

Separation Parables

Scripture Reading — Matthew 13:36-43, 47-50

“The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous.”
—Matthew 13:49—

In today’s global culture, we often hear that we must be open-minded and dedicated to tolerance. Everyone must be included—no one left out. These ideas are based on some principles of God’s kingdom. But other kingdom principles, such as God’s judgment of sin and evil, are often left out.

Jesus’ parables include stories about the Lord separating weeds from wheat at the final judgment, and about a net from which edible fish are separated from fish that cannot be eaten.

Jesus’ parables emphasize limitless grace, but they also highlight God’s limitless demand. Few things are more important than our perception of God. If God is a seeking, caring God, then we should imitate his grace both for ourselves and in our treatment of other people. But we must also recognize and proclaim a coming judgment, when good and evil will be eternally separated. Although we are saved by sheer grace (as Martin Luther rediscovered before sparking a reformation), grace is never cheap.

The kingdom is like the process of net fishing or wheat farming that, in the end, calls for separation. And the Lord is the one in charge of judgment.

But the upcoming judgment teaches us to put aside selfish pleasures and choose to do what pleases God and has eternal value. By grace and in God’s strength, we can do this.

Prayer

Father in heaven, guide us to commit daily to live for you. And may our lives promote commitment to our faithful Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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