

The Parable of the Net

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[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew and to the 13th chapter, Matthew chapter 13.

We're continuing to look at the book of Matthew and we've been in chapter 13 looking at the kingdom parables and really we've come to the last of those, the seventh, which is the parable of the net.

So if you'll look there with me, it's Matthew 13 verses 47 through 50. Jesus says there, 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 good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come 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. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word and we ask that you'd be with us now and give understanding as your word is opened.

[1 : 22] We pray that you'd be glorified in your word and Lord, we pray that you'd work in the hearts of all who are gathered here. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. So here Jesus gives another parable and he speaks to them about fishing.

Now the technique of fishing that he describes here would have been one that was very familiar to many of the disciples because they were fishermen. They knew exactly what he was speaking of. It was their daily trade.

Some of us probably have fished and this still yet would be different than what we're used to. I hope you're not out fishing in Pennsylvania waters at least with nets drawing in the fish.

But they're commercial fishermen and so there's this example. They would have used flat bottom boats. It says the nets cast out. Oftentimes it was thrown with an anchor near the shore and they would ride out in a boat and kind of ride out in an ark and come back.

And as they come in to the shore and they pull the net in, the fish are caught. Even as he describes it here, it may be that they threw out a cast net and they're drawing it back in. It's filled. But you have this picture of them drawing fish into a net.

[2 : 27] He says this is what the kingdom of heaven is like. Now before we look at the parable itself, let me just say that as Jesus is describing this, he's not speaking to the crowds here.

He's speaking only to the disciples. At the beginning of the chapter, we see he's speaking to the crowds. I don't know that I really highlighted this in the last message, but we see in verse 36 a shift.

Then he left the crowds and went into the house and his disciples came to him saying, explain to us the parable of the weeds and of the field. There he explains it. Then he gives the parable of the hidden treasure, the pearl of great value, and the parable of the net.

It seems as though he's giving this exclusively to his disciples. And really by using the details of their own life, the conclusion is unavoidable that the message in this parable isn't for everyone.

He's speaking specifically to the disciples. He's speaking to those who in many ways were his followers, the ones who would be identified in what we might think of as Christian.

[3 : 26] And here they are following Jesus. And he's speaking to Jesus' followers and saying, this is what the kingdom of heaven is like. It's like this net. And so we could say today that here's a parable that's specifically marked out as for the visible church.

It's for those who claim to be followers of Jesus. It's a reminder for us of something about the kingdom. And there really are a lot of similarities between this parable and the parable that he shared with the larger crowd of the wheat and terrors, of the wheat and the weeds.

They both deal with the midnature of the kingdom, which we'll talk a little bit about in this message. Before the judgment, the kingdom is going to be mixed. It's not purely believers. In both parables, we have the angels that are doing the work of the gathering and of the separating.

There are even key phrases that are repeated in both of these parables, such as, at the end of the age and exactly word for word, throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

And so while he explained that parable to the disciples, here he gives another one specifically for them to hear and to understand. And so what does this parable teach us about the final judgment and about the separation that will happen in that day?

[4 : 39] I've taken four points by James Montgomery Boyce, who summarized this, and I've just tried to adapt these as I look at what does it teach us about this before we draw some longer application and conclusion.

So four things we're looking at about this parable that teaches us about the final judgment and the separation that will happen at the day. So first, that it will be thorough.

So the time of mixture in any form will come to an end. I've said already that we live in a day and age where the kingdom isn't readily identifiable for us. As we look around at the church, there are some who are believers in the church and there's unbelievers in the church.

And we can't identify which is which. But what we see in this parable is that that day, one day will come to an end. And so we have this example again, this parable of the fisherman.

He throws his net out. Maybe we could even specifically in terms of how maybe you guys fish. If you've ever fished, you've thrown your line out, you get a hit, you catch something, you don't often know what it is, so you get it up out of the water.

[5 : 45] He's saying the kingdom of heaven is a little bit like that. The net's drawn in. Fish of every kind. It's indiscriminate. But there comes a day when it has to be separated. My son and I, every year, go fishing out on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River.

