

# An Enemy in the Neighborhood

by Warren Wiersbe

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*The parable of the chairs teaches us about the struggle between God's good seed and Satan's bad seed, and how Satan tries to counterfeit God's work.*

**Duration:** 57:48

**Scripture:** Matthew 13:37, Matthew 13:51, Acts 20:29, 2 Corinthians 11:13, Galatians 1:6, 1 John 3:12, Revelation 2:9

**Topics:** "Spiritual Warfare", "Discernment"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the parable of the chairs in Matthew chapter 13, highlighting the dual sowers at work in the world - Jesus sowing good seed and Satan sowing counterfeits. It emphasizes the presence of counterfeit believers, the lineage of the devil's children from Cain to false ministers in the New Testament, and the importance of discernment to identify counterfeits. The sermon stresses the need to be alert, avoid detours, have a global concern, and maintain a long-term perspective in the spiritual battle against counterfeits. It concludes with a call to be faithful stewards who share both old and new treasures of God's Word.

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## Transcript

In the parable of the chairs, found in Matthew chapter 13, the Lord Jesus is... Thank you, you're so gifted. Now, if we'd have called a committee meeting, they would have lowered the platform. In the parable of the chairs, in Matthew chapter 13, our Lord lists seven elements that are involved in this parable, and they are given down in Matthew 13 and beginning at verse 37.

The one who sows the good seed is the son of man, so our Lord identifies himself as the sower. The good seed, the field is the world, and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom. And so our Lord Jesus Christ is planting seed, and we are that seed.

The chairs, the weeds, are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil. So in this field of the world, there are two sowers at work. Our Lord Jesus is sowing the good seed, and wherever the Lord Jesus sows good seed, that is people, the children of the kingdom, the children of God, wherever he sows the children of the kingdom, Satan comes and sows a counterfeit.

That's the basic message of the parable of the chairs. Now we want to look now, having gotten as far as the good seed, we'd like to look at the bad seed now, namely the chairs, the sons of the evil one. These are counterfeit believers, and immediately we are faced with the fact that Satan is an imitator.

We'll talk more about that in just a minute. But I want to dwell now on this matter of Satan having a family. All of us know John chapter 3, you must be born again.

Those who receive him become the children of God. The Holy Spirit enters into us. Our bodies become his temple, his tool.

And yet there's a frightening verse in John chapter 13, where we read about Judas, one of the disciples, and Satan entered in to him. That's a frightening statement. We want to talk now about the children, the children of the devil.

Let's go back to the very beginning, Genesis chapter 3, and verse 15. This is the beginning of the gospel in the Bible. Man has sinned, woman has sinned.

Now they are going to die. They have died spiritually, they shall one day die physically. God the Father came and found them, forgave them, clothed them, and made a promise.

Chapter 3 and verse 15. The theologians call this the first mention of the gospel in the Bible. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed, he's talking to the serpent, and her seed.

Paul picks this up in Galatians and says the seed, her seed, means Christ. He, that is the seed of the serpent, shall bruise you, the seed of the woman, he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel. This is the promise that a redeemer would come and conquer Satan.

But the interesting statement here is Satan's seed. The first child of the devil that you find in scripture is in the next chapter, chapter 4. His name was Cain. You say, what is your authorization for that? We're told this in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 15, where the Apostle John says, don't love the way Cain loved.

He was of that evil one. Now you know the story of Cain and Abel. Both men were religious, but only one had saving faith.

Cain was at the altar offering a sacrifice and was warned of God. His sacrifice was not accepted. He was warned of God.

Sin is crouching at the door. Watch out. Instead of watching out, Cain opened the door.

Sin came in. He killed his brother. In John chapter 8, verse 44, a verse you've often used, our Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees and the religious leaders, you are of your father, the devil.

He was a murderer and he was a liar from the beginning. Cain was a murderer. He killed his brother.

Cain was a liar. Where is your brother? I know not, am I my brother's keeper? And so the first of the children of the devil is Cain, who imitated faith, but didn't have it. Who lied and who murdered.

Now throughout the Old Testament, there are several instances of false people, false religions, false worshippers, imitating the things of God. But I want us to move to the New Testament, starting with Matthew chapter 3. Remember our thesis, wherever the Lord Jesus plants a true child of God, a ministry of a true child of God, Satan comes and plants a counterfeit. Matthew chapter 3. God planted John the Baptist.

