliberate sabotage, political sabotage, industrial sabotage, and often personal sabotage, too. And here, you see, it's very clever, isn't it?

See, the enemy doesn't come in and smash up the field, plow it up with his tractor like a French farmer in a protest. No, he sneaks in, in the dead of night, and spreads rival seeds.

So absolutely nothing is seen at first, but later on, when it's too late, there's a delayed, a devastating effect, verse 26.

Now the weed that was sown here, as the footnote says, was probably darnel, which is actually part of the wheat family, and it's virtually indistinguishable from the wheat.

Until, that is, the ears form, and their ears bear no grain, no fruit. Instead, in fact, we're told that they have a poisonous fungus in the ears.

[12:01] And you see, then it's suddenly obvious, there's a disease spreading. But it's too late to do anything. Maybe if it's just a few clumps of weeds, you could root it out.

But no, everywhere the real wheat is growing, there are weeds so intertwined with it that the Master says, verse 29, to destroy the weeds now, will destroy the wheat also.

So no, he says, I will not risk destroying my good crop. And so the sifting, the separation, we'll have to wait, verse 30, until the harvest time.

both must go on growing together. Both must benefit from the watering, from the fertilizer, from the scarecrows, and all the rest of it. Both must be spared together until that day.

But then, on that day, there will be a thorough, and a complete, and a final separation. No question about it.

[13:07] Look at verse 30. Gather the weeds first, and bind them in bundles, to be burned. But gather wheat, into my barn.

And Jesus is absolutely plain. Look at verse 37. He's talking about a separation, that's already present in the world now, between those he calls the children of the kingdom, verse 38, and the sons of the evil one.

But for the moment, you see, it's not totally clear, at least to the casual onlooker, which is which. But one day, it will be absolutely clear.

And it will become permanent, in separation. Terribly binary language, that Jesus uses, isn't it? In fact, I'm sure that, calling people, sons of the evil one, like that, would fall very much, under the hate speech laws, that have just been parched, by our parliament.

People just don't like, that kind of offensive talk, do they? They didn't like it then, either of course, but it didn't stop Jesus. You cannot bear, to hear my word, he says in John chapter 8, verse 33, because you, are of your father, the devil.

[14:36] Pretty offensive, isn't it? But friends, Jesus is not evil, and hateful. Jesus is exposing, real evil, in order to warn people, where real evil, is going to end up, for all eternity.

It will end up, under the true, and the just, judgment, of God's, ultimate justice. It may be delayed, but it will never, ever, be dispensed with.

And the parable of the net, in verse 47 onwards, just reiterates, the same thing. And the focus there, is chiefly, beyond this future, clear judgment, at the close of the age, notice verse 49.

Now, the kingdom of heaven, in this age, is like a net, full of all kinds, of fish, but then, there will be, a clear separation, of the evil, says Jesus, from the righteous.

And this, is what explains, your experience, of the world, he says. This is what answers, your great question. of why God, allows, such evil, to continue.

[15:53] Look at verse 29 again. See, it's because, of God's, mercy. It's because, of his great concern, for his precious harvest. He will not, imperil, the ultimate destiny, of any, of his precious wheat.

Any, of his children, of the kingdom. And therefore, he won't be premature, in his judgment. See, we tend to be, so impatient, for judgment, as we see it.

Because, of course, judgment, as we see it, always involves, punishment for somebody else, and not for us. But, God, is patient. Peter, says that, so clearly, doesn't he, in 2nd Peter, chapter 3.

God, is not slow, to judge. He is merciful, desiring, that people, should come, to repentance. And that some, who might, who might look like, to us today, to be like, horrible weeds, that actually, they might turn out, in the end, by God's mercy, to be fruitful wheat, in his kingdom.

And that should remind us, that we should be, much more careful, perhaps, in our judgments, than we often are. But there's more, than God's patience, you see, isn't there?

[17:11] Because the Bible, teaches us, that in God's providence, he even allows, evil to flourish, very often. And he turns, the enemy's worst attacks, to serve, his own purposes, of grace.

In order, to prepare his children, for the blessings, of his kingdom, ultimately. These present sufferings, says Paul, these groanings, Romans chapter 8, they all work, for the good, of those, who

love God, through Jesus Christ.

