



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

One of the ladies in our congregation lent me a CD a few weeks ago of Chonda Pierce. Any of you know who she is? She is a stand-up comedian, an older gal, who loves to laugh at women getting older and how society perceives them. Guess she thought I was an older woman who needed a laugh and boy did I laugh. Her monologue was masterfully timed with one-liners in quick succession that you could not help but laugh, not just because they were funny but also because they were also true.

As I was preparing for this message, I thought of Jesus standing up in front of all those people telling one parable after another. It was his way of trying to get people to understand his message, to understand what the Kingdom of heaven is like. In this monologue, there are 5 short parables, almost one-liners. His intention was not to get people to laugh, but rather to get them to understand using any examples familiar to them. Jesus wanted all to grasp the value of the kingdom He was offering.

The 5 parables are all based on things that the people were familiar with: seeds, yeast, treasure, a pearl and fishing. In their lives they knew of agricultural principals that planted seeds grow. The people knew about buried treasure. After all there were no banks or storage units, so they often used burial to stash valuables. Exposure to precious gems, like pearls, was prized by kings and queens signifying great value. Many among them were

fishermen that understood separating the good from the bad fish after a catch. But the one-liner that stuck with me this week was the one about yeast.

Jesus said, "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." Does anyone know how much 3 measures of flour is? Well it is about eighty pounds. So, a woman who whips up 3 measures of flour is no Martha Stewart, making a few light delicate croissants, but she is a baker.

Just image emptying 16, 5 # bags of flour into the biggest bowl you have ever seen. Adding 40 cups of water and mixing it up. It would take a strong woman to knead that 100-pound lump of dough. Or maybe you would need a Hulk Hogan type to be able to knead that amount of dough. We are not told how much yeast to add but I suspect it would be more than one packet of Red Star.

Soon, the flour, water and yeast are now dough and an amazing mystery is bubbling up inside of it. The hidden will become manifest in at least a doubling of size of the dough. And there is no way to stop its expansion. It is much like how God works in our lives, transforming us into something new. From flour, water and yeast to dough, able to make bread, rolls, pizza crust and more. And we are made into something new, something valuable and most likely something sustaining.

Yes, yeast does take time to work and how it works is amazing. We have to be patient as it rises. In our society we now even have quick rise yeast, but not so in Jesus day. In fact, yeast was a commodity that they did not always have access too, so they would save some of the dough from a batch, keep it alive and use it again as a started for the next batch. Sounds like those friendship breads we had going around years ago. Or the sour dough starter my daughter used to keep in my fridge. She kept it alive to use again, to start another batch.

And so, what does all this have to do with the Kingdom of heaven. Well, I think that we can find lots of lessons in this parable. But the one that interests me most is that once that yeast is set in motion, it is always working.

God placed the Holy Spirit in our hearts at our baptism to keep Jesus alive in us. Whether we know it or not, that Spirit is churning inside of us. He is always present and when we are ready, He will bring us a pinch of dough, faith to grow in us. I know that for a few decades of my life, I did not even think

about God. Actually, I did not really care about Him. I was just living life minding my own business and things were going well and suddenly, BAM! Isn't that the famous chef's expression, Emeril Lagossi? BAM. It was like the truth about Jesus hit me upside of my head. Jesus somehow broke into my life and it was forever changed. And here I am today. I wasn't even looking for God, but he was obviously call out to me.

Some people rather, have a hunger, a longing for bread, sustenance. They are born with a longing for a spiritual experience. They are searching for something bigger than themselves, God. Someone told them about Jesus, or maybe even invited them to Christ the Servant and they settled in and began a personal relationship with the Lord. They found Jesus and their search for something delicious was over.

Some of you I suspect were born into Christian families. Some heard the truth from Christian friends, and some heard the truth on a facebook post and many of you might have come to Christ through hardship and trials. But the point here is that you cannot be committed to or have a relationship with Jesus unless you somehow discover Him. The treat of God's kingdom of heaven has to be discovered and brought forth from within.

God is always present in the dough; He is the yeast that makes us a new creation. As we have been talking about in our Bible study, God comes down to us. We cannot climb up any sort of ladder to get to him. He came down by sending his only son Jesus to walk among us, to teach us about the kingdom. He hung on a tree until dead, for us. He was buried and then rose again, to new live and to give us forgiveness, abundant life and eternal life. We are made new in His death and resurrection. For it is only in Christ that we receive these amazing gifts. Heaven is our reward for faith in God. And it is only by His grace that we are saved. Nothing or no one in the whole wide world can give us promises as God does. He loves us that much that His offer is always present, and He wants us to let his yeast work in us and develop a faith in Him.

Yeast permeates the dough and is then present throughout. And so, it is with the kingdom of heaven, it is present everywhere, every day and is manifest for those with the faith to see it. We need to remember too that no matter our circumstances that the kingdom of God is present. The Holy Spirit does not need a brass band to announce Him. He can come in the invisible, the hidden

small things in life. But it takes faith to believe that the yeast is there, and the bread will rise. Faith is necessary to see the kingdom of heaven as well.

So, this week as you walk through each hour and encounter people and circumstances look for the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is right here, right now. It is not distant. Sometimes it is hidden and not obvious. And certainly, it is not static, but alive and manifesting in the world. The kingdom of heaven has room for all of us. And if we look for the kingdom, we will find it abundantly present. So, give thanks to God for his never giving up on us and offering His Kingdom to all.

And so folks, these one-liners of Jesus are true. All the world is a lump of dough, flour with yeast mixed in, and potential beyond belief. God offers abundant bread at His heavenly banquet and gives us a foretaste even now and for all of eternity. **AMEN**