Called of God, prepared of God, John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. Jesus called John the Baptist the greatest prophet that ever appeared. And John the Baptist comes preaching and calling people to repentance.

And he looks out at his congregation. I wouldn't dare do this, but he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. And he was the called of God, great prophet.

Verse 7 of Matthew chapter 3. But when he, John the Baptist, saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, you brood of vipers, that would endear you to your congregation. Now there may have been times you felt like saying that, but the fruit of the Spirit is self-control, so you did not. I heard about a preacher's son who did not know any cuss words, naturally, and he was being tormented by the school bully.

And this preacher's boy was groping for something to call this bully, and finally he said, oh, you board member, you. Well, I don't know where he would have learned that, but John the Baptist knew that in this vast congregation that came, there were children of the devil. And I've heard people say, if you're not a child of God, you're a child of the devil.

I don't find that anywhere in the Bible. I don't find anywhere in the four Gospels where Jesus looked at a prostitute and said, you child of the devil. Or he looked at a publican or a reprobate Jew who had quit going to the temple and the synagogue and said, you child of the devil.

There's only one crowd that John the Baptist and Jesus ever addressed with that title, the scribes and the Pharisees. And who were they? Well, they were the self-righteous people, religious to the core, and rejected their Messiah and crucified him. So John the Baptist looks at them and says, you generation of vipers.

Now just turn the page to Matthew chapter 12. Matthew chapter 12. They have accused Jesus of being in league with the devil.

Here he is performing these marvelous miracles of mercy. Satan is a destroyer. He's not a healer.

And they said he belongs to Beelzebub, and he said, you better be careful what you're talking about. And down in verse 33 of Matthew 12, our Lord says, either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad. For the tree is known by its fruit.

You brood of vipers. How can you, being evil, speak what is good? And so our Lord picked up the same language of John the Baptist and looked at this religious crowd. I'm sure when John the Baptist said this, people were shocked.

Because to the people of that day, if anybody was going to heaven, the Pharisees were. They tithed. They prayed at the drop of a hat.

They quoted scripture. They defended the law. The Sadducees didn't have the same faith as the Pharisees because they did not believe in a spirit world.

But John let them know they belonged to the same family. You brood of vipers. Now, chapter 23.

Immediately you say, well, chapter 23 of Matthew is when our Lord really let the Pharisees have it. Whoa unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. I have a suspicion, I can't prove it, but I have a suspicion that

when our Lord preached this terrible sermon, terrible not because he preached it, but because of the terror involved in the life they were living, there was anguish in his heart.

There was anguish. I hear people saying, the time has come for Christians to be angry. And my Bible says the wrath of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God.

But if you're talking about anguish, I'm with you. You say, what's the difference? Anguish is anger plus love. You want to see anguish? Look at Jesus.

Look at Jeremiah, who wept and wept and said, Lord, help me to weep even more. So with anguish in his heart, in chapter 23, the Lord Jesus is telling the truth about the scribes and the Pharisees. Notice verse 15.

Whoa to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte. And when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. What was he calling them? Children of the devil.

You look at verse 33 of the same chapter. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell? And so God sowed John the Baptist, and the devil sowed the Pharisees and the scribes. Jesus was sent by the Father, and the scribes and Pharisees showed up.

Well, turn to the book of Acts, chapter 13. Acts chapter 13. The apostle Paul with Barnabas is out on the first missionary journey.

They've come to Cyprus, and Paul is trying to win a man to Christ. Look at verse 10. Elymas, the magician, the sorcerer, shows up, and Paul says in verse 10, you who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness.

God picks up Paul, plants him in Cyprus. The devil says, I'll match that. And along comes a child of the devil to oppose the work of God.

The apostle Paul makes an interesting statement in 2 Corinthians chapter 11. We're going to look at this chapter several times tonight in passing. Chapter 11 of 2 Corinthians in verse 26.

He's listing some of the experiences he had as an apostle. He's not doing it to boast or to brag. He's simply saying, this is what the Lord has enabled me to endure.

