

“The Parable of the Mustard Seed, Part 2” Matthew 13:33, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
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Morning Worship Service

Text:

“He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened.” (Matthew 13:33 NAS)

Text Main Idea:

The Parable of the leaven demonstrates that the smallest leaven has a significant and undeniable impact

Sermon Main Idea:

The Kingdom of God is like leaven. While it starts out small and is unnoticeable, it has a significant impact

Introduction:

“He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened.” (Matthew 13:33 NAS)

This parable relates to our previous parable on the mustard seed. Both parables speak to the Kingdom starting small and ending with a large impact

- While the mustard seed demonstrates an external impact, the leaven demonstrates an internal impact

To understand the Kingdom, we need a little history lesson. Let us look to the prophet Isaiah to give us this history lesson

First, look at Isaiah chapter one

Isaiah 1:2 The people sinned against God

“Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the LORD speaks, “Sons I have reared and brought up, But they have revolted against Me.” (Isaiah 1:2 NAS)

- The nation of Israel revolted against Him
- The prophet, speaking on behalf of God, directs his message to the sons of Israel
- They were a “sinful nation” and a “people weighed down with iniquity” 1:4

“Alas, sinful nation, People weighed down with iniquity, Offspring of evildoers, Sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, They have despised the Holy One of Israel, They have turned away from Him.” (Isaiah 1:4 NAS)

- They were self-seeking, self-willed, and they hated God
- They were once faithful and now played the harlot 1:21

“How the faithful city has become a harlot, She *who* was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, But now murderers.” (Isaiah 1:21 NAS)

So the result then is the coming judgment they are about to face. God is going to lead them into captivity and judge them for their sin. Vs 24-25

But there will come a time where God will change everything and bring them back. They will be redeemed with justice 1:27

“Zion will be redeemed with justice, and her repentant ones with righteousness.” (Isaiah 1:27 NAS)

Now look at chapter 2

- Here the prophet announces a message of hope to Israel

“The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 2:1 NAS)

- “The text concerns the geographical areas “Judah and Jerusalem.” Vlach, He will Reign Forever pg 146
- He is talking about the actual regions of Judah and Jerusalem.
- If this is not clear then what comes next demonstrates this fact. He has to be because of what comes next in the context
- 2:2-4

“Now it will come about that In the last days, The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it.³ And many peoples will come and say...”

Notice what the people who live outside of this region will say:

"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways, And that we may walk in His paths."

- The nations will come to Him
- The one who resides there will instruct all the people

“For the law will go forth from Zion, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.⁴ And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.” (Isaiah 2:2-4 NAS)

When Christ is ruling, the nations will put down their arms

- They will stop fighting
- They will seek instruction from Christ
- They will learn the law of God

As Vlach, points out there are 4 key elements here:

1. The Preeminence of Mount Zion
2. Gentile Pilgrimage to Mount Zion
3. The Lord Judging the Nations
4. The Removal of Weapons of Warfare

(Now it is important to note the prophetic practice in the Old Testament. When God would announce judgment upon Israel for her sin, He would also give a promise of hope for deliverance. This is an example of that. Chapter 1 the pronouncement of guilt and judgment. Chapter 2, hope.)

All of this will occur when Christ takes up His reign as King and rules from His Kingdom

- The text of Isaiah says “In the last days” vs 2
- This is the Prophet’s announcement of future events

Verse 4 is significant

“And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples;”

- He (The Lord) is going to judge between the nations
 - The House of the Lord
 - The Word of the Lord
 - The Lord is the HE in this context
- He is going to solve disputes
- He will render judgments between many people

The fact that the gentiles will bring their issues to Christ demands an intermediate Kingdom that the Messiah reigns from to minister to all the nations of the world from Zion

(By intermediate Kingdom I mean a Kingdom which exists here on earth before the eternal reign of Christ. This eternal reign is marked by the final judgment of sin and the remaking of the heavens and the earth)

This intermediate Kingdom is referred to in Zechariah 14

- “And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be *the only* one, and His name *the only* one.” (Zechariah 14:9 NAS)

He will rule over all and if there are nations that will not honor Him He will judge them

- “And if the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no *rain will fall* on them; it will be the plague with which the LORD smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.¹⁹ This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.” (Zechariah 14:18-19 NAS)
- Those nations that do not honor Christ will be judged
- If they do not come and celebrate the Feast of Booths they will be under the wrath of God and will receive a plague of no rain