Because, what really matters, is, that coming time, of harvest. That's what the sower is eyeing, right from the very beginning.

In both, of these, parables, about sowing the seeds. It's that day, of harvest, that matters, above everything else. And Jesus, you see, is telling us, that unless you see that, as Christian believers, unless you are certain, about that day, you'll never understand, the present day, and you'll never cope, with the realities, of your present life, and your witness, in the mission field, of this world. Whether it's in your home, whether it's in your, your school, or university, in your workplace, whether it's in, in Glasgow, or Germany, or Ghana, wherever. Present realities, and future certainty. [18 : 40] Until the last day, for the sake of God's mercy, Jesus is telling us, that good, and evil, must prosper, side by side, together.

But then, at last, a certain reckoning, will be made, forever. And that's Jesus' clear, message, in these parables.

And if that's true, and of course, it is true, how are we to think then, whether we're, a Christian person, or whether indeed, you're a person, who's not a Christian believer, wouldn't call yourself that.

Well, I want us to think about, two clear implications, of this, both for the church, and it's thinking about life, but also for the world outside, and how it needs to consider, these things, that Jesus, are telling us.

First of all, in the light of Jesus' clear message here, there can be no, misplaced triumphalism, for the church, of Jesus Christ.

[19 : 51] This world is a battleground, for the gospel. It is a real war zone, and it will be, friends, right, until the very end. Conflict, and therefore casualties, for the people of God, without, and within, the professing church, that is a present, reality.

And we need to get that, very, very clear. Jesus, is simply highlighting here, something that is actually, seen so clearly, all through the Bible story, right from the very beginning, and will be so right, until the very end.

That this world story, is, a story, of two seeds. The children of the kingdom, and the sons of the evil one, as Jesus calls them here, in verse 38.

And the conflict, between these two seeds, is inevitable, and it's perpetual. In fact, you know, the Bible's very definition, of what it means, to be a Christian believer, is, to be one whom God, has placed, into, that battle.

I, will put, enmity, struggle, battle, between, the woman's seed, and the serpent's seed. That's what God himself says, way back in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, after, after humanity's first rebellion, against God.

[21 : 18] That is the very first definition, of a believer, in the Bible. A struggler, a fighter, with evil.

Because God, has made you his. And therefore, he has made you, to be at odds, with the world, and the flesh, and the devil himself. that's so, so important, for us to remember, especially when, when so many struggles, might make you think, oh, I must be a terrible failure, as a Christian.

No, what that means, Fred, is your faith is real. You're still in the struggle, you haven't yet, abandoned the faith. And that battle, the Bible tells us, will rage, right, till the very end.

As it does, right the way through, to the very end, of the Bible story. If you read in Revelation chapter 12, later on, you'll see, that it's describing, exactly what Jesus, is describing, in this parable. About the time, between his resurrection, and ascension, and his coming again, to judge the world. That chapter talks about, the ancient serpent, the devil, Satan, being defeated.

[22 : 29] He's thrown down to the earth, and yet, he is still raging, he's still warring, against, the seed of the woman, the children of the kingdom, here on earth.

And he will do so, right until the very end, when Jesus comes. And he's destroyed forever, he's cast into the eternal lake, of fiery torment, that you read about, in Revelation chapter 20.

That graphic, imagery, that apocalyptic imagery, of John's vision, is saying exactly, what Jesus, is describing here, in this parable, in this story.

That there will be battles, with the devil, with his seed, on earth, right, till the very end, of this present age. That's why the apostle Paul, is just as plain, in Ephesians chapter 6, remember, about what Christians, are to expect today.

It's to be a battle, constantly. And he wrote, it's a battle, not ultimately, against flesh and blood, but against the authorities, against the cosmic powers, after this present darkness.

[23 : 35] An enemy, has done this, says Jesus. And the present reality, for the real church, of Jesus Christ, is that we are in a war, and that we shall be, right, until, the very end.

Because the enemy, is real, and dangerous, right, till the very end. And so there can be, no misplaced, triumphalism, in the church, of Jesus Christ, or indeed, in our individual, Christian lives today.

We've got to face up, to reality. Reality about the world, and reality, about the church. The world, Jesus says to us, will be a very messy place, right, till the end.