I have been on frequent journeys. Now, that's enough for me right there. In dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren.

Wherever Paul went, the children of the devil showed up to oppose the work of God. I think it's important that we keep in mind that Satan is a counterfeiter. And because he is a counterfeiter, we have to have discernment.

I said a few minutes ago, there are people who say, if you're not a child of God, you're a child of the devil. I don't find that biblical for two reasons. Number one, nowhere do we find any prophet or any preacher or Jesus or John the Baptist or Paul calling everyday sinners children of the devil.

According to Ephesians chapter 2, I was born by nature a child of wrath because I inherited from my ancestor Adam a fallen nature. And this nature is under condemnation. So I was born by nature a child of wrath.

But Paul says in Ephesians 2 that by choice, we become children of disobedience. Now, a child of wrath who is a child of disobedience through faith in Jesus can become a child of God. But suppose you don't do that.

Suppose you don't just simply reject Jesus. You adopt a substitute. What happens then? And I believe that when Jesus called these people children of the devil, he was making a statement.

They're counterfeit. They act as though and talk as though they have the real thing, but they're counterfeit. Now, you know from your own Bible study that in the New Testament, we are warned over and over again to watch out for counterfeits.

The greatest problem that the church faces today is not the muck and mire and filth of society. It was just as bad, if not worse, back in Paul's day. The greatest problem we face is not on the outside.

It's on the inside. It's within the fellowship. Paul called the Ephesian elders together in Acts chapter 20, and he preached them a farewell sermon.

I've had to preach three farewell sermons in my day, and I think the only time we ever had a unanimous vote in our churches was when I resigned. Paul called the elders together. His speech is recorded in Acts chapter 20, and he reviewed the past, how he'd been faithful to preach the Word of God.

Then he talks about the present. Then he warns them about the future, and this you find in verse 29, Acts 20, 29. It would do every ministry board good occasionally to read this farewell speech.

What does he say? I know that after my departure, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. The church is compared to a flock of sheep. Sheep are defenseless creatures, basically.

So there are wolves that come in. Jesus said, beware of wolves in what? Sheep's clothing, counterfeits. That's not bad enough.

Verse 30, and from among your own selves, oh, from within the church, men will arise speaking perverse things and seeking to draw disciples after them. I want you folks to know that I am no man's disciple, and I don't want anybody to be my disciple. Occasionally somebody comes up and says, oh, Brother Wiersbe, I'm one of your fans, and I say, I'm very sorry, I don't have a fan club.

I have some friends who do, but I don't have a fan club, and I don't want you to follow me. People write and say, I read your book on such and such, I don't agree with it, and I write back and say, I don't write books to try to convince people to follow me. I write what God has taught me, and I hope it'll help you.

If it doesn't, read somebody else. We made a few changes on Back to the Bible when I became general director after Mr. Epp went home, and a lady wrote and said, it just tore me apart for the small changes we'd made. She said, I've been listening to Mr. Epp for 25 years, and boy, she tore into me.

I wrote back and said, I'm so glad you listened to him for 25 years, but it didn't do you any good. I continued, if Mr. Epp were alive today and read this letter, he would weep. She wrote back and apologized.

I think I've gotten about four apology letters in all my years of ministry over the radio. From your own selves, people are going to come up in the church and say, now, follow me. I know of a church in Detroit, Michigan some years back.

A man was teaching a large Sunday school class. He got up one Sunday and said, I think this class is big enough to be a church. Follow me, and pulled the whole crowd out of the church, down the street to another building, and started his own church.

Folks, that's not Christian. So our Lord warns us, and Paul warns the Ephesian elders, watch out for these counterfeits. They'll arise from within, or they'll enter in from without.

John wrote in 1 John chapter 2 about the Antichrist. He said, you have heard that Antichrist is coming. He's here.

There are many Antichrists. Remember, the word A-N-T-I, the Greek prefix, anti, doesn't just mean against. It means instead of.

Instead of Christ, the counterfeit Christ. The tares are the sons of the evil one. Now that leads us immediately into the next element.

The enemy who sows them is the devil. Now I want to zero in, and may the Spirit of God open our hearts, on this whole business of satanic counterfeits. The enemy who sows them is the devil.

