

A Dragnet Matthew 13:47-50 (NASB, my emphasis in bold)

⁴⁷ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a **dragnet** that was cast into the sea and gathered **fish of every kind**; ⁴⁸ and when it was **filled**, they **pulled it up** on the beach; and they sat down and **gathered the good fish** into containers, but **the bad they threw away**.⁴⁹ So it will be at **the end of the age: the angels** will come forth and **remove the wicked** from among the righteous, ⁵⁰ and they will throw them **into the furnace of fire**; in that place there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.

Introduction

Our sermon series on the Kingdom of God continues this morning. In fact, I plan to preach on this theme of God’s Kingdom on earth throughout the summer. As we go through various parables on God’s Kingdom, we will see a consistent theme emerge from all stories. They are: 1) In God’s appointed time, a.k.a. Kairos, God’s full reign/Kingdom is going to be fully realized on earth. 2) On that day, God will gather all peoples from the surface of the earth and separate them into two groups, ‘*the righteous and the wicked*’ or ‘*the sheep and the goats*.’ 3) Each group will go into their eternal destination, either Heaven or Hell.

Once again, keep in mind the following key words: *Kairos. Sorting out. Eternal destination.* Let me unpack it for you.

Content

Why in Parable?

Jesus our Lord uses an illustration or story called ‘parable’ to explain the mystery of God’s Kingdom. He chose the stories that were familiar to the folks so that they might remember the lesson for a long time. He was a Master of communicating His message in the language the audience was familiar with. E.g., If you want to communicate with the younger generation today, you need to learn to speak their language, like Texting, TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube. The young ones immediately get it.

In today’s parable, Jesus uses the story of fishing. Keep in mind that His earthly ministry was revolving around the Sea of Galilee where many of the residents were fishermen and their families (E.g., Peter and Andrew, James and John were fishermen). Every day, they saw their fathers, sons, and brothers go out, catch, and return with fish to the shore. They also witnessed that at the shore the fish were sorted out into two groups: good fish or bad ones. The good ones were sold in the market, and the bad ones were thrown out. And the cycle repeats.

Key Words in the Text

Let us go over the key words in today's text that you have circled with pen.

A Dragnet (v. 47): What is a dragnet? *“A large fishing net equipped with a weighted bottom edge for touching (“dragging”) the river or lake bottom and a top with wooden floats allowing the net to be spread across the water (Isaiah 19:8). Such nets were normally let down from a boat and then drawn to shore by a crew positioned on the beach. In the case of a large catch the net was hauled to shore by boat (John 21:6-8)”*

(<https://www.studylight.org/dictionaries/eng/hbd/d/dragnet.html>).

Fish of Every Kind (v. 47): In this parable, the sea refers to the world and the fish refer to the people. Like there's a variety of fish in the ocean, so are the people in the world. We are the people of every kind. Good and bad. Short and tall. Righteous and unrighteous. Faithful and unfaithful. From the East to the West. From America to Korea. Everywhere. Every nation. Every race.

When Filled, the Dragnet Is Pulled up (v. 48). When the fishermen see that the dragnet is full of fish, they pull it up and haul it to the shore. They patiently wait, though, until the net is filled. Sometimes it takes a day or two for the net to be filled with fish. Same thing goes with the Kingdom of God. Everything is about timing. God didn't call “Time's up” a year after Jesus' resurrection nor a thousand years later. Even after two thousand years, He still hasn't called it yet. The world is wide and there are over 8 billion people living today. God's dragnet is still being filled. When it is filled, God will pull it up with Christ's Second Coming. I must say ‘that day’ is getting close, though. If you have been waiting for God's time, Kairos, consider that God's net is still being filled. When the time is up, and the gospel is preached to the end of the world, He will send the Christ, the Messiah, with His angels in His glory. All the peoples on earth will be gathered then.