And we know, don't we, that war is messy. We've seen far too much, of that, haven't we? On our TV screens, in recent years, in the Middle East, in Syria, in Iraq, and other places.

People get hurt, in war. Soldiers get wounded, and killed, in war. Innocent people get caught, in the crossfire, in war. And you see, when we ask the question, why, why, why would God allow this?

[24 : 55] Why doesn't he end it all, now? But we need to trust, Jesus answer here. It's not that he doesn't care.

It's that he does, care, infinitely, for his everlasting harvest. for the ultimate best, for the eternal purpose, that he has, for all of his beloved seed, for the children, of his precious kingdom.

Jesus is not like, some sort of, unscrupulous general, sacrificing innocent people, for some grand scheme, of the state. No, he's, he's more like, a careful architect, overseeing, a vast building project, and only he can see, and only he knows, the final beauty, the final grandeur, of the building. And so he's leading, the builders on, even though all that they can see, at the moment, is the, is the present shambles, the mess, of the building site, that they're working on. And this world, is his building site.

It's full of all sorts of mess. And God's builders, his people, who are in the midst of that, doing his work, well, they're going to get very dirty, in the midst of it, aren't they?

[26 : 21] It's inevitable. If you're going to do, any real building, any real construction, you too, will get filthy. And so we mustn't have, any false expectations.

We mustn't be, expecting suddenly, the show home, of the new world, to suddenly appear, right in front of us, for us to live in now. Now Christians too, are going to be part, of this very messy world, until the end.

And so that means, that we're not to expect, are we? Perfect health, perfect healing now. We as Christians too, are going to suffer the flack, of a world, that is still a battleground.

We're not exempt from that. Nor are we to imagine, that we as Christians, somehow are going to become, suddenly sinless, and perfect now, as though some great experience, would zap us off, into a heavenly bliss, right away.

No. There have been many movements, in the church over the ages, imagining those kinds of things. But friends, that is not faith, that's just fantasy.

[27 : 33] And it doesn't take, much reality either, does it, to burst the bubble, of that kind of unreality. I love that old story, about Charles Spurgeon, who met a man, who boldly claimed to him, Mr. Spurgeon, I haven't sinned now, for at least six months.

And apparently, Spurgeon turned around, stamped very hard, on his toe, and produced, an immediate expletive, from the man. No. Alexander White, the old Scottish preacher, paraphrased, I think Jesus' words here, perfectly.

It's a, ser fecht, richt, to the end. It's a sore fight, right to the very end. And we're quite wrong, therefore, to imagine, aren't we, that somehow Christians, will never be caught up, in tragedies, or in trauma, in accidents, even in violent deaths, through terrorism, or through wars, or that Christians, won't die in plane crashes, or that Christians, will never lose, their loved ones, never lose their spouses, to cancer, never lose, a child in the womb, or a young baby, or a son, or a daughter.

Now friends, this world, this field, where the enemy is at work, is a messy place. It's a cursed place. Just because of the sin, and the rebellion, of human beings.

And it will be, right to the very end. And that means too, of course, that, there will never be, ideal conditions, for gospel mission, for evangelism, for ministry.

[29 : 15] It's not that, if only God, would suddenly send revival, while all our troubles, would be over. Well, of course, it's good to pray.

And we want to pray, that God will pour out, his Holy Spirit, upon our nation, in a new way, and turn people, to repentance and faith. But, see this parable, tells us, doesn't it?

That it is precisely, where the master, has done a great sowing, of the good seed, that the enemy himself, will be attracted, to sow harm, and to sow opposition.

And I forget, how shocked I was, years ago, reading a biography, of Jonathan Edwards, who was at the center, of that great revival, the great awakening, in 18th century, New England, and North America.

And he was right, at the heart of it, and yet, just a few years, after the height, of that revival, Jonathan Edwards, was chucked out, of his church, by his congregation, because they'd had, enough of him.

[30 : 17] But where would you pray for? Because where the evangel, is flourishing, there the enemy, will be fighting, according to Jesus. There are some Christians, who have a, a certain view, of the end times.

It's called, a post-millennial vision, of a golden age, of the gospel, that will precede, the coming, of the Lord Jesus again. Well that may be, I don't want to be, too dogmatic, in these areas, of eschatology.

