

# Lesson 11

## Proper 11

### The Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

Jesus' parable was a true-to-life earthly story. Those who heard it knew that in their society, it sometimes did happen that people played a dirty trick on their enemies by scattering darnel seeds in a field that had been sown with wheat. It happened often enough that there was a Roman law forbidding it and specifying the penalty for perpetrators. As the two kinds of plants sprouted together, it was almost impossible to distinguish them from each other, and any attempt to pull out the sprouts of darnel would damage the tender sprouts of wheat. As Jesus said in His story, the only option was to wait until the plants went to head. Then the difference became apparent and the darnel could be cut off and the wheat left, but this was tedious and costly, and the weeds' competition for the soil's nutrients had already effectively limited the wheat harvest.

155. As Jesus explained His parable to the disciples, what did He make the point of comparison on which the meaning of the parable turned?

156. Is the parable about believers and hypocrites together within the Church, or is it about God's dealings with people in general?

The use of "sons of the kingdom" and "sons of the evil one" is significant. Both imply a decisive *belonging*. Sons, in biblical usage, are those who have rights of inheritance, whether in the kingdom of the Son of Man or in the kingdom of the evil one. (See John 3:16–21; Romans 6:16–18.) Salvation and condemnation are presented side by side in Holy Scripture, and each must be seen in the light of its opposite for its reality to be appreciated.

157. How did Jesus describe the contrasting fates in eternity of these two sets of sons?

158. How would any attempt forcibly to root out the "weeds" from human society be harmful also to the "wheat" and frustrate its purpose in God's plan for His kingdom?

Once again, Jesus says, "He who has ears, let him hear." This places awesome responsibility on all who hear the Word. God does let people say no to Him. We can shut our ears to the promptings of the Word if we want to, but the parable and its application show the awful results of that—just as they show the blessing that results from hearing and acting accordingly.

159. How can we perk up our ears to listen to the Word more effectively in our daily lives?

## **The Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 44:6–8**

In this pericope, the Lord spoke through Isaiah to declare Himself to be the one and only God. His words are in the context of another of His promises of deliverance of Israel from exile and His blessing them as His chosen people—and their enthusiastic response to Him as displayed in their identification with His name, “the LORD,” or *Yahweh*. (See vv. 1–5.) As He pointed to Himself and His uniqueness as the One and Only, “the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts,” He ridiculed the lifeless man-made idols some were foolishly worshipping instead of worshipping Him. (See vv. 9–20.) He then concluded with a reminder of the privileged position Israel enjoyed with Him under the covenant of grace and blessing He had established with them. (See vv. 21–22.)

160. What is the significance of the Lord calling Himself Israel’s “King”?

161. What did the title “Redeemer” add to their understanding of their relationship with Him?

“The LORD of hosts” describes God as the Lord of the armies of heaven and of all the host of creatures in the created world.

162. What assurance was there for God’s people in knowing Him as “the LORD of hosts”?

163. What does “I am the first and I am the last” say about the Lord?

164. What is emphasized with the Lord’s “besides Me there is no god”? (See Deuteronomy 32:36–38.) What did the Lord point to that most obviously distinguished Him from all other “gods”?

165. What is pictured by the Lord’s calling Himself “Rock”?

166. How does this Old Testament Lesson tie in with today's Holy Gospel?

## The Epistle for the Day: Romans 8:18–27

In his great statement about life through the Spirit, Paul has said there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” because “the righteous requirement of the law” is “fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (vv. 1, 4). He proclaimed freedom from the control of the sinful nature because “if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (v. 10). He said this makes us debtors to the one who freed us. By the Spirit, we are to “put to death the deeds of the body. . . . For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (vv. 13–14). And Paul concluded, “We are . . . heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (vv. 16–17).

That led to Paul's comparison of the present sufferings with that future glory. The Greek speaks of “the sufferings of the now time,” the time of our earthly existence.

167. What all is included in “sufferings of this present time”? What is the “glory that is to be revealed to us”? Why are the sufferings of this present time not even worth comparing with that glory?

Paul says the creation itself is waiting for the coming glory. The Greek word *metaiotes*, “futility,” carries the idea of “being without truth or meaning.” This is the word used throughout Ecclesiastes for “vanity” in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Here in Romans, Paul used it to suggest that the creation, because of human sin, was subjected to a situation in which it could not fulfill its intended purpose. (See Genesis 3:17–18.)

