

Who Am I? Finding Our Identity as God's People

(Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 Romans 8:12-28)

When you're out and about in public places, it can be very interesting to observe how people treat one another. In fact, it can be quite entertaining, depending on who you perceive yourself to be, and your perspective on how other people (from particular ethnicities) should behave and conduct themselves. Public transport can be very interesting when it's a full train and you're standing holding on to some frame. An elderly passenger walks in and I expected a younger person (especially male) would get up and offer their seat. A couple of young teenage school boys, got in at the next stop and they were full of energy and laughter. Their conversation was full of bad language in talking about their Sports teacher, whom they did not like. Our identity has to do with our birth family, the country we come from, which school we go to and what suburb we live in. How does life in general influence our perspectives on human behaviour? What do we do about it? Maybe the parables of Jesus can help us to explore.

What are parables? They are stories of imagined events used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson. There is much to be learned about this from the Bible, but we will only look at the story from today's Scripture. It is very clear from the gospel of Matthew why Jesus used parables in His teaching...vs 11ff because non-believers refused to listen, let alone understand what Jesus was teaching about God, the Creator of Life. A parable is like a mirror which shows people where they stand. A mirror held up to the faces of the hearers during that time of story-telling whether they understand, and it is no less challenging today.

The pressing questions are: What is your response now? Where do you stand? The main concern in this parable of the weeds and the wheat bring out the problem of why evil is so persistent in a world that is supposed to be the kingdom of God. This of course can apply to the Church, in which true and false believers coexist until the final judgment. But this is not the main feature here, for two reasons. The problem of nominal Christianity did not exist then, and we are told that the field is the world.

It belongs to the Sower who sowed good seed in his field, but his enemy came, sowed weeds among the wheat, and left.

What was the solution in the text, ‘let them both grow together until the harvest, then we’ll deal with it.

The disciples were very curious as to what was the explanation of the parable of the weeds in the field.

‘The Sower is Jesus, who sows good seed, the field is the world, and the good seeds are the children of God’s Kingdom. The weeds are the evil ones and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Therefore, just as the weeds are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. Yes. The world belongs to God as King, and Jesus initiating the Kingdom movement is to restore this rule of God’s sovereignty.

So, these are things we gather about those who belong to the Kingdom of God.

- 1, They are the seed sown by the Sower (v37) and they owe their position in the Kingdom of God entirely to the Sower.
2. They have God as their Father (v43). Membership of the Kingdom means adoption into the very family of God.
3. They are called ‘righteous’ (v43), not only in relationship to God, but righteous in behaviour among their fellow believers.
4. They will one day ‘shine like the sun’(v43). The glory of the Lord, often mentioned in the Old Testament will be reflected in them and from their behaviour.

Strong language here by contrast, there is a clear New Testament perspective, that the seed sown by the devil are the sons of the evil one. They do evil, and more literally expressed as lawlessness. They are rebels against God’s kingly rule. Their destiny is destruction (vs42).

This is an unacceptable perspective to people today. People who do not treat evil with great seriousness, and many of course do not believe in a future life, a heaven and hell where the great separation will be finalized as our gospel reading gave us.

However, it is an undeniable part of the teaching of Jesus. The world cannot claim to know more about it than God, through the teaching of Jesus before His death on the cross.

In the excitement of the Kingdom's offer of salvation and the freedom we have to choose to belong, it would've been too easy to be impatient. Why does not society change? This parable is currently a silent revolution in some areas of the world. It speaks of the different origins and different lifestyles of members of the community.

Are we challenged to share God's good news with the ones who don't know God? That though now scarcely distinguishable from one another in some areas, even in Church communities, at the final judgment, the sons of the Kingdom will shine like sun in the Kingdom of their Father. What an offer by the grace of God alone, and all people of every nation are invited to come on board as God's family. The only identity we were created for, to become children of God!

Paul's letter in Romans 8:12-25, 26-28 sums this up beautifully, so let's read through this text again.

Vs.12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, because if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all those led by God's Spirit are God's sons. You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father!" The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ- if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us. For the creation eagerly awaits with anticipation for God's sons to be revealed....

Vs.26 In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unspoken groaning. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Vs.28 We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.... AMEN

Closing Prayer