

## The Kingdom of Heaven is Like ...Yeast

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Last Sunday we spent time reflecting on the parable of the small mustard seed that became a large tree and the lesson that it was intended to teach Jesus' disciples – namely, that our experience of the kingdom of heaven on earth is to grow beyond our meager expectations. In fact, our understanding of God's presence and our desire to do His will is to grow expansively. Its impact in us is intended to be so abundant and glorious, that it will draw others to its safety and security – to home!

Today we want to reflect on another one of Jesus' parables that seeks to explain the kingdom of heaven to us ... the parable of the yeast. It's captured in one verse in Matthew 13, which says:

*The Kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked through the dough. (Matthew 13:33)*

This is another well-known parable, but what is its' spiritual meaning for us today? What does it tell us about our experience of the kingdom of heaven here on earth? And what does it tell us about the impact that experience is intended to have? To properly sort through its deeper meanings, we need to look at the

different pieces to this puzzle. And yes, parables are intended to be puzzles that we sort out ... with the help of God's Holy Spirit.

In this parable we have three primary elements:

1. the yeast (the leavening agent that causes dough to rise or expand),
2. the woman (baker), and
3. the flour (dough).

The yeast is clearly intended to represent the kingdom of heaven on earth, which can be defined as "the full experience of God's presence and the desire and determination to do His will".

It's interesting to note that in teaching contexts in Jesus' day, 'yeast' was generally carried a negative meaning. Most often, it stood for evil. That's the very reason why God required that all yeast and leaven be removed from Jewish homes during the Passover Festival. Jesus Himself used the term 'yeast' in a very unflattering way when speaking of the Pharisees and the hypocrisy of their teaching in Matthew 16:6,11. But here in Matthew 13 He turns the normative meaning upside-down, giving yeast a very positive meaning. He does so with purpose ... seeking to cause His hearers to ponder this parable deeply. Not unlike that mustard plant that grew disproportionately into a massive tree, yeast being

likened to the goodness and glory of God's Kingdom represented a significant anomaly ... and that would have made those early day hearers stop and think, "What is Jesus saying?"

The woman in the parable represents God. He is the One who grants us the experience of His Kingdom here and now. As the Sovereign Ruler of that Kingdom, only He can!

The flour or dough is our spiritual lives ... both individually and corporately. According to the parable, they daily are able to receive the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth.

As we reflect on these three elements, there are three significant lessons to be learned and applied as we experience the Kingdom of Heaven on earth:

**1. God is our Master Chef/Baker**

God is the Master Baker in this parable. He's the One who does all of the work! And it's important to recognize that. And you get the sense from the parable that He does it with caring and compassion. The sixty pounds (or three measures) of flour used was enough to feed a family for a day; so God's Fatherly Love is captured here for those that have ears to hear.

We need to recognize that our experience of God's Kingdom is only possible because He graciously gives it to us. Take a look at Matthew 13:33.

What do we find God, the baker, doing in this parable? He measures out the flour. He mixes in the yeast. He kneads the dough ... working the yeast all the way through it. What we see here is that God first prepares us to receive His Kingdom, He then places it within our hearts and souls, and finally He works it into every part of us. Step-by-step He makes sure that we are able to experience His Kingdom ... to know His presence and to align ourselves fully with His good and perfect will.

Are we allowing God the opportunity daily to work in us so that we are ready to receive more of His Kingdom on earth? Are we graciously receiving new and richer experiences of that kingdom in our lives? It's so easy to pray, "Let your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven", and yet fight against God's work in preparing us to receive it more and more fully. We need to surrender to the Master Baker.

## 2. **Yeast (The Kingdom of Heaven) Is Intended to Transform Us**

The NLT captures this truth beautifully,  
*The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.*

The Baker worked the yeast into all the flour, so that it permeated the dough. Why? Well I'm no baker, but I do know from some of my many 'failed bread-making experiments' that if the yeast doesn't permeate every part of the dough it won't turn out so well! Without yeast doing its job, bread won't rise!

We need the kingdom of heaven to permeate every part of our beings ... body, soul and spirit ... so that we can grow into the beautiful masterpieces that God intended us to be. As our experience of the Kingdom of Heaven permeates, the character traits of the Kingdom come alive in us ... grace, holiness, peace, love, joy, power. The fragrant aroma of our lives can then touch and bless others! Just like a newly baked loaf of bread. Yummm!

