





Two Kinds of Yeast

Matthew 13:33; 16:5-12

Mark 8:15

Luke 12:1; 13:20-21

Parables of Jesus

Teach the lesson from Matthew 13, or Luke 13; the verses are almost identical. This is a very short parable of Jesus, and we can contrast it with the comments Jesus makes about the leaven, or yeast, of the Pharisees.

The Jewish people had expectations of a Messiah, but Jesus did not meet those expectations.

The scriptures had prophesied that a Messiah was coming to rescue the Jews who would rule his people as king. The Jews were waiting for a savior, but one that looked very different from Jesus. They expected a strong, military leader, who would rise up against the current Roman government, and elevate Israel as a world superpower. Even the comments the disciples make let us know that they were waiting for a day when Jesus would tell them it was time to rise up and come into power.

Jesus arrives as a prophet, one who is not searching for power but humbles himself and serves the sick, the poor, and the outcasts. He reaches out to those who everyone rejects and heals those who are in need; he eats with sinners.

He does the opposite of what the people expected of a leader.

Jesus is constantly trying to tell the people that his kingdom is different. Jesus tells them that the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, is arriving on earth as it is in heaven. He tells them parables to show them that the things he is doing is the arrival of God's kingdom on earth. God's kingdom involves elevating others above yourself and putting the needs of others above your own. The kingdom of heaven is treating others with kindness and loving the unlovable. The people that the world shuns as the least are actually the most important in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of heaven is backwards to everything that the world expects.

This story is no different, he is telling several comparisons to show them what the kingdom of heaven is like.

In Matthew 13, Jesus has been sitting by the seaside giving many different parables to illustrate the kingdom of heaven. He gives a short illustration about a woman making bread. He tells them that the kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, or flour, until the whole thing was leavened, or until it worked through all of the dough.

What is leaven? It is yeast. Yeast is a living organism; it is a living cell. It is what makes our bread rise. Without yeast we have different types of flat breads, but yeast is what makes the bread grow larger. When yeast is added to a dough it changes the whole composition of the dough, not just a part of it (Galatians 5:9).

Discuss:

Have you ever made bread? Have you kneaded yeast into the dough?

Can you have a half of a loaf of bread that rises? Once the yeast is added to a mixture, the whole loaf will be leavened. All of the bread will rise.

It is also not possible to take the yeast out of the bread once it has been added. You would have to start all over again if you do not want the bread to rise, or a leavened dough.



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So what is Jesus talking about?

The yeast of the kingdom of heaven changes people's hearts and changes the world. It is hidden in a lump of dough. You cannot see it, but it changes *everything*.

Once the kingdom of heaven came into the world, it is unstoppable (Acts 5:38-39.) It is completely different, it is something new.

Many times that leaven is mentioned in the Bible it represents evil; several times leaven is used to represent sin. Many of the Old Testament feasts and holidays called upon the children of Israel, the Jewish people, to remove the yeast from their homes and not offer any sacrifices with yeast or leaven.

But as we read this kingdom parable told by Jesus, it seems that there are two different ways of looking at leaven, or yeast in the Bible.

Jesus tells the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, Saducees (another religious group: Matthew 16:11), and the leaven of Herod (Mark 8:15). Their leaven is their doctrine (Matthew 16:12), which is hypocrisy (Luke 12:1).

The Pharisees did everything "right." Their actions looked good on the outside to others, but on the inside their hearts were not pure (Matthew 23:25,27).

They had other motives; they wanted to be seen and praised by all the people. Their heart was not right with God and their actions did not match their intentions.

Jesus called the Pharisees out - even on their thoughts. On many occasions we are told that he knew their thoughts, and his comments addressed what they were thinking in their hearts (Matthew 9:4; Mark 2:8; Luke 5:22). Jesus called the Pharisees "hypocrites", which meant they were just acting. They acted one way to look good to the people around them, and they said the right things, but their hearts were "far" from Jesus (Matthew 15:18; Mark 7:6; Isaiah 29:13). Jesus told the people not to be like the Pharisees, who prayed loudly out in public just so that people would see them (Matthew 6:5-6).

The Pharisees made a lot of extra rules and followed them so that everyone would think they were extra holy. They would tell everyone they should obey these rules, but they would find ways around the rules to not obey them the way that God intended. An example of this is the way they treated Jesus for healing on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were very self-righteous and proud. Jesus was telling his disciples that this way that "seems right to a man" (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25) were ways of death and they should beware of them.

This sin of pride, or self-righteousness is also a leaven that grows in the heart and changes a person, and this is the leaven he warned against.

Again, he turns everything around to the opposite of what people are thinking. What was previously used to symbolize something evil can also be used to symbolize a method that shows the way the kingdom spreads into the world. And once it is in the world, it cannot be removed.

Jesus in the Story



Parables allowed Jesus to make very bold statements to those who were open minded, to those who “had ears to hear.”

Jesus tells stories in parables to make people think, not to clearly illustrate his point. Those who searched for the kingdom would study and ponder, and go deeper. But these parables also allowed Jesus to conceal his true message from those who were against him.

He spoke in mysteries to give him the time he needed to completely bring the kingdom into the world.

The parables are still packed with truths that we can ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to us through our understanding.



Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

29. On the Rock

1. How many types of people are in the story?
2. What kind of person does what Jesus says?
3. Which person does not do what Jesus says?
4. What did the foolish man build his house on?
5. Whose house did not have a foundation?

Psalm 62:6-7

He only is my rock and my salvation. He is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of strength and my refuge, is in God.

30. Weeds in the Wheat

1. When could the servants tell that there was something else planted in the field?
2. Why could they not tell sooner?
3. What was the only thing that was different?
4. Why did they not pull the weeds when they could first tell what they were?
5. What do the weeds represent?

Matthew 7:15-16

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?

31. Two Kinds of Yeast

1. How many measures of meal did the lady in the story use?
2. Is it possible to remove the yeast from the dough?
3. What do you have to do instead?
4. In your own words, what is "leaven of the Pharisees?" (Luke 12:1)

Acts 5:38-39

"...For if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but it is of God, you cannot overthrow it - lest you even be found to fight against God."

32. The Heart of Man

Read Proverbs 4:20-23

1. To what should we give attention?
2. To what should we listen?
3. Where should we keep the Word of God?
4. What is the Word of God to our bodies?

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life.