When God is ruling he can dry up the rain

- If you think global warming is a problem you should see what happens when someone angers God

Back to Isaiah 2

As verse 4 indicates there will be no war and no need to prepare for war

- Today people stockpile weapons as a deterrent to war

Verse 4 emphasizes true world peace

- There are no need for weapons
- In fact the money usually invested into war will now be invested into making food
- The effect will be greater food and people will be blessed and cared for

Now turn to Isaiah Chapter 11

1. The King from Jesse 1-6
2. Restored Harmony to the Animal Kingdom 7-9
3. Blessings to the Nations 10
4. Restoration of Israel 11ff

First, The King from Jesse

“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.” (Isaiah 11:1 NAS)

- Fulfill the Davidic covenant
- Just as Jesus was from David See Matthew Ch 1

“And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.” (Isaiah 11:2 NAS)

Compare this with Matt 12:28

“But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Matthew 12:28 NAS)

As Matt Waymeyer explains:

“Isaiah 11 also indicates that certain aspects of this Kingdom rule will be coercive, and even punitive. According to verse 4, as the Messiah reigns over this coming Kingdom, He will judge the poor with righteousness (vs 4a), defend the afflicted with fairness (v. 4b), strike the earth with the rod of His mouth (vs 4c), and slay the wicked with the breath of His lips (v 4d). This need for the Messiah to defend the poor and afflicted and to bring punitive judgment upon the wicked ‘indicates the presence of rebellious activity not keeping with the eternal Kingdom order in which sin is absent.’” Vlach pg 157-8

The point is that the messiah is going to come from the line of Jesse and rule over the nations of the earth

- Protect the poor and righteous
- He will end war
- Judge the wicked
- Strike the earth with judgment
- And slay the wicked

Secondly, He will restore the animal world

“And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the kid, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them.⁷ Also the cow and the bear will graze; Their young will lie down together; And the lion will eat straw like the ox.⁸ And the

nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.⁹ They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:6-9 NAS)

- Restoration of life before the fall
- Peace among the animals of creation
- Animals which normally prey on others will get along with animals which are normally hunted by predators

Thirdly, Blessings to the Nations

"Then it will come about in that day That the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious." (Isaiah 11:10 NAS)

All the nations will turn to Him

- Friends this has to be after the time Christ return but before the eternal reign of Christ as there are nations coming to Him

Fourthly, The restoration of Israel

"Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, And from the islands of the sea." (Isaiah 11:11 NAS)

"Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, And those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, And Judah will not harass Ephraim." (Isaiah 11:13 NAS)

- Northern tribes and Southern tribes of Judah will be in harmony together

This is just a small description of what the OT has to say about the Kingdom of God to come

- Now at the time of Christ's ministry this is what the people would have been expecting
- They were expecting a Ruler to come, setup his Kingdom, and start ruling over all the nations
- The expectation was right the timing was off

Why was the timing off?

1. Because of the sin of God's people
2. They rejected Christ
3. This is why later they are going to repent and turn to the one they have rejected

The Kingdom is going to come and when it does Christ will rule the world from His Kingdom

- This is what the prophets predicted

It is also what Jesus Himself affirmed

- The two parables before us emphasize the greatness of the Kingdom to come despite how seemingly small and insignificantly it started

- At this point Jesus was letting the disciples know the Kingdom was only getting started. They thought or would be tempted to think it should be fully arriving at their time

The Parable of the Mustard seed demonstrated that the Kingdom would come in a small way and would end with a huge impact

- Just as the mustard seed is the smallest among the garden plants it turns out to be taller and larger than any of the other plants
- It is so big that animals can take shelter in its branches
- Huge result from such a small and seemingly insignificant seed

The second parable which is related to the previous one demonstrates that the Kingdom is hidden but has a powerful impact

- The Kingdom while hidden has a significant impact

Notice how Jesus describes the Kingdom here:

“He spoke another parable to them, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened.” (Matthew 13:33 NAS)

Again it is clear here that he is talking about the Kingdom

- I have to make this point clear because there are so many who take other views of this verse
- Some say that Jesus is talking about evil and how evil is infiltrating the Church
 - Well this is fine in 1 Cor 5:6
 - But not here