We love it. There's some good fish there. We catch some smallmouth bass. We catch some trout. But every now and then, not every now and then, lately it's been two-thirds of the time, we catch suckerfish.

Suckerfish. Not good eating. Ugly little fish. Creepy looking. You get it out and you have to decide when you bring the fish in, what am I going to do with it? Does this one go in the bag that we're taking back to fry later tonight?

Or does this one get thrown back in? Or disposed of in other ways? Exactly what's happening here. In the end of the kingdom, as the kingdom draws in people from every sort, there ultimately will be a separation, a thorough separation where they will decide, is this one good or are they evil?

But it's a reminder for us, what we see in verse 47, it says that they gathered in fish of every kind. So again, we see the indiscriminate nature. But it's a reminder for us as well that we live in an age of mixture.

[6 : 57] We live in an age where things aren't black and white. It's not clear. It's not pure within the church. This is true for us even as Christians. We experience that, don't we?

For the Christian, we know that we are righteous in Jesus Christ. But yet are we righteous, maybe in our lifestyle, in our behavior?

I think of what Paul says in Romans 7. The things I want to do, I don't do. The things I don't want to do, I just keep on doing. Oh, wretched man that I am. And so we experience this personally, that we live in an age of mixture.

And we understand as well that when the kingdom finally comes to its end, when it's consummated finally, when Jesus returns, we understand for the Christian, that's going to come to an end as well.

We will be glorified. We'll no longer have that internal struggle that we have of wanting to honor God with what we do and not being able to. Or not wanting to sin and feeling like, we just keep on doing, I can't stop it.

[8 : 00] One day, as for the Christian, we will be glorified. And we will do what we want to do, and we won't do what we don't want to do. And that will be a glorious time for us. But the parable in particular is speaking of the church.

And so just as it's true for us in this day and age that we live in a time of mixture, even as Christians, so too it's true of the church. Believers and unbelievers are mingled together in the church, and we cannot always identify which is which.

I said when we looked at the parable of the wheats and the tares that we, even church leaders, we're going to be fooled at times, we will receive people into membership in the church that one day may have to be excommunicated because we think they're not genuinely saved.

There'll be others who will acknowledge they're not saved and they'll walk away from the faith. And we will have been fooled. We will have thought they were converted. There'll be others, though, that we will receive into the church that we'll think are converted, who will go about their life looking saved on the outside, only when that separation comes for them to be cast aside, that they never were saved, that we were deceived in it.

I said as well back in that previous sermon that we also see that there will even be false believers who will be leaders in the church. There will be men who are pastors or elders or deacons in the church who are never even converted.

[9 : 28] And the reality is, we're going to get fooled. Even within the church, even within solid churches, it's going to happen. I think all you have to do is turn on TVN or one of the Christian television stations to see there's obviously unconverted people who are claiming to be pastors and leaders.

But I'm saying even within solid churches, there's going to be times in which people are going to be fooled. I don't know about you, but for me, that's hard sometimes.

I like everything in my life to be clearly defined. Good and bad. I want to know what's right, what's wrong. I don't like gray areas. I want it all to be clearer. And that's just not the way things are going to be in this age of the church.

The church will never be pure in this age. But the time of mixture is coming to an end. And at the end of the age, God will gather all people unto himself and he will divide them rightly.

Now, if I don't like that things are gray in this day and age, I ought to and we ought to like that God will settle this rightly. Because if there's something else that's a struggle for many of us, it's the problem that it seems like people get away with things that are wrong.

[10 : 40] And we want to be the judge and we want to say, well, this is wrong. And we want to punish people for what they've done wrong. And we want our sins to be overlooked. But, you know, we want to judge rightly. And there's coming a day when God will judge rightly.

He will set this right. All humans will find themselves in one group or the other. You see there's no other choice again. He draws all the fish in. There are the fish that you eat or sell.

And there are the fish that you get rid of. Those are the two choices. And so, too, as he draws all people of every kind into the kingdom, as we're brought into that day of judgment, some will be brought ultimately into the kingdom.

We'll be into his presence. There will be others who will be cast into hell. So either we will be blessed in heaven, we will be glorified, we will be cleansed from all evil, we will be in the presence of our Savior, or we will be in hell without Christ and without hope.

