

THEME: **THE PARABLES OF JESUS**

TOPIC: **THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN**

TEXT: **MATTHEW 13:33; LUKE 13:20-21; 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-7**

INTRODUCTION

From our study last week we were able to see similarities to "The Parable of the Mustard Seed" & "The Parable of The Leaven".

- ✓ Both are quite brief, with no explanations by Jesus recorded
- ✓ Both appear to be describing the remarkable spread of the kingdom of heaven

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON "LEAVEN"

A. WHAT WAS "LEAVEN"?

1. A small portion of fermented dough used to ferment other dough.
2. Once inserted into a batch, it continues its process of fermentation until the whole batch has risen.
3. In today's language we are more likely to use the term "yeast" instead of "leaven"

II. THE MEANING OF THE PARABLE

A. THE KINGDOM'S GROWTH WILL BE PERVASIVE.

1. That is, having the quality to permeate, to spread or flow throughout the world
2. One suggestion is that the loaf represents the world, and the leaven is the kingdom
3. Thus, the reign of heaven (God) will gradually make its influence felt in the world
4. This "reign of heaven" could be manifested:
 - a. In the form of the gospel (the "word" of the kingdom, **Matthew 13:19**).
 - ✓ As it is was proclaimed to all creation – **Mark 16:15-16**
 - b. In the form of the church, which spreads as people accept the gospel
 - c. In the influence of the Word and the church, as their influence is felt in society
5. This parable may also illustrate the "invisible" growth of the kingdom
 - a. As leaven does its work with less than noticeable effect
 - b. So the spreading influence of the kingdom is often unnoticeable, but real nonetheless!
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B. THE KINGDOM'S INFLUENCE WILL BE COMPLETE.

1. Speaking of the loaf, Jesus said, **"Till it was all leavened."**
2. No part of the "loaf" (world) will be untouched by the influence of the kingdom
3. That the gospel did indeed spread in this way was expressed by Paul in **Romans 10:17-18; 16:25-26; Colossians 1:6, 23**
4. Of course, not all have obeyed the gospel – e.g. "The Parable of The Four Soils"
 - a. While the "fragrance of His knowledge" is diffused in every place...
 - b. To some it is "an aroma of death" – **2 Corinthians 2:14-16**
5. Yet, we still see the leavening influence of the Word and Christ's reign.
 - a. In the growth of the church
 - b. In the influence of the Word in society (our judicial system, charitable organizations, etc.)

III. APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE

A. DON'T LOSE HEART...

1. Don't measure the growth or success of the kingdom solely by visible standards.

2. As Jesus said to the Pharisees...
 - a. "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say 'See here!' or 'See there!'" – **Luke 17:20-21a**
 - b. "For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." – **Luke 17:21b**
3. The spread of the kingdom (the rule of God) is taking place wherever the "word of the kingdom" is being sown, and fruit will be borne as it falls on "good and noble hearts"
4. There is a need to remain confident:
 - a. That which began as a mustard seed will become a great tree.
 - b. That what started in one small portion of the loaf will eventually spread through the whole loaf

B. DO YOUR PART TO BE A “LEAVENING INFLUENCE”

1. Allow the "leaven of the kingdom" to permeate your own heart and life
 - a. Take the Word of God into your own heart
 - b. Study and meditate upon it, and then seek to apply it!
2. Allow the Word to produce fruit in your life, so that you become a leavening influence for the kingdom of God!
 - a. By word, as you share the gospel of the kingdom with others
 - b. By deed, as you do good works that glorify God
 - c. For as leaven, we are also "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" – **Matthew 5:13-16**. Designed to glorify God by our good works and influence our world for good as well!

CONCLUSION

With an understanding of these two parables ("**The Mustard Seed**" & "**The Leaven**"), we can take heart in knowing that the work of Christ in regards to His Kingdom will not be for naught or in vain.

As we review this lesson, let me ask "**What kind of leaven are you?**"

- a. This parable has been describing "leaven" as a positive force
- b. But remember, "Leaven" is also used to illustrate that which is harmful.
 - ✓ The "leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" – **Luke 12:1**
 - ✓ That which is a corrupting force, and needs to be purged – **1 Corinthians 5:6-8**

Will you allow the grace of God to make you to be the kind of "leaven" that can be used to His glory?