

Lesson 11

Proper 11

The Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

Jesus' parable was a true-to-life earthly story. Those who heard it knew that in their society, it sometimes did happen that people played a dirty trick on their enemies by scattering darnel seeds in a field that had been sown with wheat. It happened often enough that there was a Roman law forbidding it and specifying the penalty for perpetrators. As the two kinds of plants sprouted together, it was almost impossible to distinguish them from each other, and any attempt to pull out the sprouts of darnel would damage the tender sprouts of wheat. As Jesus said in His story, the only option was to wait until the plants went to head. Then the difference became apparent and the darnel could be cut off and the wheat left, but this was tedious and costly, and the weeds' competition for the soil's nutrients had already effectively limited the wheat harvest.

155. As Jesus explained His parable to the disciples, what did He make the point of comparison on which the meaning of the parable turned?

156. Is the parable about believers and hypocrites together within the Church, or is it about God's dealings with people in general?

The use of "sons of the kingdom" and "sons of the evil one" is significant. Both imply a decisive *belonging*. Sons, in biblical usage, are those who have rights of inheritance, whether in the kingdom of the Son of Man or in the kingdom of the evil one. (See John 3:16–21; Romans 6:16–18.) Salvation and condemnation are presented side by side in Holy Scripture, and each must be seen in the light of its opposite for its reality to be appreciated.

157. How did Jesus describe the contrasting fates in eternity of these two sets of sons?

158. How would any attempt forcibly to root out the "weeds" from human society be harmful also to the "wheat" and frustrate its purpose in God's plan for His kingdom?

Once again, Jesus says, "He who has ears, let him hear." This places awesome responsibility on all who hear the Word. God does let people say no to Him. We can shut our ears to the promptings of the Word if we want to, but the parable and its application show the awful results of that—just as they show the blessing that results from hearing and acting accordingly.

159. How can we perk up our ears to listen to the Word more effectively in our daily lives?

The Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 44:6–8

In this pericope, the Lord spoke through Isaiah to declare Himself to be the one and only God. His words are in the context of another of His promises of deliverance of Israel from exile and His blessing them as His chosen people—and their enthusiastic response to Him as displayed in their identification with His name, “the LORD,” or *Yahweh*. (See vv. 1–5.) As He pointed to Himself and His uniqueness as the One and Only, “the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts,” He ridiculed the lifeless man-made idols some were foolishly worshiping instead of worshiping Him. (See vv. 9–20.) He then concluded with a reminder of the privileged position Israel enjoyed with Him under the covenant of grace and blessing He had established with them. (See vv. 21–22.)

160. What is the significance of the Lord calling Himself Israel’s “King”?

161. What did the title “Redeemer” add to their understanding of their relationship with Him?

“The LORD of hosts” describes God as the Lord of the armies of heaven and of all the host of creatures in the created world.

162. What assurance was there for God’s people in knowing Him as “the LORD of hosts”?

163. What does “I am the first and I am the last” say about the Lord?

164. What is emphasized with the Lord’s “besides Me there is no god”? (See Deuteronomy 32:36–38.) What did the Lord point to that most obviously distinguished Him from all other “gods”?

165. What is pictured by the Lord’s calling Himself “Rock”?

166. How does this Old Testament Lesson tie in with today's Holy Gospel?

The Epistle for the Day: Romans 8:18–27

In his great statement about life through the Spirit, Paul has said there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” because “the righteous requirement of the law” is “fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (vv. 1, 4). He proclaimed freedom from the control of the sinful nature because “if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (v. 10). He said this makes us debtors to the one who freed us. By the Spirit, we are to “put to death the deeds of the body. . . . For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (vv. 13–14). And Paul concluded, “We are . . . heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (vv. 16–17).

That led to Paul's comparison of the present sufferings with that future glory. The Greek speaks of “the sufferings of the now time,” the time of our earthly existence.

167. What all is included in “sufferings of this present time”? What is the “glory that is to be revealed to us”? Why are the sufferings of this present time not even worth comparing with that glory?

Paul says the creation itself is waiting for the coming glory. The Greek word *metaiotes*, “futility,” carries the idea of “being without truth or meaning.” This is the word used throughout Ecclesiastes for “vanity” in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Here in Romans, Paul used it to suggest that the creation, because of human sin, was subjected to a situation in which it could not fulfill its intended purpose. (See Genesis 3:17–18.)

168. When will the creation's “pains of childbirth” end? (See Revelation 21:1–5.)

169. Why is it significant that Paul spoke of “the redemption of our bodies” and not “the redemption of our souls” or “spirits”? (See 1 Corinthians 15:50–57.) What is the key word for us in this consideration?

The word “likewise” refers back to Paul's preceding thoughts. He now points out that “the Spirit helps us in our weakness” and “intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”—in the same way as “the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth,” and in the same way as we Christians “groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

170. What is it that the Spirit prays for as He “intercedes for the saints according to the will of God”? What is implied by the fact that the Spirit does this “with groanings too deep for words”?

Charismatic Christians, who believe that the Holy Spirit has given them the gift of tongues—a “prayer language”—and that He prays and praises through them in unknown languages when they turn over their minds and tongues to Him, sometimes refer to this passage to support their view.

171. How can you see that this passage does not refer just to speaking in tongues?

172. What assurance is there for us in the fact that God, the one who searches our hearts, “knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God”?

173. What is to be our Christian attitude and lifestyle as we wait patiently in hope? (See 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Peter 3:3–15.) In the light of all this, what would Paul say to us when we get down and think, “Oh, what’s the use?”