And all that is good in our lives will be stripped away from us. All the good that we know is a reflection of God and his goodness. And to be separated from that is what one would face in hell.

[11 : 52] So there will be a thorough separation. It's not up to us to separate. We do our best in many ways in terms of who do we receive into the church and who do we allow to be elders. But ultimately, it's going to be a time of mixture.

But God will judge and he will do so thoroughly. Secondly, the judgment, the separation will be definite. It's definite in two ways.

First, God has determined to do it. And he has established the grounds of separation. There's no way of getting around this. There is coming a day of judgment. God's determined it. It will happen.

There's nothing that we can do to change this reality. It will come to pass at the very end of this age. Secondly, it's definite in the sense that the basis of judgment and acceptance is trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To put it in terms of the other parables we've seen, have you received the good seed of the gospel? Is there fruit in your life that would testify to the fact that you're genuinely saved? Have you laid everything else aside to gain the hidden treasure or that pearl of great price?

[13 : 03] Is your hope of eternal life in Christ and in Christ alone? Those are the terms for entrance into the kingdom and those things cannot be changed. Now, I thought, I could argue there's a third way, but it really goes into the third point.

So, the third way that this is definite and into my third point is that the judgment is permanent. It's definite in the fact that we can't change it after the fact either. There is no time in which someone would be cast into hell and later they're going to repent and be brought ultimately into Christ's presence.

It's permanent. This separation is permanent. Some are kept while the others are thrown back. Some are kept while the others are thrown into hell or the lake of fire.

If you are without Christ on that day, you will be without Him forever. Maybe that will help to understand what I mean when I say it's permanent. I think oftentimes we put decisions off until later.

I find two things often happen in my life. One is I put a decision off until later only to realize there comes a day when I needed it and I didn't buy the item after all. Right? It's like, oh, I wish I would have had that, but I didn't get it.

[14 : 12] And then there's the other extreme. My wife could testify to this in plenty if you're interested, but I have a tendency to save something. And I think I'll need this one day.

And then what seems to inevitably happen is I don't use it for, okay, I was going to say a year or two, but the truth, I don't use it for a few decades. You know, it sits there. And then one day we're cleaning out the house, we get rid of it.

And what always happens, some of you can testify to this, I'm sure, you end up needing it like the week or the month after you get rid of it. Right? And so there's coming a time for us too in our lives where the end will come, the day of needing will be there and there's no turning back at that point.

Either we have faith in Jesus Christ or we don't. Once the judgment happens, there's nothing we can change about it. And so the fear ought to be, what if I put it off too long?

And it's specifically speaking to the visible church here. He's speaking to those of you in this room who maybe hear the gospel preached day in, day out, and maybe you think, this is good, I won't accept it, but not yet.

[15 : 22] Right? Not yet. For whatever reason, now doesn't seem like the time to do it. But the reality is, both on a personal level, our death can come at any moment.

And once that happens, we can't change. Can't change our mind, we can't decide after that to become converted. But the reality that we put off that we don't give much thought to so often is, Christ is returning.

And the day Christ returns, he will bring with him the judgment. All men will be judged and will be separated into one group or the other. And so, there is no change afterward. I'm sorry, I don't believe that there's going to be some period of years in which we'll know Christ has returned and we'll get to trust in him afterwards.

When Christ returns, it's the end, it's over. And what you've decided, what you've committed your life to, there's no turning back at that point. And so, are you prepared for that day?

That day of judgment, the day even of your death? And I think part of the encouragement of this parable is don't put that off. Today is the day of repentance.

[16 : 40] In that day, there will be no opportunity for repentance. It will be too late at that point. And so, the day for trusting in Jesus Christ will be past when he comes.

It will be past when we die. And so, I encourage all of you to search your hearts and deal with that issue now. Don't put it off. Decide today, are you trusting in Jesus Christ or not?

And even in light of what we've seen in these parables, am I okay with the consequences of my decision? If you're saying, I'm not trusting in Jesus Christ today, do you believe the words that he's saying here?

