

# Ears to Hear

*Getting to the Point of the Parables*

## 2. Further into the Fields

*The Parable of the weeds*

Matthew 13v 24-30 & v36-43

*“Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.”*

– Matthew 13v 34

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

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## Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:

*It is estimated that in the synoptic Gospels, (Matthew, Mark and Luke) around one third of Jesus' words are found in His parables. If then, we are really interested in understanding Jesus; how He thought and taught, then we would do well to look at these penetrative illustrations more closely.*

*Yet it is sad to so often hear parables talked about in such a bland and predictable way. Western Christians have not only sought to instantly spiritualise the parables, but to sanitise them also. This is both tragic and ironic. The parables carry force, humour and an uncomfortably subversive message within their short, but devastating storylines.*

*In order for us not only to understand the parables, but also to hear the heart of Christ's teaching, we must return to Biblical times; unravel our well-worn, but often misinformed opinions and take our place not only within the culture but also the crowds of Jesus' day. Only then can we hope to hear His valiant voice and feel the force of the parables. The aim of this series is just that.*

*Scripture's message is a timeless one, yet its voice is all but lost if we simply jump to our own cultural conclusions and force the parables to fit our own situation. Only a rigorous, prayerful approach can yield the rich rewards contained within the parables: We must ask what was going on in Israel at the time of Christ, socially, spiritually and economically? The answers to these and other questions help us to contextualise the rather lurid backdrops that Jesus paints as He makes His parabolic points. Why Jesus spoke in such memorable ways is intriguing and of great importance to us all. There are lessons to learn and lives to be touched for the cause of Christ and the parables point the way He would have us go.*

*This series finds its title from the words of Christ Himself: If we truly have "ears to hear," we will approach these studies with humility, diligence and an expectancy that the parables of Jesus might leap of the sacred page and into our hearts, not simply so we get the point, but rather that we might also go on to live in the light of the lessons they so vividly teach us.*

*Do you have ears to hear? Then get into the point of the parables!*

*"He who has ears to hear, let him hear..." - Luke 8v 8*

### **Further into the Fields: The Parable of the Weeds**

*Why did Jesus tell two similar parables so close together? The Parable of the Sower followed so closely by the Parable of the Weeds present those listening with very similar scenes. Did Jesus not made His point forcefully enough the first time? Were the people so dull that He had to spell it out again so soon? At first glance, the parables of the Sower and the Weeds are almost identical: Sowers, seeds and fields, with both the potential and problems every farmer faces. These were familiar ingredients in a world where agricultural imagery was commonplace. Also, as with the parable of the Sower, Jesus goes on to explain privately to His disciples the meaning of this second parable of the weeds. So why did Jesus reintroduce these same storylines so quickly? A closer reading shows that whilst the parables have some obvious similarities, they are actually quite different. If anything, the parable of the weeds introduces more compelling details that flesh out the previous parable and introduce Jesus' listeners to some of the more dramatic aspects of God's purposes.*

*Great spiritual realities are brought before us in the parable of the weeds. We become aware of God's kingdom, of Satan's destructive influence and of coming judgment at the end of time within this sobering seed story. As always, Jesus looks for those with "ears to hear." In His explanation to the disciples, Jesus exhorts both them and us to heed the warning of the weeds and trust the One who can reap a rich harvest in our lives if we are willing to look to Him as Lord of the harvest. Seeking to live for God's Kingdom amidst a world of wicked weeds is a challenge, especially as they are designed to undermine His purposes in our lives. Jesus exhorts anyone with ears to hear to follow Him by faith, enter God's Kingdom and resist the devil, remembering that one day we will all give account of our choices in these matters to God.*

#### **Each week – Getting to the Point of the Parables:**

*A simple way of studying parables could include these 3 questions:*

***Look at the Picture in the Parable: What is Jesus describing?***

***Listen to the Punch line of the Parable: What is Jesus saying?***

***Learn from the Purpose of the Parable: What is Jesus expecting?***

**Read: Matthew 13v 24-30 & v36-43**

**Key words:** *Kingdom, enemy, wheat, weeds*

- **The Sower and His Scope: *Jesus and the Kingdom of heaven***  
*The Son of Man has come to herald God's Kingdom: When Christ is received in faith, this Kingdom breaks in with blessing and power.*
- **The Saboteur and his Scheme: *Satan and the desire to destroy***  
*Described as "an enemy" in the parable, Satan opposes God and accuses Christians. His chief objective is to distract, distort and destroy the work of God work in our lives.*
- **The Wheat and the Weeds: *God and the judgement to come***  
*At the end of time God will judge all of human kind. On that day, He will deal fairly and finally with all evil and reward the righteous.*

**Ears to Hear?**

- ***Call of the Kingdom: Am I aware of God's Kingdom?***  
*How often do you think about being part of the Kingdom of heaven?*  
  
*How should awareness of God's Kingdom affect the way you live?*  
  
*In what ways could God's "Kingdom come" more in your life?*
- ***Behind Enemy Lines: Am I aware of the devil's activity?***  
*Jesus tells of "an enemy" describing the activity of the devil.*  
  
*Do you believe the devil is real and to what extent are you aware of his activity?*  
  
*What are the dangers in under/overestimating the devil's influence?*  
  
*Why do you think the wheat and the weeds are left to grow together?*
- ***Wheat or Weeds: Am I aware of God's judgement?***  
*How often do you think about living in the light of judgement day?*  
  
*What will you present to God as service for Him on that day?*  
  
*What sin still needs to be confessed and removed from your life?*