

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Thursday, April 25, 2024

From Matthew 13:

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 out 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.

The parable above is the seventh of seven that the chapter from the Gospel of Matthew supplies. It is the only report of this particular parable and there are some scholars that believe that its placement as the last in the series promotes its importance in the mind of Christ.

Even so, just what could this mean?

Sometimes it helps to hear a different translation of the same text. Eugene Peterson provides the following:

Or, God's kingdom is like a fishnet cast into the sea, catching all kinds of fish. When it is full, it is hauled onto the beach.

The good fish are picked out and put in a tub; those unfit to eat are thrown away. That's how it will be when the curtain comes down on history. The angels will come and cull the bad fish and throw them in the garbage. There will be a lot of desperate complaining, but it won't do any good.

Well, that helps, but there might be further clarification and advice derived from an outright commentator on the text. Anna Case-Winters, New Testament professor, writes:

God's dragnet gathers all kinds. The diversity of the in-gathering is borne out in the unlikely swirl of people around Jesus: sinners and tax collectors, a Roman centurion, people with leprosy and all kinds of diseases, a Gentile woman, people possessed of demons, a little child, a disciple who betrays Jesus, a disciple who denies him, Pharisees who plot his death. All are drawn in. ... It is well to remember who is Lord of the 'harvest.' The Second Helvetic Confession cautions, 'We must not judge rashly or prematurely ... nor undertake to exclude, reject or cut off those whom the Lord does not want to have excluded.' Elsewhere it says ... we should 'have a good hope for all.'

What is it they say? 'It takes all kinds.' That appears to be the truth not only in our experience but in Christ's teaching as well. The bottom line for me is reflected in the intentions of the confession quoted by the honorable Dr. Case-Winters: this is the reality of life and it is best and most beneficial for us within the church to leave the judgment to God and be hopeful for all the rest. I think that might be the best interpretation after all.

Prayer for the Day: (From *The Valley of Vision*)

O Thou Most High, may I cultivate the expedient, develop the lovely, adorn the gospel, recommend the religion of Jesus, accommodate myself to thy providence. Amen.



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