That those who don't trust in Jesus Christ will be cast eternally away from him into a place of fire, into a place where there'll be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Which really leads me to the fourth point that we are taught in this parable, which is, for the wicked, that day will be dreadful. For the wicked, that day will be dreadful.

[17 : 41] Jesus ends the parable with the description of the terrible fate of those who have not trusted after Jesus. He describes it as a fiery furnace.

He says that it will produce weeping and gnashing of teeth. And he says it will not end. I think those are the three things that are really given to us in this parable. A fiery furnace.

Now again, we see that this is a parable. I've heard people try to argue, well, it's not really, literally a fiery furnace. Well, no. But what is it that God's describing here? Does being in a fiery furnace sound pleasant?

I mean, the reality is you understand that you will be there and death is an impossibility for you. And you think about some of the things that you might face in this life, death would be a release.

to be in a fiery furnace, at least you have the assurance, the hope in some ways that this won't last forever, that you'll die.

[18 : 44] But in hell, it's not like that. It will be as if it will be like being in a fiery furnace, but there will be no hope of it ever coming to an end, which is my third point about it.

It will not end. And it says it will produce weeping and gnashing of teeth. I know some of you work at hospitals and things. I don't know if you guys have ever been like in a doctor's office or the hospital and you see the back of the door oftentimes or up on the wall, they have that pain chart.

Isn't that always fun? You know, you look on the pain chart, you're supposed to see what number you are on the smiley faces. You have like a one and a pain. I'm still smiling. I'm in pain, but I'm happy. And then you have like 10 and they're, you know, the face is turned, it's red and it's crying, you know, and they've got a frowny face and one of them is, did you lose consciousness?

Did it, you know, did it cause you to be nauseous? Did you pass out from the pain? And it's always fun to try to figure out where you are on the chart. I think about the idea of this is a pain that's going to cause weeping and gnashing of teeth and we can think of crying.

I think crying is extended here. Weeping is something, I think, more than crying. It's a crying that doesn't come to an end. It's an uncontrolled crying. But the idea of gnashing of teeth, the grinding of your teeth, you're in so much pain that you want it to stop and there's no end to that.

[20 : 02] And so you grind your teeth in pain. And again, the reality is you look at that chart and you see, oh, there's a point in which my pain would be so bad, I'd just pass out, I don't have to keep dealing with it.

That's not the reality of hell, is it? There will be a continued eternal consciousness, there's no sleep, there's no rest, an eternal consciousness of pain, of weeping, of gnashing of teeth that will never come to an end.

And so there's coming judgment, there is a coming judgment, and the fate of unbelievers will be terrible in that day. Really, this is the most solemn part of the parable, it's where Jesus ends.

And he's reminding us that the true character of those who belong to the visible church will not remain hidden forever. There's a coming day when all will be revealed. And there's probably some of you in this room that are real happy that your pastor, your elders, and the person sitting next to you in the pew doesn't know what's going on in your heart.

That you're capable in this life of deceiving people. That maybe you look like a believer, but you're not. But what Jesus is teaching us in this parable is that's not going to last forever.

[21 : 20] All that you have hidden so well from everyone else will one day be revealed. And none of it right now is hidden from God. He knows what's going on in your heart. Though I'm deceived, your elders may be deceived, the people around you, even the people in your own family may be deceived, God's not deceived.

And so these things will not remain hidden forever. The angels at the end of the age will oversee a great separation. We've been talking about this some in Sunday school, but we don't distinguish in the gospel.

We offer the gospel freely to people. We preach the gospel, even in the preaching of the word today. We don't have some way of checking people at the door, are you truly a Christian before you get into the service? We preach the gospel freely to all.

But God distinguishes in the last judgment. It's God who makes the final decision. The decision is personal and it's specific.

God's word speaks of the sheep and the goats being separated, the wheat and the tares of the weeds, the good fish and the bad fish. There's a great division coming and all of us in this room will fall into one group or the other.

[22 : 35] And so my fear and I say fear but I know it's a reality that there's some in this room who are Christians in name only, in appearance only, who are professing the name of Jesus Christ but inwardly their heart has not been changed.