The Lord reveals a number of facts about the devil in this parable. Number one, the reality of the devil. Jesus didn't laugh about the devil.

I see these bumper stickers. Bumper stickers are stupid. There are many people who get all their theology from these bumper stickers.

I saw one one day that said the devil made me do it. I wouldn't put that on my car. The devil made me do it.

The reality of Satan. I get a little disturbed when I hear preachers or read books or magazine articles where people say, we don't have to worry about the devil. After all, he's bound.

Somebody told Dr. James M. Gray when he was president of Moody Bible Institute that Satan had been bound. And Dr. Gray quietly replied, it must be a very long chain. Satan is alive and at work.

And our Lord is saying, the kingdom of heaven on this world, the field, there's an enemy loose. And you better take him seriously. Now I know, I know that Satan can do nothing without the will of the Father.

I know that. You know that. And I know that he has a host, an army that assists him.

He has some unsaved people who assist him. He has some Christians who assist him. The reality of Satan.

Our Lord also reveals the enmity of Satan. He is an enemy. He pretends to be a friend.

He can become a masquerader as an angel of light. But he's an enemy. The subtlety of Satan.

What does Satan do when he comes into the field and finds the wheat has been planted? He plants a counterfeit. He can't root up the wheat. He plants a counterfeit.

And they both grow together. Now this matter of planting a counterfeit reveals to me that Satan is not an originator. He's an imitator.

People are looking for things to be original. I don't think there are many original sermons. I don't mean by that people are plagiarizing, although there are people who do that.

I remember reading about a preacher who was preaching his way through a book of sermons he'd bought. Unknown to him, a man in the church had the same book. And as the man was going out of church one Sunday morning, he said, Pastor, that was a great sermon today.

Thank you. He said, next week's is good too. Satan is a counterfeiter.

That's his strategy. Now if we keep that in mind, it'll help us in our witnessing, in our preaching, in our counseling, that people are living on substitutes. And for everything that God wants to give that is so real and so lasting, the devil's got a counterfeit.

Let's just turn the pages of our Bible. And you know these passages well, but I think it's good for us to review them. Galatians chapter 1, Paul tells me that the devil has a counterfeit gospel.

Verse 6, I'm amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, which is really not another. Only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. You ask people, how do you go to heaven? What is the good news? And you'll get some strange answers.

Paul goes on to write, but even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. Now what is the gospel? That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. He was buried.

He arose again the third day according to the scriptures. He was seen of witnesses. That's the gospel.

And we don't have to add anything to it. We certainly shouldn't take anything from it. But Satan has a counterfeit gospel.

That's Galatians chapter 1. This counterfeit gospel leads to what you read about in Romans chapter 9, a counterfeit righteousness. Romans chapter 9. What shall we say then, says Paul in verse 30? Well, this is what we're going to say. That the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith.

But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone just as it is written.

And here's the quotation from the Old Testament prophet. Now verse 10, the verse that was read, Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. And I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not accordance with knowledge.

For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. All of us know many people who are religious, kind, thoughtful,

but you talk to them about the righteousness of Christ through faith. They don't know what you're talking about.

Now these people can be saved. I'm not saying they can't be. I'm saying that Satan does not lead people down a detour to hell by making them dope addicts or drunkards or things like that.

I found it easy when I was in Chicago to witness to people who were down and out. I could walk out of one door at Moody Church and be in Old Town. Old Town was the cesspool of the city.

Old Town was where the teenagers who ran from home would hang out. Old Town is where you would see winos in the gutter. Those people knew they were sinners.

If I walked out another door, I was in the Gold Coast, where the people walked their dogs with ermine wraps and drove around in quiet little Bentleys and Rolls Royces. And you couldn't talk to them about righteousness. They were righteous.

There is a false righteousness. Our Lord told an interesting parable about a man who was demon-possessed, and then the demon decided to leave. And the man cleaned up his life, but he was empty.

The most dangerous condition is that of emptiness. And the demon decided to come back and went and got some friends to go with him. And his latter end was worse than the first.

A false righteousness. So there is a false gospel leading to a false righteousness. We go back to 2 Corinthians 11.

This false gospel is preached by false ministers, false teachers. 2 Corinthians 11. 13.

