

The Parables of Jesus #7
The Parable of the Leaven
(Mt. 13:33)
Bill Denton

Introduction

A. Story of husband baking bread

1. A husband convinced his wife he was perfectly capable of baking the bread while she went out to do some errands
2. Not paying attention to the correct measures of ingredients, he put a cup of yeast into the bowl
3. Not long after, his wife phoned to ask if he had found everything to bake the bread
4. His reply -- "Yes, but now I'm having trouble finding the kitchen!"

B. Anyone who has done any baking knows that it only takes a little leaven to do the job

1. Jesus used that familiar picture to teach another truth about God's kingdom
2. It is another positive picture that helps develop our faith

C. Matt 13:33

Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." (NKJ)

I. THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN

A. Jesus tell us that he is describing the kingdom of heaven

1. Some commentators have taken the leaven here to mean evil, but that can't be right -- Jesus specifically says he is describing the kingdom
2. We understand his point only if we take the approach that here leaven is something good and positive, not evil

B. In many other passages, leaven is used as a symbol of evil

1. Matt 16:6
Then Jesus said to them, ""Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." (NKJ)
2. Mark 8:15
Then He charged them, saying, ""Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." (NKJ)

3. 1 Cor 5:6

Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? (NKJ)

C. Here, though, Jesus specifically says the kingdom is like leaven

1. Previously, we've been told that the kingdom is like seed
 - a. parable of the sower -- seed is the word of God planted in the hearts of men
 - b. parable of the wheat & tares -- seed was sons of the kingdom planted in the world
 - c. parable of the mustard seed -- kingdom is like a tiny mustard seed that grows into a large tree
2. Here the kingdom is like leaven
 - a. a woman hides it in three measures of meal (not to keep it secret but simply mixed in such a small amount the leaven is unnoticeable)
 - b. silently, slowly, surely the leaven transforms the entire mixture
 - c. that's the picture Jesus wants people to have of the kingdom

D. Any housewife would understand the importance of leaven (Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible, Matthew, Vol. 1, p. 307)

1. Leaven makes bread soft, no longer hard
 - a. gospel does the same
 - b. it penetrates the heart, softens the hardness of life
 - c. a man becomes softer toward God and others
 - d. a man becomes caring, sensitive -- transformed
2. Leaven makes bread porous and moist, no longer dry
 - a. gospel does the same
 - b. it penetrates the dryness of a man's heart and life
 - c. it moistens the heart and makes it pliable -- transforms
3. Leaven makes bread satisfying
 - a. gospel does the same
 - b. changes dissatisfaction with life into something with purpose, meaning and significance
 - c. enlivens with joy, hope and satisfaction -- transforms
4. Leaven makes bread nourishing
 - a. gospel does the same
 - b. motivates a man to feed others
 - c. a man begins to pass along what he has received
 - d. the transformed now helps transform others

II. LESSONS TO LEARN

A. Leaven is powerful

1. That's why it can be used to illustrate other powerful things
2. We sometimes underestimate the power of the gospel
 - a. Rom 1:16
For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. (NKJ)
 - b. 1 Cor 1:18
For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (NKJ)
 - c. 1 Cor 1:23-24
but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (NKJ)
3. The gospel of Christ, the word of the kingdom is powerful

B. Just a little of the gospel in a person's life will change it (TPOSB, Mt. Vol 1, P. 307)

1. A person who will allow a little of the gospel to penetrate his life will eventually have his life changed
 - a. Acts 17:11-12
These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men. (NKJ)
 - b. 2 Tim 3:16-17
All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJ)
2. Believers must mix the gospel in the world -- work it in thoroughly
 - a. Matt 28:19-20
"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (NKJ)
 - b. requires diligence and faithfulness on our part
 - c. also requires trust in the leaven

3. It does not take much leaven to do the work

a. Mark 5:19

However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." (NKJ)

b. 1 Pet 3:15

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; (NKJ)

C. Like leaven, the kingdom works from the inside out

1. Remember, the woman mixed the leaven into the meal and the leaven worked from within to transform the dough

2. God works on humans the same way -- inside out

a. Prov 4:20-23

My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. (NKJ)

b. Col 1:27

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (NKJ)

c. Gal 4:19

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, (NKJ)

D. God's kingdom is transformed people

1. He changes the direction of life from worldly to heavenly

2. He changes the way we think from self-centered to God-centered

3. He changes the practice or behavior of life from sinful to sanctified

4. He does all this by changing our hearts

a. from within

b. slowly but surely

CONCLUSION

A. Want to know what the kingdom is like?

1. It's like a woman baking bread
2. She puts leaven into the mixture
3. Eventually, it permeates the whole mixture and transforms it

B. How would the kingdom work in your life

1. The same basic way
2. It would begin small, on the inside
3. Eventually, it would change your whole life

C. Isn't it flashy, astounding, knock-your-socks-off kind of thing?

1. No it's more like baking bread
2. The end result may be just as astounding

D. Invitation