They don't really love him, they don't know him, they haven't trusted in him. Their essential character while hidden to the eyes of others is not and cannot be hidden from God. He will judge and the unconverted will be discarded to eternal wrath.

Kelly mentioned earlier about how we shape our identity in life. And for some of us maybe being a Christian is just part of our identity.

We want people to think highly of us, we want them to think we're good people and so we profess the name of Jesus Christ but our heart's not in it, we're not really changed. God's not deceived by that.

In the end, he will judge and the unconverted will be discarded to eternal wrath. And so, though it may seem good to deceive people today, you yourself are deceived if you think God's deceived.

[23 : 48] He knows all and he will judge rightly. It's really the focus, the emphasis of the parable, it's where he ends the parable and it's a sober warning to the disciples and to the visible church.

First, I want to say, just, this gets into my application, I have it later on too so I'll try not to repeat myself, but Jesus is saying this to the disciples. Now, I think probably the most obvious reason that he's saying this to them is because one of the disciples is Judas Iscariot.

And so, understand this isn't some hypothetical teaching Jesus is giving his disciples. He's saying, understand that in the visible church, in the visible kingdom, there are unbelievers.

But God's going to separate in that day. And so, in many ways, Judas is separated. In the end, he, Satan enters him, he serves Satan and he kills himself.

And I have no doubt he's in line with this parable. He's been cast into hell. He's one of the disciples. I mean, I think sometimes how we lift up the idea of, oh, if I could be with Jesus for three years, what a great Christian I would be.

[25 : 05] And maybe we don't equate that with, we have the church, we have the finished word of God. But here you have one man who's professed to be a disciple, who is claiming to be a follower of Jesus, that's what we mean by disciple, a learner, a follower of Jesus Christ, who's unconverted, who's a servant of Satan, and who's cast into hell.

And so Jesus is teaching them, preparing them for, don't be surprised if some of you turn away. It's the reality of what the kingdom of God is. And so, maybe this sounds hypothetical as we're looking at it, but it wasn't even hypothetical for the disciples.

Of the disciples, one of them would turn away. And so too, maybe you guys think I'm crazy up here saying, there's some of you in this room who are professing believers who aren't. I think I'm completely in line with what Jesus says here in the example of the disciples to say if out of 12 of them, one of them wasn't, just look around you in this room.

There are people who are professing faith in Jesus Christ and just on the odds of the disciples versus how many people of you have professed faith and have joined our church, there's maybe eight of you in this room who are professing faith in Jesus Christ who are unconverted, who are deceiving us, maybe even deceiving yourselves.

And the reality that we're presented with, the sober warning is that the drag net's being drawn into the shore. Every day we're closer to the day of judgment. I know how easy it is to think, well, we're 2,000 years in.

[26 : 35] 2,000 years is a long time. My odds of it not happening in my lifetime may be pretty high. It's not at all how God's word presents it.

The day is soon. It's coming. And every day that we postpone, we know that the net's getting closer to the shore. The day of judgment's coming even closer. The day of separation is nearer than it was yesterday.

And so every day it comes closer and one day soon that great catch will be landed and the separation will occur. And if you're in that net and you're not converted, there's a terrible destiny that awaits you.

I don't want that for any of you in this room and it's one reason why we, I think, so faithfully preach the gospel. So, that is the message of this parable.

Now, how does this apply to us? What is some application for us? Well, first, a question I had was, why the repetition? I mean, this really is a lot like the parable that we did in the tares that he gave to the larger crowd.

[27 : 40] Why this repetition just to the disciples? Well, I think Jesus' repetition of this in one way stresses the certainty of the final judgment. Often, repeating something is a way of emphasizing that it's going to happen.

And so, we're warned not once but twice that there's coming a future separation and judgment. You may remember the disciples had expected the kingdom of Christ to be clearly divided between the righteous and the wicked.

They expected it to happen immediately. Jesus would come, he would usher in his kingdom. We've talked about their expectations where he would overthrow the Roman government and he would rule and there'd be those who were on the outside, the bad people and there'd be the good people who were serving his kingdom and it'd be obvious who's who.