The sequence is not hard to forget. There's a false gospel that leads to a false righteousness, and it's preached by false ministers. We go on.

Ultimately, you're going to find them gathering together in what the Apostle John in the book of Revelation calls a false church. The second chapter of the book of the Revelation. He says to the church at Smyrna in verse 9, I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you are rich.

I like that little parenthesis there. If you were to visit the churches of Asia Minor at that day, you would have concluded that the church of Laodicea was the richest, and the church at Smyrna was the poorest. If Smyrna had called you, you wouldn't have accepted the call.

If Laodicea had called you, you'd accept it. But of Laodicea, he says, you're poor. Oh, you've got everything, but you're poor.

But he says to Smyrna, you're rich. I know your tribulation, your poverty, and the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, that is, God's people, and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. The word synagogue means to gather together, an assembly of Satan.

By the way, this is repeated in chapter 3 of the book of the Revelation, verse 9. Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan. So Satan has a false gospel that leads to a false righteousness. It is proclaimed by false ministers, and these people gather together in a false assembly.

And of course, ultimately, this is going to culminate in a false Christ. I don't want to go into it now. I don't know as much about prophecy as I used to.

I have a book in my library written by a very dear friend of mine who's in heaven proving that we will never make it to the moon. He shouldn't have written that book at all. I have another book in my library written by a very well-known preacher and missionary advocate who's also in heaven proving that Mussolini was the Antichrist.

I don't know as much about prophecy as I used to. But I know this. It's all falling into place.

I am utterly amazed at what is going on in Europe. If you had told me 25 years ago that the nations of Europe, for the most part, would have the openness to each other that they have now, walls have come down. And the French can go over to Germany and investigate what they want to investigate.

And the Germans can go into France. And nobody argues about it. It's amazing what's happening.

Everything is shaping up. And the next thing on the horizon will be the one person who has the answer to all the world's problems. Antichrist.

And remember, A-N-T-I means instead of as well as against. The substitute, Christ. How's it all going to end? Well, the last two elements are that of the harvest and the angels.

I don't want to take time to go into that. Not because it isn't important. It's something you can think about.

Don't get all of the details of either theology or eschatology from the parables. The parables have a message to proclaim. Namely, wherever God sows the good seed of the kingdom, his people, to bear fruit, the devil comes and plants a counterfeit.

He is a counterfeiter. And he wants to get into the church and give people counterfeits. Satan, as an angel of light, if we aren't careful, can bring to people counterfeit experiences.

This is why it is so important that we are yielded to the spirit, filled with the word, so that we have discernment. One of my esteemed predecessors at the Moody Church in Chicago was Dr. Harry Ironside, a great teacher of the word of God. Some of the older folks here may remember him.

A great man of God. And in his early years, he used to go out and minister to the Native Americans in Arizona and New Mexico and California. And he told the story of one day walking down the street in Los Angeles with a Native American Christian who had not been saved a long time.

Now, California is, in some respects, bad in this area of counterfeits. Vernon McGee said to me one day, if a piece of paper fell out of an office window at nine o'clock in the morning, by noon it would have a hundred followers. There seems to be out there a desire for false religions.

I don't know why. I was with Chuck Swindoll at a conference once, and he got up and said, I want you to open your Bible now to First Californians. I think he meant First Corinthians.

Well, at any rate, they were walking down the street and there was a preacher on the corner on a soapbox, Bible in hand, preaching. Oh, the Native Americans saw this man and went up and stood there and listened. Ironside kept on walking.

And the man listened. It so happened that the man was a cultist. He belonged to a cult.

After a while, the Native American quit listening, came caught up with Ironside, and Dr. Ironside quietly said, Well, what did you think of the preacher? And the Native American said, All the while that man was speaking, my heart was saying to me, Liar! Liar! Now, who did that? The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit bears witness in our spirit. And on more than one occasion, I have been listening to somebody and said to myself in my heart, No, the Holy Spirit is not bearing witness.

I don't see this. We must have discernment. Now, we want to wrap up our study in just a few minutes, talking about the third aspect of this parable.

We've talked about the setting and the wording, and now the living of it. And I simply need to pass along to you what God has said to me to admonish me. The first thing he said to me was, I have to be alert.

