

Preaching the Parable of the Tares

So, how do we preach this passage? Fred Craddock is famous for his process of drawing widely from various primary and secondary resources to do the exegesis of the text. Then he completes the exegesis by boiling it down to one particular theme which he chooses to explicate and expound. I think the procedure is excellent and I commend it.

Yet, a major decision has to come in the theme the expositor chooses to develop and unfold. As you have seen and heard from our analysis, there are several possibilities here. Craddock readily grants this point as well. He urges that we just pick one of the possibilities and work on developing it into a coherent theme. Having done this exegesis, one may return to the same text later and develop another sermon with a different theme.

A sermon on the importance of the judgment certainly could serve as a foundation to develop a theme to preach. Matthew, in 13:41-43, envisions the church as subject to an assessment by the coming Lord. A sermon on the theme of appropriate preparation for that special day would certainly not be out of order, although, as we have noticed, certain sociologists may not be pleased. Since the Parable of the Sower also has an explanation, a sermon could be done comparing and contrasting the central points of the two parables which Matthew has furnished with their own interpretations.

My own preference is to focus on the point in the parable where the householder instructs his workers not to remove the weeds lest the good wheat is lost. As I have indicated, I think Matthew is concerned with those who are causing dissension by seeking to purge and condemn a number in the community with whom they disagree. They think they know who are the elect. Here the instruction of Jesus is very clear. According to Matthew, Jesus does not side with the “up rooters” but with those who, with mercy and love seek to nourish and restore “the little ones” and the “marginalized.” They produce the good fruit. I would call this theme ‘the grace of the kingdom.’ I offer my own work on a sermon preached this Spring (April 22) on this topic.

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