168. When will the creation's “pains of childbirth” end? (See Revelation 21:1–5.)

169. Why is it significant that Paul spoke of “the redemption of our bodies” and not “the redemption of our souls” or “spirits”? (See 1 Corinthians 15:50–57.) What is the key word for us in this consideration?

The word “likewise” refers back to Paul's preceding thoughts. He now points out that “the Spirit helps us in our weakness” and “intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”—in the same way as “the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth,” and in the same way as we Christians “groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

170. What is it that the Spirit prays for as He “intercedes for the saints according to the will of God”? What is implied by the fact that the Spirit does this “with groanings too deep for words”?

Charismatic Christians, who believe that the Holy Spirit has given them the gift of tongues—a “prayer language”—and that He prays and praises through them in unknown languages when they turn over their minds and tongues to Him, sometimes refer to this passage to support their view.

171. How can you see that this passage does not refer just to speaking in tongues?

172. What assurance is there for us in the fact that God, the one who searches our hearts, “knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God”?

173. What is to be our Christian attitude and lifestyle as we wait patiently in hope? (See 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Peter 3:3–15.) In the light of all this, what would Paul say to us when we get down and think, “Oh, what’s the use?”

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*O God, so rule and govern our hearts and minds by Your Holy Spirit that, ever mindful of Your final judgment, we may be stirred up to holiness of living here and dwell with You in perfect joy hereafter; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*

### **The Holy Gospel: Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43**

155. The point of comparison is the wheat and the darnel with the children of the Kingdom and the sons of the evil one, and how both live in and compete for the same space. Jesus expanded the point to explain also how they got there and what the end result would be for both.

156. Jesus' explanation suggests that the field represents the world, not the Church. Still, some have applied it to picture the Church as an open fellowship in which lack of commitment and some sinful situations are not really to be disciplined. Certainly, the Church will ultimately succeed, but it is a mistake to look for this success in terms of the Church transforming human society into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus' explanation lets us know that full success awaits the harvest at the end of the age.

Children of the Kingdom respond to God's grace and gain the "right" to inherit the Kingdom eternally; sons of the evil one actively reject the Kingdom and Jesus and gain the "right" to be thrown "into the fiery furnace," "the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). The contrast and conflict between the two will continue throughout earthly history.

157. The sons of the evil one will be thrown into the fiery furnace; the sons of the Kingdom will shine like the sun. Both are paraphrases of Daniel (chapter 3 and 12:3).

158. Any attempt on the part of "purifiers" in the Church to root out "weeds" would harm also some of the "wheat," mistakenly judged by them to be not up to "wheat" standards. Such purifiers usually develop their own subjective standards of judgment. The Church's purpose is not to root out and destroy evil by force but to proclaim the Word, which has Spirit's power to change "weeds" into "wheat."

159. It is only when the Holy Spirit is the teacher that our ears and hearts are attuned to the Word. We must always pray for His guidance and power. With that attitude, we then must turn to the Word expectantly and energetically, for the Spirit uses the Word as His means. If we don't get into the Word, we are, in effect, shutting down our ears and hearts and frustrating the Spirit of Christ.

### **The Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 44:6–8**

The first paragraph places this lesson into its context in Isaiah 44. Reading the portions indicated as they appear will provide a foundation for this study.

160. The title "King" emphasizes that Yahweh was the sovereign Lord of Israel. During the exodus, the wilderness wanderings, the conquest and settlement of Canaan, and the period under the judges, Israel was a theocracy. Then Israel wanted a human king like the other nations. (See 1 Samuel 8:1–7.) The use of this title

when Israel was in exile, in subjugation, was a call to return to the close relationship in which the Lord was her only sovereign.

161. The title “Redeemer” added significantly to Israel’s conception of the Lord their God. It says that the Lord had not just ruled them but was committed to being responsible for them. The *Concordia Self-Study Bible* points out that the Hebrew word “refers to an obligated family protector and thus portrays the Lord as the Family Protector of Israel. He is related to Israel as Father (63:16; 64:8) and Husband (54:5)” (p. 1076).

