



## Sermon Parable of the Leaven – Time to Rise Up

Preached at Cloverdale Church 11/12/2023

### Matthew 13:33

**<sup>33</sup> Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.**

What is meant by the term, “The Kingdom of Heaven”?

- The Kingdom is a process with an expected end of greatness (continuous process).
- A process: a course of events where God begins to govern as King.
- Some relate it to the growth and state of the church today.
- Heaven over earth, where God dwells, His dominion, authority
- Isaiah 57:15.
  - He dwells in our hearts as well as in Heaven.
  - The Kingdom of Heaven is in us.

What is leaven?

- A substance like yeast used in dough to make it rise (1 Cor 5).
- Leaven often represents sin in the Bible.

Three Measures: Some estimate this as being like 40-60 pounds of dough or five dozen loaves. 3 measures of meal is a lot, for something like 100 people.

Jesus is still teaching through the use of parables – a natural story that placed side by side, can reveal spiritual insight and greater understanding. Let’s place the story in the natural, next to the spiritual to better understand how the Kingdom operates today. The process:

Leaven	Seed	Kingdom	Us
Starts as a small lump	Starts small	Started small 12 folks	Started small, humble
Hidden in the meal	Hidden in the ground	Christ hidden	Hidden in our hearts, mind
Transformation starts from inside	Transformation starts in the ground	Christ transformed and risen	Transformation of our mind – you can’t see it yet
Change seen outward	Outward sign of growth	Growth of the church	Evidence of the word working in our lives
Expanded growth - whole	Expanded growth	Expanded growth – whole earth	Deeper understanding, God reigns us
Others benefit	Fruit produced	Kingdom reigns	Fruit produced



The process has not changed but continues. The Kingdom of God is here and looks like this but will not stay the same or remain in the same state. His rule will expand until His Kingdom reigns over all. The same process is working in us. The same process is designed to work in the church.

Luke 17:20-21 -- Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

The Kingdom of God is expanding like leaven would in meal or dough. Although the kingdom of God works invisibly, its effect is evident to all. Yeast does its job slowly, secretly and silently, but no one can deny its effect on bread. The same is true of the work of grace in our hearts.

Rev 11:15 – His Kingdom is coming and ever expanding.

The Gospel spreads throughout the world even as leaven does.

**Key Point:** There is a process involved as by degrees *the whole is leavened*. Likewise, the process works the same in us. God by degrees starts to gain more and more sovereignty over our lives until He is in full control. There may still be areas and strongholds in our life where God doesn't have complete control....but the process is as His influence increases, God will rule all aspects of our life for His glory.

**Key Point:** Why do you think the parable shows so much bread coming out of this story? Perhaps because this is much more than just about us or one person. The Kingdom of Heaven is not just about us. Instead, His plan is to expand the Kingdom and His rule in our lives so that others will benefit from our story and be fed.

Why is leavened use? Here are some opinions:

Jesus used a surprising picture here. Many, if not most, regard this as a beautiful picture of the kingdom of God working its way through the whole world. Yet leaven is consistently used as a picture of sin and corruption (especially in the Passover narrative of Exodus 12:8, 15-20). Again, both the content and the context point towards this being a description of corruption in the kingdom community. This certainly isn't a picture of the church gradually influencing the whole world for *good*. Rather, in the context of increasing opposition to His work, Jesus announced that His kingdom community would also be threatened by corruption and impurity. (Guzik)

G. Campbell Morgan wrote that the leaven represents "paganizing influences" brought into the church.

My opinion (listen also to the podcast/audio lesson from the website):

- I believe the Kingdom is designed to grow in the world and within us as described in the parable...like leaven spreading through a loaf and causing it to rise.
- At the same time, leaven involves sin or pride or corruption which can creep in.
- Let me take you quickly through the Feast of Pentecost which I think helps to explain leaven in the story.
  - Two loaves are waved before the Lord as part of the offering. Both loaves have leaven.

- The thought is these loaves represent the Nation of Israel and the other the inclusion of the Gentiles. One represents Israel becoming a nation, the other represents the start of the New Testament Church.
- Is there leaven or sin in the church and among Jews and Gentiles? Yes of course.
- But here in this service of the Feast of Pentecost, God accepts both loaves as they are.
- Using the seven feasts as a map, we know that accepting leaven is not the end of the process nor the desired end state for us or the church.

**Application:**

- I know many who will say they won't attend or accept the church because of hypocrites. I understand and agree, if there are people in the church then you may very well find some hypocrites and Pharisees in the midst. However, while calling out the leaven, I can't be against the church that God has accepted.
- The church will not always be like this....the leaven being eventually removed is part of the process.
- This should warn us to be watchful that as the Kingdom of Heaven starts to increase in us, that we are careful not to allow pride and self-righteousness (leaven) slip in.

Other observations from my favorite commentaries:

Matthew Henry: The leaven was *hid in three measures of meal*. The heart is, as the meal, soft and pliable; it is the tender heart that is likely to profit by the word: leaven among corn unground does not work, nor does the gospel in souls unhumiliated and unbroken for sin: the law grinds the heart, and then the gospel leavens it. It is *three measures of meal*, a great quantity, for *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. The meal must be kneaded, before it receives the leaven; our hearts, as they must be broken, so they must be moistened, and pains taken with them to prepare them for the word, that they may receive the impressions of it.

JFB -- This parable, while it teaches the same general truth as the foregoing one, holds forth, perhaps, rather the *inward* growth of the kingdom, while "the Mustard Seed" seems to point chiefly to the *outward*. It being a woman's work to knead, it seems a refinement to say that "the woman" here represents *the Church*, as the instrument of depositing the leaven. Nor does it yield much satisfaction to understand the "three measures of meal" of that threefold division of our nature into "spirit, soul, and body," alluded to in 1 Th 5:23.

What about Cloverdale? I'm encouraged because I understand the process. You can be small, but if we allow the word of God to work on the inside of each of us, the process is designed to transform this place and we will grow and expand and look different for the benefit of the Kingdom. Just follow the steps. Change is necessary for the Kingdom to grow. It may look like this now....but it will not stay this way, the King has arrived.

We each have a work to do in promoting the growth and expansion of the Kingdom by sharing the Kingdom process with others.