Many good, and godly people, have held that view. And I hope it's true. But you see, according to Jesus, what that must also mean, is a great rise, in the activity of Satan, and evil.

Verse 26. When the plants, came up and bore fruit, then, then, the weeds appeared also. So you see, according to Jesus, we can't harbor, any false triumphalism.

We cannot expect, some sort of, weed free age, before the very end itself, can we? The problem you see, of some of these, longings for revival, for a golden age, of triumph, the problem is, it can easily, become an excuse, for walking, away, and not working hard, in gospel mission, in the middle, of what we see now, as hard days, opposition days, days, that are not, full of, abundant, flourishing blessing.

[31 : 58] But no, Jesus point is the opposite, we must keep, on sowing, and we must not, be deterred, even when, the enemy is most, at work. It's similar, in a different way, with, other Christians, who believe, that if only the church, did enough, in social terms, in political terms, that we can somehow, bring in the kingdom, of peace, and of plenty, in this present world.

But again, you see, no, Jesus says, differently, this world will be messy, full of weeds, right, till the very end. Again, that's not to say, of course, that we, we just give up, and we become indifferent, and we think, oh well this, this whole world, is going to hell, so what's the point?

Why bother? No, no, no, Jesus does not say that. Notice, Jesus calls his people, the children of the kingdom. And it's our world, it's not the enemy's world, this world, is God's field.

And notice verse 41, you see at the last, God's angels, are going to come and, eject from this world, all the causes of sin, all lawbreakers, he's going to put them out.

It's not vice versa. They're not gather up, Jesus people, and take them out of this world, in some kind of sudden rapture, letting the world carry on, without his church.

[33 : 28] Well, some Christians believe that, that is the opposite, of what Jesus says here. The kingdom of heaven, has begun right here, on this earth. And when Jesus comes again, it will be the earth, that is swept clean, of all evil, that is renewed, that is remade, for the children, of his kingdom.

Again, 2nd Peter chapter 3, he's very clear about that. He says, just like in the days of Noah, when the world then, perished, by water, so at the last, he says, the same kind of exposure, of this world, will occur by cleansing fire.

So there's no excuse, you see, for Christians, to be running off, into holy huddles, just waiting for rescue, out of this world. No, no, no. This is Christ's kingdom.

And we are the children, of kingdom, who will inherit the earth, as the home, of his eternal righteousness. So despite, the presence of evil, which is still growing, which is still influencing, this world, we are to outgrow it.

And we are to advance, and we are to bear fruit, in God's field. And we will, bear fruit, that will last forever. But don't be under any illusions.

[34 : 51] Only on that last day, will our battles, and struggles be over. In this world, there's going to be, a very messy place, right to the end, says Jesus.

And, the church too, will be a messy place, right to the end. Jesus is very clear here, isn't he?

The weeds are right in, amongst the wheat. And part of the whole problem, is that sometimes, it will be very hard, to distinguish the wheat, from the weeds. And it's impossible, to separate them. And it's the presence, of that good seed, of the kingdom itself, which attracts, those weeds, and the enemy. And so, wherever the gospel, is at work, bringing, children of the kingdom, to birth, then the enemy, will be sowing.

And wherever, the net of the gospel, is fishing, all kinds of fish, will be drawn in, in the catch. And we might, well be right, in thinking, there's some very, very funny fish, aren't there, in the church, of Jesus Christ, at times.

[36 : 08] But the apostle Peter, the apostle Jude, are quite explicit too, aren't they? False teachers, they said, false prophets, arose, all through, the history, of God's people Israel.

And so likewise, they will arise, among you, they say, the New Testament church. And that means, that there can never be, any such thing, as a totally pure, and unmixed church, right until the end. The whole New Testament, is playing witness to that, isn't it? So many of the warnings, that are given, in all the epistles, they're given directly, to real churches. And sometimes, it is hard, to discern, exactly who is who.

Even though, very often, we can discern, the effects of poisonous weeds. That can be seen, as a whole in the field, there's no doubt. And notice in verse 41, you see, Jesus causes them, causes of sin, he calls them.

Stumbling blocks, literally. Those who will trip up, others into sin. And law breakers, because they also, will lead others, against God's word.