The Good and Bad Fish (v. 48). In the parable, Jesus is not really talking about the quality of fish. Instead, He is talking about good and bad people. Note here: God is going to judge peoples and nations not according to any human standards but **according to His own standards**, which are different from ours. Let me say it again: it is not human goodness that makes us righteous but the merit of Christ, His blood, and His grace that makes us righteous in His sight (Understand the meaning of being righteous: simply put, righteousness means being right with God. It means to have peace with God through Christ's death on our behalf). One thing is for sure: on that day, no one will complain about God's **fairest** judgment standards. We will be surprised to see some folks who we thought would not make it into Heaven, but be there and vice versa. E.g., The chief priests and the elders in Jesus' time would consider themselves righteous before God while despising the sinners. To them Jesus

said, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before **you**” (Matthew 21:23, 31).

The End of the Age, Remove the Wicked from among the Righteous, into the Furnace of Fire, the Place of Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth (v. 50). The end of the age is appointed, yet nobody knows when it is going to be. Only God the Father knows. Even the Son of God doesn't know. It is set in motion in time, and it is approaching fast. Jesus gives us a heads-up in Matthew 25:31-46 what's going to happen at the end of the age. He will gather all nations and separate the wicked from among the righteous. Listen to Jesus here.

The Judgment

³¹ “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. ³² And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, just as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; ³³ and He will put the sheep on His right, but the goats on the left.

³⁴ “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? ³⁸ And when did we see You as a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you **did it for one of the least of these brothers or sisters of Mine**, you did it for Me.’

⁴¹ “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you accursed people, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴² for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; ⁴³ I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or as a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ ⁴⁵ Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you **did not do it for one of the least of these, you did not do it for Me**, either.’ ⁴⁶ These will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the righteous into **eternal life**.”

Remember: on the Day of Judgment, God will send out His angels to separate the wicked from among the righteous. The wicked will be thrown into the furnace of fire, a.k.a. Hell.

Here's a mystery to me: Jesus repeatedly points out in the Scriptures that there are Heaven and Hell designated for eternal destinations. Why, then, do God's people ignore this warning from the mouth of Jesus and continue to believe that there is no Hell? E.g., One statistic says, only 61% of Methodists believe in Hell (<https://thearda.com/us-religion/statistics/religious-beliefs/united-methodist-church>). In the past, I have seen and heard some good-natured people in the church say that there is no such a place as Hell (Let me tell you: they are ignorant of God's Word). Hell, they argue, is the worst condition on earth that we humans have created. Further, they say, God is the God of love after all, and He will have everyone in Heaven when they die.

I believe they say so from their genuine love and kindness for humanity. Such sentiment is based upon the desire to be nice to everyone. It is even honorable to want everyone in Heaven (God wants that, too). However, everyone ought to be in Heaven doesn't mean everyone will be there no matter what.

But we'd better listen to what Jesus says. He said in the Bible multiple times that there is Heaven and there is Hell. The righteous will be in Heaven and the wicked will be in Hell. It is time that you took Jesus seriously and believed in what He has spoken about eternal destiny and destination based on the choice each individual makes. If you don't believe what He says, call Him a liar. Do not let your nicety or misled compassion cancel the Word of God.

Finally, I am going to tell you three tips on how to live in the end times: three things Jesus commands us to do as we live in such a time as this.

1) **See to It That No One Misleads You** (Matthew 24:4). Jesus commands us not to be deceived by the false prophets and false Christs. Today, we have plenty of prophets and pastors talking about the end times. Some of them are specific about the timeline of God's judgment. Remember what Jesus says: *"But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone"* (Matthew 24:36). Keep away from those who give you a specific time and date of Christ's return.

2) **Watch and Pray.** *"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming"* (Matthew 24:42). The only way we can be on the alert is praying. No royal way but to spend time with the Lord in prayer.

3) **Love Fervently** to hasten His Second Coming. Jesus asks us: *Do you love your neighbor as yourself? Have you forgiven your enemies? Do you pray for those who persecute you?* Peter the Apostle echoes what Jesus said. *"Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins"* (1 Peter 4:8). The same Apostle also says, *"Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy*

conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!” (2 Peter 3:11-12).

Conclusion

Remember the story: in due time, a dragnet is pulled with every kind of fish in it. The fish are sorted out between good ones and bad ones. Good ones are kept, and the bad ones are thrown out.

Remember the lesson: the Kingdom of Heaven will come down in Kairos, God’s appointed time. Jesus the King will separate the wicked from among the righteous. Each group will go into their respective eternal destination, either Heaven or Hell. Let us pray.