(Time for me to teach for a moment)

Here is the problem that we face when it comes to Bible interpretation. It is the problem of subjectivity in interpretation

- You will hear people say “well that is your view”
- Or we all believe the bible and we all think it means something different
- We can’t possibly agree with what it means so let us stick to our traditions, creeds, doctrinal statements, or training

The idea is that Biblical interpretation is subjective and different teachers will have different understanding of the meaning of the text of scripture

- One of the chief contributors to this line of thinking is the doctrine of Analogy of the Faith

The Analogy of Faith, which many refer to Scripture interpreting scripture, is wrongly understood and applied and consequently leads to various interpretations

Many when describing the Analogy of Faith will say that it means we take a clear passage of scripture, which we know what it means and apply it to a passage which we are not clear on

- Scripture interprets scripture
- Scripture explains scripture
- So we are told to take a passage which is clear and use it to explain a passage which is not clear

Many who advocate this will also say, this is what the reformers emphasized when they spoke of the Analogy of the Faith

- Well yes and no
- First the reformers emphasized not a hermeneutic for interpretation but rather the ability for the Bible to be understood apart from the Church
- The Catholic Church had said the Bible could only be understood by the Church and thus only the Church could interpret the scripture
- The reformers response to the Catholic Church was the doctrine of the Analogy of the Faith. Scripture interprets scripture

Today this Analogy of Faith has come to mean, as I said, we use the clear passages to interpret the unclear passages.

- But this understanding of the analogy of the faith has some problems
- What makes a passage clear?
- What is clear to you and your theological traditions may not be clear to me and my theological traditions
- Let's assume your tradition says that we simply believe God and we are saved. So as long as we make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ we are saved even if our life never demonstrates a change
- Then what will you do when you come to passages which say "work out your salvation with fear and trembling?" Phil 2:12
- What will you do when there are passages which call God's people to be sanctified?
- Typically the passages which don't make sense are either ignored or interpreted to mean something else
- This is why there is so much confusion
- You can believe what you want to believe and I will believe what I want to believe and we will go our own separate ways

This is not how we are to handle the Word of God

This text before us is a classic example of what happens when this misunderstanding of the Analogy of faith is applied

- Let me show you – Many take the leaven in Matt 13:33 to mean sin
- Turn to 1 Cor 5:6-9

"Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*?⁷ Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.⁸ Let us therefore celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.⁹ I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people;" (1 Corinthians 5:6-9 NAS)

- Leaven effects the whole lump
- The Corinthians are told to clean out the old lump and to stay away from the leaven
- They are not to be a part of the leaven of malice and wickedness but are to be unleavened bread
- Unleavened would be to live in sincerity and truth

- VS 9 then tells us the practice don't "associate with immoral people."
- So this passage is clear, we understand it to teach that we are not to practice sin
- Nobody would deny that
- Sin, like leaven, corrupts the whole
- Just like leaven influences the whole lump of bread so sin influences and corrupts our whole being

This is a truth nobody denies

But here is where interpretive mistakes are made in Matt 13:33

- When people come to Matt 13:33 and see the word Leaven they think
 - It must refer to evil
 - That we must be getting evil out of our midst
 - That Jesus is concerned about removing evil from our midst
- A little evil will infect the whole
 - So they use this verse as an explanation for having to rid yourself, or the church, or the world of evil
 - I like the idea it is just not the meaning of this text
 - And to teach it from this text is a gross mishandling of God's Word
 - And I know you will agree with me as we look at this text together

It is no wonder people cannot agree on what the Bible means

- If we can grab any text from any random book of the bible and use it to explain what any other verse must mean where does the madness stop?
- Why would Paul in 1 Cor 5 have more authority over Jesus in Matt 13?
 - Is it based on chronology?
 - It is based on order in the Bible?
 - Is it based on penmanship?