Just as yeast or leaven changes the character of the whole batch of dough, making it soft and spongy and tasty, the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven into our hearts and souls ultimately impacts every part of our being – it changes our character, which translates into very different doing. As the kingdom of heaven touches us more fully, we will mirror its goodness and glory more fully. The bad that was, becomes good. The impure becomes pure. The unholy becomes holy. Our thinking, our acting, our speaking, our living is to be totally changed by the coming of the Kingdom of heaven to us.

Like the mustard seed becoming a huge tree, the work of the yeast of the Kingdom of heaven is progressive in our lives. It works silently, secretly, gradually, yet certainly, to accomplish its intended results. It works to transform us. As the Master Baker brings more of the kingdom of heaven into our lives, with its transforming power, we will find that things that tripped us up in the past -- the sins that once plagued us -- no longer do. As we come to experience God's presence and understand His purpose and will more fully, we will find ourselves gaining a more consistent ability to overcome temptation, to flee the devil, and to experience victory over sin. As the truths of the Kingdom penetrate and permeate our hearts, minds and souls, we will find ourselves being more loving, more caring, more compassionate, more forgiving and more giving.

Is the Kingdom of heaven actively transforming your life? If not, ask the Master Baker to bring on the yeast!

### 3. The Kingdom of Heaven Within Sustains the Church

As I already shared, the parable speaks of 9 lbs (or three measures) of flour. In Jesus' day, that reflected the amount of flour needed to prepare bread enough to feed a standard family ... and families in that day were pretty large because they included grandparents and aunts and uncles and servants and slaves too! As the woman faithfully prepared bread for her family each and every day, using that

little bit of yeast in 9 lbs of flour, so God (Our Father) faithfully prepares to feed His family (the church) each and every day by bringing the yeast of His Kingdom into the hearts and souls of all His children. As we individually receive that yeast, as it permeates each of us and helps us to grow into people of godly character and wisdom, we – jointly and collectively – sustain one another’s faith. The yeast given to us individually is given for the blessing of all!

In this, the parable of the yeast is similar to the parable of the mustard seed. When that seed grows and becomes a spectacular tree is becomes a place of safety and shelter for many! The benefit of the mustard tree is for those still outside of the household of faith. The benefit of the yeast is for all those who are within the household of faith.

The grace and peace and joy that comes to me through the gift of the kingdom of heaven within are intended to bless you. The love and faith and hope that comes to you through the gift of the kingdom of heaven within are intended to bless me. And on and on it goes. Each gift we receive, each blessing of the kingdom that we allow to permeate and transform us into people who live the values of God’s kingdom on earth, becomes a gift to those we love, and care for, and forgive and bless within the church. The transforming work of the kingdom of

God in me is intended to sustain you ... and vice versa. A little yeast mixed into the dough of all of our lives, feeds God's Family, which is the Church!

So when my joy tank starts running low, as it sometimes does, I look to you and find my joy restored. And when your hope tank gets low, you should be able to look to me and find it restored. God, the Master Baker, ensures that we collectively have all that is needed to sustain kingdom life here on earth! Isn't that amazing!

Are you allowing your experience of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth to bless others within the Family of God? When you see someone who seems to be low on joy, are you eager to share the joy you have received with them? When you learn that someone is struggling to find peace, are you praying that your peace (given by God) will serve them too? The Word is full of "one another" commandments which serve as reminders to share the blessings of God's kingdom with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Are we doing that? Our personal circumstances aren't always easy, and because of that it is sometimes difficult to personally experience all the glorious goodness of God's Kingdom. But no one need go without! Where a believer is lacking, we simply need to share what we've so graciously received, to make up for their short-fall. That's what family does!



Jesus declares that,

*The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread.*

*Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough!*

Have you received the yeast, that is the kingdom of heaven, from the Master Baker? If not, it's ready for you! You just have to ask! The kingdom of heaven is available to all true disciples of Jesus Christ. Become His disciple and you will receive its blessings in your life!

Are you allowing the yeast of the Kingdom, which God gives you daily, to permeate every part of you – body, soul and spirit? Are you allowing it to transform you into a Kingdom-seeker who carries the character traits of God Himself? If not, surrender to the Master Baker so that He can mix that yeast in fully! Let Him do His good work in you! Don't fight it! As He does His work, the fruit of the Spirit will shine through you – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness and self-control.

When you are experiencing these blessings of the kingdom to overflowing ... the blessings of grace and mercy and forgiveness and wisdom ... are you passing

them along to others in the Family? Are you sharing with your brothers and sisters who are in need? God's intention is that the yeast He provides us individually will sustain us collectively! Are you doing your part?