

Matthew 12:30

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-12/matthew-1230/>

Jesus speaks two proverbs whose core truth reveals that anyone who is not with Jesus and His kingdom is working against Him.

The parallel Gospel accounts of this teaching are Mark 9:40; Luke 9:50 and 11:23.

Jesus continues His rebuke of the Pharisees, who have just accused Him of casting out demons in the power of Satan. He has already demonstrated that their accusation is false, and invited them to consider the truth—that He is working in the power of God's *Spirit*.

Now He draws an important line. Jesus speaks two proverbs. A proverb is a saying or expression that conveys a general truth. The first proverb Jesus speaks is *He who is not with Me is against Me*. The core truth Jesus is conveying with this proverb is that there are ultimately only two sides in the great cosmic conflict: God's side and not-God's side. Anyone *who is not with Me* [Jesus], is *not* on God's side. *He is against* God. Everyone is either ultimately *with* Jesus and His kingdom or *against* Him and His kingdom. There is no neutral ground. There is no third option. And there is no option not to choose one or the other.

In a very different context, Jesus gives what appears to be the opposite proverb. Mark and Luke both record this moment.

“John said to Him, ‘Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us.’ But Jesus said, ‘Do not hinder him, for there is no one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. For the one who is not against us is for us.’” (Mark 9:38-40)

“John answered and said, ‘Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him, because he does not follow along with us.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Do not hinder him; for the one who is not against you is for you.’” (Luke 9:49-50)

In these passages from Mark and Luke, John the disciple notifies Jesus that someone else is doing good things in His name. John adds that he told this person to stop. Jesus then corrects John using a proverb that is opposite to the one Jesus told the Pharisees, “For the one who is not *against* you/us *is for* you/us” (Mark 9:40/ Luke 9:50). When someone is doing good, don't get in their way. God knows motives, we don't.

Side by side those truths are:

"He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matthew 12:30)

There are ultimately only two sides in the great cosmic conflict: God's side and not-God's side.

“The one who is not *against* us *is for* us” (Luke 9:50)

Do not worry about others who are doing good or try to stop them from doing good, regardless of what you might think of their motives.

Immediately after He speaks the first proverb, *He who is not with Me is against Me*, to the Pharisees, Jesus says the second proverb. *And he who does not gather with Me scatters*. The meaning of the second proverb is very similar to the meaning of first. Its core truth is that anyone *who is not* working *with* Jesus is working *against* Him.

It usually takes more effort to gather and build than it does to scatter and tear down. To *gather* means to draw together, to organize and build. Jesus invites people to believe in Him and to follow Him in the gathering and building of His kingdom. As was just mentioned, scatter is the opposite of *gather*, but there is an additional contrast between these two actions. It almost always requires a degree of intent and focus to *gather*. And while one can deliberately scatter, scattering does not necessarily require intent. One can mindlessly or accidentally scatter. The actions of *gather* and *scatters* along with the intent (or lack of intent) required to do them show us that it requires a deliberate choice to be a participant in God’s kingdom who gathers *with* Jesus. The kingdom must be sought after (Matthew 6:33). And it must be sought after by faith (Romans 9:30).

In this context the Pharisees are clearly *not with* Jesus. They are not interested in gathering *with* Him. They are *against* Him. They are scatterers.

Biblical Text

He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.