[37 : 22] Well, there's plenty of evidence, of that. Has been all through history, in the professing church, of Jesus Christ. We see it today, among people, who want to rewrite the Bible, or edit out parts, of the Bible.

Call sin, good, and call what God, calls good, sinful. But we're not to, to recoil, in some sort of horror.

We're not to, retreat into a ghetto, somewhere, if we can find it, of imagined purity. Nor are we to despair, or give up hope, as if everything was lost.

No, Jesus is telling us, the master is in control. He's not thrown off course. And yes, he may tolerate, evil, growing alongside, the good seed, of his kingdom.

But he wants, his good seed, also to grow, and it will grow, and it will, produce, fruit in abundance, at a great harvest.

[38 : 22] So Jesus is saying, to his followers, be patient, as I'm patient, and endure, and go on, reap, sowing, and go on growing, and bearing fruit.

There mustn't be, any mistaken, triumphalism, but neither, must there be, any mistaken, pessimism. Because again, and again, in the New Testament, the mark, of the Holy Spirit, being at work, in the world.

Isn't it froth? It isn't instability. But it's patient endurance. We're saved in hope, says Paul in Romans 8. And we wait for it, with patience, with endurance, with perseverance.

And so we go on, being utterly realistic, about the present, but also utterly certain, about the future. God will have, his harvest.

And who knows, perhaps, some, perhaps many, who seem to us, at the moment, to be weeds, may yet turn out, to be true wheat, in the mercy of God.

[39 : 36] God has promised, a great harvest. And we need to keep that, before us. Even as we are, realistic, about the present mess, the present, strife in this world. And even wherever, the church, is sowing that good seed, we will see, evidence, of the enemy's work.

But secondly, if there's to be no, false triumphalism, for the church, nor can there be, any false security, for this world. Jesus is crystal clear, about that too.

There's a coming, of a great, and decisive separation, for all eternity. That is the future, certainty. Verse 30, the reaper, separates, the weeds to be burned, from the wheat, in the barn.

Verse 48, the fisherman separates, the bad fish, which are cast out, from the good fish, which are gathered in. Unless there be, any shadow of a doubt, about that, look at verse 39.

Jesus says, it is a complete, and forever, and final separation, of the evil, from the righteous. All, causes of sin, all lawbreakers, all evil, will be cast, out, from his kingdom.

[40 : 58] Never to sully it again, for all eternity. The enemies of God, may look, at times, perhaps most of the time, to be in the ascendant.

But Jesus says, no, there is a day, of reckoning, coming. And the judgment, will be absolute, and it will be permanent. It's striking, isn't it, how offensive, people today, find the very idea, of God's judgment.

I actually heard, of an assistant minister, who was told, by a senior minister, when he started, his job in that church, he was never, to mention judgment, on Sundays, in case it would put, seekers off.

Because people are so very, offended by this idea. And yet, we're all, always clamoring, for justice, constantly, in this world, aren't we? Fighting injustice, and perceived injustice, is such a powerful force, in world politics, and world affairs.

We've seen it, this very week, haven't we? with those, those people gathering, on Clap and Common, for those vigils, over the, poor woman, Sarah Everard, who was murdered. Wanting justice, understandably.

[42 : 15] And of course, the different, causes that may drive you, will differ. Differ according to your politics, according to your, personal values, and so on. Sometimes it is, a very personal thing, isn't it, that drives a quest, for justice.

Something that feels, very close, and dear to you, that makes you, crave for that, justice for someone, like you. I'm sure that's, what motivated, many of those women, this week, who like, the Duchess of Cambridge, said she knew, what it was like, to feel afraid, walking as a woman, in London.

In that personal sense. Sometimes it's, a shared sense, of morality, or of honor. Even in prison, there's a moral, pecking order, isn't there?

There's the, the child molesters, there's the rapists, right down at the bottom, of the heap, and those are the, the ones who have to be, kept safe, in solitary confinement, often. From the rough justice, that they would get, from the ordinary criminals, from the, the ordinary murderers, and the thieves, and the much more, honorable, prisoners than that.