In theological practice, the use of Analogy of Scripture has come to mean we can make any passage we don't like, mean what we want it to mean, because a passage we do like is clear and undeniable to us

- Well friends this violates the normal use of language, it violates context, and it is subjective
- There are objective rules of interpretation that take out the subjectivity of interpretation

The Analogy of Faith means that the bible is consistent with itself and can check itself. Nothing taught in the scripture will contradict the rest of scripture. Ultimately, we use scripture to test and check our meaning

- The Same Spirit that inspired Matt 13 also inspired 1 Cor 5
- We check our meaning against the rest of scripture, the bible and our theology acts as a checking principle to the exegetical conclusions we have formed

Let me show you how this works here in Matt 13:33 (4 observations)

"He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened.'" (Matthew 13:33 NAS)

First, Jesus is speaking about the Kingdom of heaven here

- It is obvious because that is what he says
- If I never told you that leaven meant evil in the Church then you would never conclude this means anything other than the Kingdom is like leaven
- The original audience having heard the message would have thought nothing of Paul's statement to the Corinthians

Second, Jesus makes an analogy of the Kingdom being like leaven

"is like"

- Leaven is yeast
- It causes your bread to rise
- It makes bread light and fluffy
- Unleavened bread is flat, hard, and dry
- Leaven is used to influence bread to grow

Thirdly, Leaven was placed into bread

- Here Jesus says the leaven was taken and hid in 3 pecks of meal
- Leaven would be taken from one lump of dough and placed into another lump and the bread would be left to sit
- As it would sit there the leaven would spread through the unleavened dough
- It would rise and be kneaded together spreading the leaven through the whole lump.
- We have some bakers in our midst, talk to them and they will tell you how this whole process works
- The small lump given enough time would influence the whole lump

Fourth, the leaven has a significant impact

- Now look Jesus says the leaven was hidden inside 3 pecks of meal
- One commentator said that it was hidden in enough bread to feed 100 people
- This is a large batch of bread
- The woman here did not hide the leaven in enough bread to make a loaf
- She hid it in enough bread to feed half our Church
- Jesus said here, the whole lump was leavened by this small piece of leavened dough

You see this parable has a lesson of its own and a context of its own and we do not need to violate this text. It's meaning is plain and simple

- The Kingdom is like leaven
- It enters into the world though being small will impact the whole world

You can understand this right?

- It does not destroy normal understanding of the text, does it?
- And we do not have to decide whether we believe Jesus, Matthew, or Paul
- We let each author explain their instruction to us as recorded in the scripture and then we compare that with the rest of scripture

Here leaven is not theological code for sin

- The power of leaven to influence enough dough to feed 100 people demonstrates the power of the Kingdom influence of the whole world
- What appears at its beginning to be small and inconsequential will turn out to be unstoppable

Conclusion

- This truth is true today
- The Kingdom of God is spreading
 - Today we see the spread in two ways
 - One in proclamation of the truth
 - Two in the conversion of people to faith in Christ
- As the Kingdom has started in us
- Promise of the Kingdom – OT Prophets anticipation
- Principle of the Kingdom– It is at work and is growing
- Proclamation of the Kingdom – This is the gospel proclaimed and received which leads to eternal life
- People of the Kingdom – The People of God – This would include those who were believers in the OT (Read Romans 11, not all Israel believed) and believers in the New Testament. While they are all God’s people there are also differences among God’s People. (For examples Elders and Pastors. Elders and Pastors both shepherd the Church and are spiritual leaders and each will give an account to God and yet there are distinctions between them)
- Practice of the Kingdom – we live here on earth, as God’s people, like we will in eternity. “Your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.”

Much of the Kingdom work is alive and active now

- We seek to live like we will in heaven. This is why Jesus said “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”
- We seek to live godly lives because we will live like God in heaven

There is so much going on today

Look at the staggering impact of the Church today

Address the greatness of the Kingdom

God is so patient

- Just as He is patient today even though He is mocked so greatly
- I just read an article this week where a lesbian couple was voted in to co-pastor Calvary Baptist Church in Washington DC
- While the Kingdom is growing God patiently deals with the mockers, but among us who believe, He grows us and matures us

- God is so kind to minister us. To give us a growing faith. To demonstrate His loyal love to us. To show us His mercies afresh every day. To guard us from the evil one. To bless our efforts to reach out and minister the gospel to others

We preach the gospel and people repent and believe

- We instruct young people and young families and they grow
- We minister the Word and people are cleansed by the truth
- We use our influence for good and the meeting of needs of others and as we do the Kingdom of God grows

This Kingdom starts from within and will spread to the whole world and each of us who believe in Christ are a part of this amazing work. This is a great honor to do this work and I hope you are excited to be a part of what God is accomplishing in us and through us for His Kingdom

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