Now, our Lord did not criticize the servants for sleeping. If you work hard in the field, you need sleep. Our Lord didn't say, the enemy got into the field because those lazy... No, no, no.

No, workers need their sleep. Our Lord said to his disciples, come apart and rest a while. They've been out preaching, they were tired.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap. Not now, but you can take a nap. I know, I've heard these people say, well, I'd rather burn out than rust out.

I don't want to do either one. I'm glad to work out. No, he didn't criticize them for sleeping, but there's a little admonition here, be alert.

Be alert. Watch out. Somebody's going to rise up and try to drag disciples out.

Somebody's going to try to break in. There's going to be wolves in sheep's clothing. We must develop, with the help of the Holy Spirit and the reading of the Word of God, a spiritual radar.

Because we're living in a world that's full of counterfeits. And we can't afford to be careless. The second admonition the Lord gave to me, and you may not agree with this, but he said this to me through the Word, watch out for detours.

Just watch out for detours. Master, do you want us to go out and pull up the tares? No, no, no. By now the root system may have intertwined and you'll pull up the wheat too.

No, just leave it alone until the harvest. I'll take care of it. I've seen many, a good servant of God, ruin his or her ministry by going on detours.

Now, our Lord is not saying we should not try to do away with evil in our world. But our Lord's not talking about that. This parable is not about, let's take care of evil in the world.

No. There are many good things we can do. But the best thing we can do is let God plant us and bear fruit where he's planted us.

Which leads to a third consideration. We've got to be concerned about the whole world. Two or three years ago a friend of mine became the leader of a group, a denomination, not a large group, but a nice group of people.

He wrote me a letter and said, now, what do you think I should do? And I wrote back and I said, first thing I would do is build a network. Your group has been isolated for so long. Build a network.

Get to know other Christians. Get to know other Christian leaders. Well, he didn't do it.

And they're still isolated. We've got to be concerned about the whole world. It took me the longest time to learn that God blesses people I disagree with.

They don't have to do it my way. As long as they're biblical in their motive, and they're not doing some crazy thing that's not biblical, as long as their message is right, and they're walking with God, we may disagree on a few things. But they'll find out they're wrong on the way up, and I'm not going to worry about that.

We've got to be concerned about a whole world. We cannot just be concerned about our city or our church or our denomination. We have to have a consideration and a concern for the whole world.

Now, the fourth little message the Lord gave to me, it's this. He said to me, don't be like those servants. Don't get agitated and worried.

You read about something in the paper, and you want to go right away and blow up a building or do something. No, He said, just calm down now. Just calm down.

Because He said to me, you need the long view of what is going on. Our Lord said, now, let them grow together. I have friends who say, oh, the world is getting worse.

I have other friends who say, boy, the world is really getting better. There are more people being saved every hour in the third world than were saved at Pentecost when Peter preached. There are some tremendous things happening in this world.

So some of my friends say, oh, the world is getting better. And some say, oh, the world is getting worse. And they're both right.

Because God is planting His people, and His people are bearing fruit. And in that fruit is seed for more fruit and much fruit. And the devil is out planting his substitutes.

But they're going to grow together. Just get the long view. One of these days, all of the counterfeits will be exposed.

If it doesn't happen today or tomorrow, don't get nervous. I remember in our second year Hebrew class in seminary, which I took primarily not to have to take a music course, I thought I could pass the Hebrew class. I knew I couldn't pass the music class.

And Psalm 46, where we read, you know, be still and know that I am God. The instructor said that Hebrew word be still means take your hands off. You know, some of us are hands-on people.

It's got to be done our way in our time for our purpose. And God says, take your hands off. I'm God.

Take your hands off and know that I'm God. You're not God. Oh.

People treat me like I am. No, you're not God. When you die, the Trinity will not be a quartet.

You're not God. Folks, get the long view. The harvest is not the end of the meeting.

It's the end of the age. The harvest is not the end of the year when you hand in your report. It's the end of the age.

And God is in control. Jesus is the Lord of the harvest. Now, many of the commentators tell us that there are seven parables in Matthew 13, and they're dead wrong because there are eight parables.

And the one we neglect is the last one. Matthew chapter 13, verse 51. The Lord is speaking to His disciples, and He says, Have you understood all these things? And here is the amazing answer.