162. Knowing the Lord as “the LORD of hosts” was a solid basis of assurance for His people that He would surely be able to do for them what He was promising.

163. “I am the first and I am the last” glorifies the Lord as the Eternal One, the beginning and the end of everything in the created world, the One who exists totally in Himself and by His own power. Revelation 1:8 and 22:12–13 use this same terminology and apply this title to Jesus in His exaltation, emphasizing His deity.

164. “Besides Me there is no god” says that those who think they have found the meaning of life in themselves or in “God as I conceive Him to be” are fooling themselves. In the New Testament, this same concept of being exclusive and indispensable is directly applied to Jesus Christ. (See John 5:23; 1 John 2:23.) “Let him declare and set it before Me, since I appointed an ancient people” refers to the Lord’s choosing of Israel as His covenant people and His mighty deeds by which He miraculously cared for them and rescued them in the past. “What will happen” refers to the Lord’s prophetic Word in which He had foretold events and given His promises to His people. Thus the Lord pointed to events in His people’s experience that no other “gods” could match.

165. “Rock” conveys strength, stability, and reliability. Commercial companies—like Chevrolet trucks—use the same imagery.

166. This lesson’s emphasis of the Lord as the One and Only, Israel’s covenant Lord, underscores the importance of being children of the Kingdom and the folly of being sons of the evil one.

## **The Epistle for the Day: Romans 8:18–27**

167. “The sufferings of this present time” include not only suffering related to being Christians (our crosses) but also all suffering caused by our living in an imperfect world: illnesses, accidents, losses, frustrations, disappointments, and so on. The glory to be revealed in us is our becoming fully like our brother Jesus, living in God’s presence, joyfully serving His purposes completely. The temporary is always outweighed by the permanent—especially in this instance.

The purpose of the whole creation, as we see from Genesis 1, was to serve man, the “crown jewel” of creation. The deterioration of the jewel had a deteriorating effect also on its setting so that it accomplishes its purpose only partially.

168. The creation’s “pains of childbirth” will end when the “baby,” the new heaven and new earth, is born to be the appropriate setting for the eternal life God has promised to those whom He has redeemed and rescued in Christ.

169. Greek philosophy’s dualism and the teachings of Eastern religions see spirit as good and matter as not so good, even evil. The Bible, however, says God declared also His material creation to be “very good.” Now the created universe is corrupted by sin, and our bodies suffer accordingly. But the Christian hope is for perfected bodies just right for life in the new creation, “the new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwells.” This hope rejects ideas of continuous reincarnations and that the goal of the spirit is to be freed from all connection to a material existence by being absorbed into the universal spirit. The Christian hope of resurrection from the dead to life in glorified bodies says that we will retain our personal identities in the new heaven and new earth—all in relation to our God and Savior. The key word in all of this is “hope” that produces “patience.”

170. What the Holy Spirit prays for on our behalf relates to His eagerness to see us enjoying our eternal destiny in Christ. “Likewise” connects the various forms of *stenazo*, “sigh” or “groan,” in the Greek text (vv. 22, 23, 26). The creation, Christians, and the Spirit dwelling in Christians all groan because the present situation has so many reminders that while we are in the “already” of our justification through Christ, we are still in the “not yet” as far as our glorification with Him is concerned. He surely supports us in our prayers for all our daily needs, but He is primarily concerned with strengthening our faith and helping us make progress in our

sanctification as we move toward our coming glory. (See Galatians 5:22–25; 2 Corinthians 3:17–18.) That the Spirit prays with groanings that are beyond words indicates the deep earnestness of His love, concern, and desire for us. His prayer for us wells up from a depth of love that is beyond words. The suggestion is that there is “emotional investment” in His desires for us.

171. The preposition is not “through” or “with” but “for.” This is not the Spirit assisting us in our praying, though He does that too. This is the Spirit of God praying *for* us out of His deep yearning for our ultimate good.

172. The assurance for us in the Spirit’s praying “according to the will of God” is that we know He is asking for the best possible blessings and is the one who is able to renew our hearts and move us into situations in which the blessings He desires for us, both physical and spiritual, will be realized in our lives.

173. As citizens of heaven, we are to be “always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58), “to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives” (Titus 2:12), and to “be diligent to be found by Him without spot or blemish, and at peace” (2 Peter 3:14).