

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

I Just Forgot the Yeast

Gospel Lesson

Matthew 13:31-33 (CEB)

³¹ He told another parable to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in his field. ³² It's the smallest of all seeds. But when it's grown, it's the largest of all vegetable plants. It becomes a tree so that the birds in the sky come and nest in its branches."

³³ He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in a bushel of wheat flour until the yeast had worked its way through all the dough."

Bible/Sermon Focus

This week's scripture gave us one of the best and most well-known images for the Kingdom of God... the mustard seed. In the same text we hear the parable of the leaven. Here we have two images that are strikingly different than how we might expect God's Kingdom to be described. When asked to imagine an ideal kingdom, many of us would think of might armies, huge buildings, and expansive worldly power. Yet here we have no armies, no buildings, and power concepts turned on their head. The original hearers of these parables must have been astounded.

Jesus' good news for the world is often different than what we might expect. And, to pray the words, "thy kingdom come" is actually a pretty radical prayer. In the good news of Jesus, we can take nothing for granted. All aspects of the God's Kingdom may indeed shock us. We are reminded by Christ, again and again, to stop trying to put our sense of worldly power and authority onto/into God's vision; that God is much more creative than that.

Just as God's Kingdom looks different than we imagine it, participation in the kingdom looks different. Pastor Jim pointed out that it is not necessary to participate in grandiose acts for the kingdom. But, that indeed small acts of love and compassion are more than enough. Perhaps, it's the "small" acts, that actually yield "big" results. In Jesus' teaching the very notion of "small" and "big" are turned upside down. Beloved community, we are all equipped for the task at hand, right now. To live in the kingdom and participate in kingdom life, and good news this is indeed.

Discussion Questions

1. How have you seen the Kingdom of God grow in unexpected ways?
2. Meditate on this quote from our sermon this week and share your reflections: "Unlike human empires that overshadow and oppress their people, in God's kingdom, we, like the birds, are invited to find hope and rest in Jesus as we move toward the full realization of God's plans and purposes now and in the age to come."
3. Share your reflections on Pastor Jim's explanation of the leaven. "Surrounded and hidden, the leaven is slowly transforming the flour that's all around it." Do you like this explanation for the Kingdom of God? Why?
4. How does our vision of the future differ from God's vision? What influences how we imagine the future of the Kingdom of God to be?
5. Think of two ways you can dedicate yourself to small acts of love and compassion this week.

Prayer

God of surprises, we come to you humbly asking for a place among your kingdom, and you point to the birds. You hold out a tiny seed. You bury leaven in pounds and pounds of flour where we cannot see it. God of surprises, we thank you for your kingdom among us. We praise your creativity. We ask that you teach us to love better, to see your world more as your kingdom, each day. Thy Kingdom come, Lord. Thy Kingdom come. Amen.

We have Jesus the king, who operates in meekness, Jesus the king, who rides a donkey instead of a war horse, Jesus the king, who is killed on a cross... Should we really be that surprised that the kingdom of God is symbolized here by a garden herb? Should we really be shocked that instead of a great imperial tree, God's reign is compared to a mustard plant that spreads like a weed?