

The Kingdom of Heaven is Like...

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

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Jesus put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.” He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”...

[Jesus continued teaching in parables after an explanation of the wheat and weeds]

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed the smallest of seeds but turns into a kudzu-like weed that will take over your well-manicured yard and give housing to God's creatures.

The kingdom of heaven is like yeast mixed throughout a whole loaf of bread. It may seem tiny and insignificant but it helps all of us rise up.

The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. It may be something we stumble upon and its value is something that we will give our all for.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. We search and search for it and when we find it we are willing to give our all.

The kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea. It collects all but there is still judgement of good and evil.

These similes, these comparisons that try and explain the kingdom of heaven to us may seem to be all over the place. They are small, they are big, they are expensive, they are good news, they are challenging news. But as theologian and author David Lose reminded me this week, the parables of Jesus are not meant to be an intellectual idea equating perfectly what the kingdom of heaven is or isn't. Jesus' parables are meant to be an experience. They take everyday, common items, tasks, and stories to teach us through our lived experience. They teach us about the

creative and redemptive power of God that continues to work through our lives even today.¹

So with that in mind, what do we experience in these parables? Have we taken up gardening or baking during our quarantine time as so many have? Have we experienced the difficulty in getting rid of weeds and the amazing power of yeast to completely change some flour and water into bread? Because that is what the kingdom of heaven is like. It works its way through us and our world. It sticks around and is difficult to get rid of. It continues to sprout up in the most unimaginable ways. There is hope because the smallest things can affect great change.

Or perhaps you have noticed how Personal Protective Equipment has acted like today's pearl of great worth. States and Countries are outbidding each other to try and get enough PPE. What is it like for the kingdom of heaven to be something that is so valuable that you are willing to give your all for it? Are you searching or longing to find something this valuable? Keep searching, and I know that we (LPC) would love to walk alongside you in this journey.

Or perhaps you have been caught up in the net of good news and social justice. The good and the evil in us is being separated and we are being given a

¹ David Lose - <http://www.davidlose.net/2014/07/pentecost-7a-parables-that-do-things/>

chance to turn from evil towards good. Perhaps we are learning about our racial and privileged blindspots and now we have the chance to turn those privileges into helping those who are being oppressed? I encourage you to keep learning and growing and maybe even join our weekly book study!

This last week, as many of you know, Congressman John Lewis passed away. John Lewis was there on Bloody Sunday where police ruthlessly attacked a peaceful protest. He spoke at the March on Washington next to Martin Luther King Jr. And he has faithfully served as a Congressman for 33 years. After the Voting Rights Act ended in 2016, 25 states passed voting restrictions. John Lewis pushed the House of Representatives to restore the Voting Rights Act and it passed the House in December of 2019. It has sat in the Senate with no move to take it up since then.²

John Lewis shared a tweet about how to respond to moments like these:

Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble. #goodtrouble³

John Lewis, I believe, embodied what these parables are all about, a lived experience. And so I start to wonder if the kingdom of heaven looks like good

² <https://theintercept.com/2020/07/20/honor-john-lewis-voting-rights-act/>

³ Twitter post. John Lewis (@repjohnlewis) June 27, 2018

trouble. A good trouble that works its way through unjust systems and creates a world filled with justice and grace. A good trouble that infiltrates and takes over the yards of our world and won't back down. A good trouble that is worth whatever the cost because we know that God stands on the side of the oppressed and the outcast, the stranger and the unhoused.

The kingdom of heaven is like many things. It is something that works its way through our lives and our world. It is transforming this world into a place where all are welcome, where all are given the same opportunities for life and wholeness, where justice rolls down like a mighty river. And the kingdom of heaven is at work within us, growing us into the people God has called us to be and sending us out into the world to share this taste of heaven with all in need.

The kingdom of heaven is here! It is growing amongst us, it is working through us, it is causing good trouble, we search, we stumble, and it gathers us up! And before we know it, it will transform everything. Amen.