

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52, 2014

³¹He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³²it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

³³He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

⁴⁴The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

⁴⁷Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; ⁴⁸when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. ⁴⁹So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

⁵¹Have you understood all this? They answered, "Yes." ⁵²And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52, 2014

Did you understand all those parables in our reading?

The disciples did, or at least said they did. Maybe you had to be there for it to be so easy.

For the last few weeks Jesus has been trying to tell the people, the disciples, and you, the kingdom of heaven is like something you ought to recognize,

but I wonder; do you get it?

First it was like the sower who scattered his seed all over the place.

Then it was like the sower of the good seed only to have an evil person come along behind him and sow that awful bearded dandel.

Now Jesus says it is like the mustard seed, yeast, a treasure hidden in a field, a valuable pearl a merchant seeks to find,

and good fish hidden in the water that the fisherman tries to catch.

The meaning is not so easy to come by though is it?

The disciples didn't always get it. They had to ask about a couple of these. But Jesus keeps telling parables hoping the people, and his disciples will finally get it.

I think sometimes, just by the very nature of the different cultures of the times, then as opposed to now,

you have to struggle to get what Jesus means by these parables.

Jesus truth gets hidden from you because you don't know enough about his day and the culture he lived in, the experience of life in his day.

For instance, the mustard seed was not something a farmer would have planted in that day. It was not a harvestable crop.

Usually the mustard seed, which was so small it could be undetectable,

would get mixed in with the seed for the planting and then when it sprouted it would cover the land and choke out whatever else tried to grow there if it were not removed,

but they provided a great place for the birds to nest.

It has been compared to Kudzu if you know what that is.

Then the word that is translated yeast in that parable was really a very different thing in Jesus' day called leaven. Leaven was an uncooked piece of a previous batch of bread used to leaven the next batch.

Before it could be used, however, it had to spoil. If not left to spoil long enough it was no good and wouldn't make the bread rise,

and left too long and it would ruin the bread and cause food poisoning.

Perhaps Jesus was trying to convey with these two parables that surprising things happen when what is small in size or what is spoiled or rotten

has the power to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

But Jesus doesn't stop there, he goes on with the treasure in the field, the fine pearl and the fish, and what does he accomplish as he does this?

Jesus provides a point of understanding for a broad spectrum of people to enter into their understanding of the truths He is trying to teach about the kingdom of heaven.

He makes His truth about the kingdom of heaven accessible to all the people:

- The farmer and his slaves who do agricultural work,
- the women who daily bake the bread, and the baker in town who supplies a community with **leavened** bread,
- the land surveyor, investor or even the land owner who knows the value of real property
- the business owner, salesman, purchasing agent who is always assessing the value of the goods, and his place in the market
- the fisherman, the sailor, the hired hand, the fish market owner the wife and mother who has to go to purchase the daily food,
 - who all have to know how to sort out the good from the bad.

Jesus wants everyone to know that the kingdom of heaven has come near to them.

But how do you translate these parables into something understandable today in your culture, in the context of your life experience?

Maybe if you wrote your own parables that would help.

Instead of the small mustard seed that sprouts into a plant that takes over and consumes everything, but makes a good place for the birds to nest,

what about the smallest child who speaks the truth of the kingdom when she walks up to her parent who is wearing that look of despair and worry and the traces of tears that could not be held back on their cheeks, and says,

“I know you are sad daddy but Jesus loves you, and so do I.”

The love and compassion of this small child is enough to drive away your despair bringing the kingdom into the life of this grownup.

The smallest one chokes out the despair and worries of life, and dries the tears.

Do you get that?

Instead of a little piece of leaven that will transform enough flour to make bread for 100 people,

maybe the kingdom of heaven is like the 1.1 cups of muriatic acid I had to add to the 10,000 gallons of water in your pool to

keep the water sparkling, clean and safe for all our family and friends to swim in.

just a little bit changes a lot!

Do you get that?

Instead of a hidden treasure in a field how about the kingdom of heaven being like the real estate investor going out to look at a house that has been sitting empty, and that apparently no one wants.

The investor finds a winning \$100 million lottery ticket hidden in the space between the stove and the wall, puts it back,

and he goes out and liquidates all he has, sells his car, cashes in his IRA and all his investments and buys the house.

Jesus is telling you the kingdom is that valuable. It is worth letting go of everything you have.

Do you get it?

Rather than being like a fine pearl, could the kingdom of heaven be like the bachelorette who has to date all these really fine guys until she finds the one for whom she will give up her whole life?

The life she could have with him is that valuable to her.

Do you get that?

Maybe the kingdom of heaven is like the reality show Storage Wars where these people bid on abandoned storage units,

and after the bidding is over and the winner can get into the unit, he goes through all the contents and packs up the good stuff and throws out the junk.

At the end Jesus asks, “Have you understood all this?”...

every scribe (scholar) who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

Jesus wants you to understand. He wants you to be the master of your household.

to share this kingdom in its old language and new, in its old stories and the new ones you use to teach,
so that each generation, all people, have the opportunity to learn.

But you have to learn them first.

The kingdom of heaven:

It is often hidden just like the mustard seed mixed in with the good seed,

its the little bit of leaven hidden in the flour enough to make bread for 100 people,

its the treasure in the field, the pearl of great value mixed in with the rest of them,

its the fish in the water, some good and some not.

But it is always worth giving up everything you have to get it.

Sometimes you have to go look for it to be able to see it.

You may have to make up your own parable to explain where you have encountered the kingdom of heaven.

Your life experience is going to be different from anyone else's, and so to be able to see where Jesus has brought his kingdom to you will require your attention.

Your eyes, your heart has to be open!

But Jesus comes, and Jesus brings the kingdom of heaven.

There are some places and some ways in which the kingdom comes that are common to everyone.

It comes to you here in this holy place as you hear and receive Jesus' word from the scriptures, preaching, prayer.

The kingdom of heaven comes in your baptism and as you remember your baptism, the promised fulfillment of your salvation.

The kingdom of Heaven comes in the sacred meal you receive at Christ's table for the forgiveness of your sins, the Holy Spirit and the affirmation of Christ's promised salvation for you.

The kingdom comes to you in your despair and your tears, in your searching, seeking and longing.

You may find it in the unexpected places and in the little things,
among many things that shine just as bright and look just as
attractive,

but are not of the value that Jesus and His kingdom are.

You may have to sort through some pretty bad things and separate the
good from all that, in order to experience the Kingdom of Heaven,

but your treasure can be found, the kingdom has come near
because Jesus is near.

**Jesus, His kingdom, are your treasures. They are worth giving up
everything for.**

Do you understand all these things?

Amen