And the difficult thing I think for the disciples and probably still for us some today is that Jesus has come, the kingdom has been inaugurated, the kingdom currently is now, but it's still not all that clear, is it?

We can't even make a distinction between the church and the world in some ways because a visible church is mingled even with those in the world. And so, just as they wanted it, we too probably want things to be more clear cut than they are and they're not.

[29 : 01] And so, they wanted the kingdom to be clearly divided and Jesus is saying, it's certain, the kingdom will be divided, but it's not yet.

Now is not the time of that. Rather, they were to focus their their attention, their efforts on the proclamation of the gospel and not expect the kingdom to be perfectly made up only of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ultimately, our job is to share the gospel. We preach the gospel of people, we depend on the spirit to do the work, and we have to confess and admit, we don't know who's converted and not.

And ultimately, it's not our responsibility to make that separation. And so, we must recognize that there will be many in the church who profess Christ but don't really know him and our business is to make sure that we're not one of those.

I said our responsibility is to share the gospel, but probably our greatest responsibility is to know for certain where do we stand in relation to this. Have I put my trust in Jesus Christ and in Christ alone for my salvation, or am I hoping in anything else?

[30 : 07] So, he repeats this, I think, to drive home the certainty of the judgment and because it's so important for us to evaluate where we are in relation to Christ.

Secondly, in application, the kingdom of heaven has invaded the world in the coming of Jesus Christ. He has inaugurated the kingdom and it can be seen. It's been made visible even though it's mingled.

What we would call the visible church. But do you understand the implications of that? The kingdom gathers in this great indiscriminate catch. It's bringing in people who are believers and unbelievers alike.

Fish of all kinds are landed and in the net and there are some fish that can only be rejected, but there are in the net those who are saved.

And there will be some who will stay in that net until the separation finally comes. So in the visible church, sitting under the sand of the gospel week in and week out, there are some people who are not going to heaven.

[31 : 14] There are some people who have not trusted in Jesus Christ. There are those who have attached themselves to the church. Maybe they've joined the church. Again, they've been caught in the net as it were.

And for all kinds of reasons other than repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, they have identified themselves as Christians. And so we're reminded the church is and will remain amidst assembly of regenerate and unregenerate people until that final day.

The kingdom has already begun, but we haven't seen the final consummation of it. Thirdly, that final separation is coming. It's getting nearer every day. Not all who sit in the pew will be in heaven.

That's sobering. But we need to hear it. He repeats it because it's also helpful for us. There's a temptation in all of us to think that we're safe because we go to church.

Or maybe because we read our Bible. Or we pray a certain amount of time. Or to look for any kind of words that we do to say, this is what makes me right with God. But we're reminded that sitting in a pew sitting under a sermon, participating in church, serving at the food distribution, whatever it may be in our Christian life, that doesn't save us.

[32 : 38] It's also helpful because it corrects our inaccurate expectations of the church. I think there's probably no one who won't be ultimately disappointed as they look at the church and realize, sometimes the people in the church treat me just like the world treats me.

They sin against me. They wrong me. It upsets me. But I think there are two things to realize. One, on the personal level that we spoke of to realize that those who are truly saved are also still sinners.

They are righteous in Christ and they still commit sin. And so believers are still going to sin against you. It's going to happen, right? We're not yet there. That day hasn't come. We're not yet glorified. But also to understand that not everyone in the church is saved even if they profess the name of Jesus Christ.

Now, that's not to encourage you to start trying to assess based on how people treat you or if they're saved or not. Well, you know, they treated me that way because they're not saved. No, that's not the point. But to encourage you to have realistic expectations in interacting with the church.

People are going to sin against you. That's going to be hard. But the church has not been purified and we have not yet been glorified. And we have to be gracious in our understanding of both the church and other individuals because that day hasn't come yet.

[34 : 01] And so knowing that ought to help us to adjust our expectations so that we're not surprised when the church that now is fails to be the perfect church that one day will be. So the parable of the dragnet ought to help us to practice patience with the church of Jesus Christ.

To understand that it's an imperfect church even while we strive together to be who we're called to be in the Lord. Fourthly, remember that Jesus isn't saying these words to the masked crowds.