But everybody, wants justice, don't they, for sex offenders? In fact, many want hell, for them as well. The tabloids, certainly do. That's what comes, in their headlines. And it was Winston Churchill, wasn't it, who said that, the proof that God exists, is the existence, of Lenin, and Trotsky, for whom hell, is necessary.

[43 : 46] You see, we all have that sense, of justice. And Jesus says, well yes, you're right there, at least. And hell is real.

And it's terrible. And you know, don't you, that it's Jesus, who speaks, more about hell, than anybody else, in the Bible. And he leaves us, in no doubt here, at all.

Especially, in this parable, of the net. Look at it. The focus, is all on the final judgment. Just two, verses of the parable, verses 47 and 48, and then just, two verses of explanation.

A separation, where evil, is consigned, to the fiery furnace. And we need to notice, two things, very carefully here.

In this group, of six parables, the only two, that Jesus gives, explicit explanation to. These first, and the last ones, that we're, examining this morning, are the two, that deal with hell.

[44 : 56] It's very striking. It's very sobering. And secondly, do you notice, that in these explanations, both times, Jesus, adds something, to the picture, that he gives, of hell as a fiery furnace.

You see, verse 42, and in verse 50, says it twice. In that place, he says, there will be, future continuous, weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

To emphasize, the ongoing, relentless, endless nature, of the torment, of that punishment. not just, a throwing into a fire, that burns, and destroys, and annihilates.

No, the fire, Jesus says, is a place. A dreadful, terrible place, filled with, conscious weeping, with endless regret, with fulminating, anger, and bitterness.

A place, that is parallel, to the infinite kingdom, of the Father. But a place, that is infinitely, separated, from that kingdom, irreversibly, and forever.

[46 : 19] So be warned, says Jesus, to our world. When you see a world, that's messy. When you see a church, that's messy too. Where real evil, seems to be rampant. And where the cause, of Christ, seems to be under fire, and under attack.

Don't be mistaken, don't scoff, at the church, of Jesus Christ. Don't scorn, and ignore God. There can be no, false security, for this world. The angels of God, will come, he says, verse 49, and they

will separate, the evil, from the righteous, and they will throw them, into the eternal, fiery furnace. Into that place, place, of eternal, horror, and darkness, and shame. Stark words, evil, and righteous. Binary. Nothing in between. Remember, Jesus isn't, talking here, and he uses, these words, evil and righteous, of some kind of, relative moral qualities.

The righteous, are not those, who are good, or nice in our eyes, or respectable, or even religious. Who are these righteous?

[47 : 40] Who are the, the children of the kingdom, he speaks about? Who is the real wheat, that bears fruit, for the harvest? Well, it's really very simple.

Look back to verse 23, the last verse, of the parable of the sword. You see, it's the one, who hears, and truly, heeds, Jesus words, today.

Who understands them. Who takes his word, into their hearts, and so bears, fruit, real fruit, that will last. Whatever the past, has been, whatever the past, hasn't been.

The coming judgment, you see, at the throne, of Jesus Christ, is the future, certainty, above all, other things, facing this world, or facing each one of us.

But the nature, of that judgment, for every one of us, will be decided, by this, present reality. and the question, of will I, or will I not, hear, and heed, the voice, of the son of God, today, and every day, throughout my life.

[48 : 57] if you will, then you need not, fear that day, but rather, you can rejoice, in that day's coming. Look at verse 43, as we finish, that last verse, of Jesus explanation, of the wheat, and the weeds.

Then the righteous, those who hear his voice, those who heed his call, who love him, who follow Jesus, the righteous, will shine, like the sun, in the kingdom, of their father.

That is the future, certainty for you, if your ears, and your heart, are open, to the gospel, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because he says, for to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance.

That's the promise, of God the son himself, our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so Jesus says, he who has ears, let him hear. Let him hear. Amen.

[50 : 12] Let's pray. Oh, that the world, might know, the all atoning lamb, and spirit of faith, descend, and show, the worth of Jesus name, and the grace, which all may find, the saving power, impart, and testify, to all mankind, and speak, in every heart.

And so may, every one of us, this day, and every day, hear, and heed, these words of life, which will make us, shine, like the sun, in the kingdom, of our Father, on that great day, of your coming, hear us, and in your mercy, help us, for the glory, of our great Savior, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.