They said to Him, Yes. Yeah. What do you want to know? Now, my guess is they'd gone and bought a study Bible somewhere, together with a chart.

And Jesus says this. Now, this is a remarkable statement from our Lord. It closes this series of parables.

And He said to them, Therefore. That's one of the most important verses in the Bible, isn't it? Therefore. Because you said, Yes, we understand it.

Understanding truth means responsibility. Therefore, every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old. Now, notice the sequence here.

He begins with scribes. Then he moves to disciples. And then he moves to householders.

He is saying to his disciples, All right, you have said you understand these things. That means you're a scribe. What did a scribe do? A scribe studied the Word.

A scribe learned the Word. A scribe interpreted, analyzed the Word. And that's where a lot of people have stopped.

Do you know that there are fans of certain well-known preachers who, when they go to church, carry those preachers' commentaries with them to check out their pastor? They're not concerned about hearing from God. They just want to know if their pastor is right. That's too bad.

That's just too bad. So he said, All right, you're scribes. You understand the Word.

Now, I'm going to promote you to being disciples. A disciple is not one who studies the Word. He's one who lives the Word.

The closest thing we have in English to the word disciple is apprentice. An apprentice is somebody who learns from a master workman by watching, listening, and doing. So, many of us enjoy being scribes.

Oh, I enjoy sitting in my library surrounded by my books and studying my Bible and getting out my red pen and my black pen. And if I ever get colorblind, boy, am I in trouble. And I take notes, and oh, I make lists, and I make lists of the lists.

I don't want to be listless in my Bible study. And all the while, all the while, my Lord is saying to me, Quit it! It's not enough to be a scribe and count how many letters there are in the chapter. I want you to be a disciple.

I want you to practice it. Oh, all right. Okay, I'll practice it.

That's not enough. You mean there's more? There's more. After you've practiced it, so you have got it as a part of your life, then I want you to become a householder.

Now, the scribe studies the Word, the disciple practices the Word, and the householder shares the Word. So, you are now going to be householders. You say, We understand these seven parables.

We know the course of the kingdom. Terrific! Now, I want you to take that treasure. Do you ever stop to think that the Word of God is treasure? God sent His Son, who minted out for us this marvelous treasure.

The psalmist said, I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil. So, when we leave this conference, it's not enough to say, Well, I did pretty good as a scribe. I took notes, and I marked my Bible, and the Lord will say, Good, did your Bible mark you? I want you to be a disciple.

Practice what you have learned. But that's not all. If you keep it to yourself, it's no good.

I want you to be a householder who shares. Now, did you notice that Jesus said, Share what is old and what is new. He must have known what was going on in our churches today.

We have a group of Athenians in our churches who are always looking for something new. They don't want the old. And we have another group that just wants the old.

Don't give us anything new. Isn't that too bad? You know where the new comes from out of the old? That's where it comes from. People say, Oh, we have this new music.

It's been around for centuries. Well, we have this new approach. Nah, it's been done before.

I had a phone call one day from a youth pastor. He said, Brother Warren, I've got a great idea for a way to win young people. I said, Tell me about it.

And he told me. I said, Terrific. We did that in Youth for Christ 50 years ago.

You see, when you're a scribe, you know the Word of God. When you are a disciple, you live the Word of God. And when you are a householder, you dispense the Word of God.

And you say, Well, now they need something old. They've forgotten the old. Ah, they need something new.

And you take the new. It grows out of the old. That's a wonderful way to live.

And so our responsibility is simply to let Jesus Christ teach us the Word, help us to live the Word, and then share that Word, because wherever God plants you, rest assured, the devil will come and plant a counterfeit. We're thankful, O Father, that though we may lose a few skirmishes and a few battles, we're going to win the war. Hallelujah.

And we're going back to the battlefield. Now help us to be good scribes to learn your truth. And then help us to be good disciples who live your truth.

And because of this, may we be faithful stewards, householders who will take this treasure and share it with others. Teach us things new. Help us to grow.

Don't let us get set in our ways. Don't let us become like the Pharisees of old that have everything embalmed. Lord, give us that the living truth will produce new thoughts and new motivation and new ministry.

And don't let us abandon the old, because we need both. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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