He's saying them to disciples. He's saying it to the church. I could say he's saying it to the visible church which is us. He's saying it to all of you who are in this room. And so again, look around you.

There are some people in this room that are going to end up in hell. That ought to trouble us. That ought to break our hearts. We ought to be concerned for one another. I know the American way is to look out for ourselves, to take care of ourselves and try to just stay out of people's lives.

And more and more we're being pushed to not be involved in other people's lives, not to judge them. What's good for you is good for you. What's good for them is good for them. Just stay out of their lives. But I think that cannot be an option for those of us in the church.

[35 : 18] We have to realize that there are some around us who are headed for hell. Do we care about those people? Are we praying each day? Did you pray before you came in here this Sunday that someone would be converted today?

That God would save someone? Ultimately, it's not dependent upon my preaching. It's not dependent upon your sharing of the gospel.

It's dependent upon the spirit. Do we live that out in our prayer life? Are we really praying that God would work in our hearts and work in the hearts of others before the preaching of the word?

Before we gather together for church? Do we realize that there are some in this room that if they continue in their current state that they will be lost?

Do we understand that hell is real? And that sitting in church with an unconverted heart is no immunity against its flames. In fact, God actually makes it clear that there's greater judgment for those who have greater knowledge.

[36 : 22] So I've said this in a recent sermon. There's part of me that just wants to say if you're absolutely sure you're never going to go to heaven, you're not going to trust in Jesus Christ, get out now. The judgment's going to be worse for you if you keep sitting here.

But my hope is that as you sit here that the Lord would do the work that you think is impossible. That he will change your heart and that you'll be delivered from that judgment. And fifthly, I want to point you to the reality that there is a place of safety.

Jesus is given this parable. It's one of those fire and brimstone parables, literally because he references the fire and the brimstone, doesn't he? It's like a flaming furnace. But there's also a place of safety and that place of safety is Jesus Christ.

He has quenched the flames for all who turn to him and trust in him. No one in this room need die and perish eternally and face the wrath of God.

No one needs to because God has provided Jesus Christ. There's a Savior. If you will trust in him, you will be saved.

[37 : 28] And so, this parable, the parable of the wheat and the weeds, they're like a warning alarm going off to those in the church. This sermon is really echoing that alarm.

You guys ever been in places where they do the alarms? I remember in school, you know, we'd have the fire drills and things like that. But you ever been in a place where there's always these false alarms?

They're going off and finally you just learn to ignore them? You know, the alarm goes off all the time so you just like, just don't worry about that. there's something wrong with the system. It just doesn't work.

And there's that temptation that Jesus' parable here is meant to be an alarm for you to say, run to Christ. Flee to him.

Get your life right with him before that day of judgment comes, before the day of your death comes. Do it now. And there's some of you who are just ignoring it. Maybe it's like the alarm in the mornings when you get up.

[38 : 28] It's like snooze. I'll deal with that later. Snooze. No big deal. But the reality is that that day is coming closer. Each day the dragnet draws itself closer to the shore.

And so please don't leave here without running to Jesus Christ for your safety. Put your trust in Christ and in Christ alone. Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word.

We thank you even for the fact that it is an alarm that's sounding to us. And we pray for those who are in this room that you would work in their heart, that you would draw them to yourself, that they would heed the alarm and run to Christ for safety.

Lord, we pray that you give us a heart for the lost, that we would pray each week before we come in here that you would work in the hearts of those who don't know you to save them.

Lord, maybe people who have been sitting here years or decades even, who yet don't know you, that you would save them. Lord, give us a heart that we would invite people to church, that we would share the gospel with them, that we would want to see them sitting here knowing that though it may mean greater judgment, there's also a cry, an alarm, the gospel's going out and that your spirit works through the preaching of the gospel that you would work and save.

[39 : 52] And so, Lord, we pray for those in this room that they would know you, that they would put their trust in you. Lord, we pray for those who are Christians in this room that you would help us to live our life in light of these realities, that we would not have false expectations of the church, that we would understand what this age is that we live in.

Lord, also that we would be burdened for the lost, even those that are in our presence each Sunday. We pray all these things in Christ's name. Amen.