

Humble Beginnings

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. It is a joy and a privilege for me to gather with you, to worship with you, and to preach God's word to you this morning.! Please open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 13.

And if you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. And we'd love to give you a copy that you can use while you're here and you can take home with you. Matthew chapter 13.

Matthew chapter 13. We're looking at verses 24 to 43 this morning. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word.

Father, you do work in mysterious ways. How can it be that the seed of the precious, eternal kingdom of heaven is deposited into us?

Lord, that is your wisdom, your love.

[1 : 24] Father, that you would open up our eyes to see the wondrous spiritual realities about the kingdom of heaven, about the church of Christ, that we may see as you see.

that we might walk by faith, not by sight, the sight of our eyes.

So Lord, give us ears to hear, open the eyes of our hearts to understand and to believe, to cherish your word this morning.

in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please stand if you are able to honor God as I read from his word and then we hear from him.

Matthew chapter 13, verses 24 to 43. He put another parable before them, saying, the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

[2 : 50] But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also.

And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?

He said to them, an enemy has done this. So the servants said to him, then do you want us to go and gather them? But he said, no, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest. And at harvest time, I will tell the reapers, gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.

He put another parable before them saying, the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown, it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

[4 : 06] He told them another parable, the kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened. All these things, Jesus said to the crowds in parables.

Indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet. I will open my mouth in parables. I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world.

Then he left the crowds and went into the house and his disciples came to him saying, explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.

He answered, the one who sows the good seed is the son of man. The field is the world and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one and the enemy who sowed them is the devil.

The harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The son of man will send his angels and they will

gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all lawbreakers and throw them into the fiery furnace.

[5 : 20] In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Scott's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. Daniel 7, 13 to 14, prophesied that a one like the son of man will receive an everlasting dominion and authority and a kingdom from God the father, the ancient of days, a kingdom that will never be destroyed and that he would rule over all peoples and nations and languages.

This was a very important prophecy in the Old Testament. So when Jesus comes on the scene and then he starts calling himself the son of man, alluding to that majestic title in Daniel 7, you can imagine the growing anticipation.

He is here. The Messiah, the son of man who will bring about the everlasting kingdom of God. Similarly, in Zechariah chapter 14, or in Zechariah prophesied of a day when the Lord God, Yahweh himself, will come down to earth and stand on Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east and fight against the nations who rebel against God and suppress his people.

He prophesied that on that day, the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day, the Lord will be one and his name one. Meaning, God's rule will be consummated over all the earth so that he will be the only king and he will be the only Lord, the only God who is worshipped.

[7 : 06] For those who knew this prophecy of God coming down himself and standing upon the Mount of Olives, when Jesus stands atop Mount of Olives in Matthew 21, before his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when people are hailing him, Hosanna, son of David, that excitement would have been palpable.

He's here. God himself has come down to be king over all the earth so that the Lord will be one and his name one.

But Jesus does not go from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem to overthrow the Roman Empire. He goes into Jerusalem to be crucified by the Romans.

Yes, he rises from the dead on the third day and at that point, this messianic expectation of this kingdom, the consummation of the kingdom is at a fever pitch among his disciples post-resurrection and then Jesus ascends to heaven, leaving the disciples to wonder, what about the kingdom?

What about the kingdom of God you spoke of so frequently? Where is this kingdom of heaven? And that same question would warm its way into the minds of Christians throughout the ages when they feel like foreigners and aliens amidst a swirl of confused and sinful values of our world, when they are ridiculed and marginalized for their faith in different parts of the world, when they are persecuted and even martyred for their faith, where is the kingdom of heaven?

[8 : 48] Jesus answers that burning question in this passage and he counsels patience, perseverance. And the main point of this passage is this, as resident aliens in the kingdom of earth endure patiently until the consummation of the kingdom of heaven.

As I mentioned to you last week, this is the third of five major teaching discourses by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew and this third discourse is around the theme of the kingdom of heaven or as the other gospel writers put it, the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven refers to the rulership of God, his dominion. The kingdom of God is closely related to the church of God, the church of Christ, but they are not identical.

The kingdom of God refers to the sovereign rule of God. The church is the subject of that rule. The church is, in this sense, the instrument and the visible expression of the kingdom of God.

So what does the kingdom of heaven look like as it breaks in upon the kingdom of earth? What does it look like for the rule of God in heaven to assert itself, to start to assert itself on earth?

[10 : 04] Jesus answers this question in four ways in our passage. First, the kingdom of heaven is contested, but it endures. Second, the kingdom of heaven starts small, but ends big.

Third, the kingdom of heaven is hidden, but it's nonetheless present. Fourth, the kingdom of heaven is new, but old. The first thing that Jesus teaches us about the kingdom of heaven is that it is contested, but it nonetheless endures.

He teaches this using the parable of the weeds. This is one of the parables that are unique to the gospel of Matthew, so you won't find it in the other gospels. Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

But by the time the good seed bears fruit and the wheat comes up and starts to bear grain, the weeds also rear their ugly head. The servants of the master confusedly wonder, where did all these weeds come from when you only sowed good seed?

And the master of the house reveals to them that it's a case of agricultural sabotage. An enemy has sown the weeds among the wheat. If you're using the English standard version of the Bible, which is the one I'm using now, you most likely have a footnote next to the word weed in verse 25.

[11:28] And if you follow that down to the footnote, it will tell you that the word weed is probably a reference to darnel. A darnel is a grass-like weed that looks nearly identical to wheat in its early stages.

You can only tell darnel apart from the wheat when the ears begin to form. The ears are the tips, the heads of the cereal grains like wheat.

It's the part that, it's the fruit, the part that produces the edible grain, the seeds. The wheat grains are heavier, so mature wheat ears will droop humbly like this when they're fully mature.

Whereas darnel is lighter, darnel ears are lighter and therefore will stand proudly erect. even after it's fully mature. So when they're fully mature, they're easy to tell apart.

The wheat kernels are also golden brown, but the darnel kernels are black and poisonous. They're actually poisonous, cause food poisoning. But all of these differences are only apparent in the late stages of growth when the ears are forming.

[12:38] That's why it says in verse 26, so when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. Not that the weeds weren't there beforehand and then all of a sudden they sprang up overnight.

The weeds were there, but before they looked like wheat. We thought we only had wheat. But then as the grains form, as the year begins to form, now you see, oh wait, where did all these weeds come from?

That's when it becomes apparent. But by the time the darnel is identified, it is too late to try to go around and uproot them and gather them up because as the master says in verse 29, no, lest in gathering the weeds you root up the wheat along with the wheat.

By this stage of growth, the roots are all entangled underneath, they're intertwined, it makes it impossible to eradicate the weed without prematurely killing the wheat. This is why the only solution is verse 30, let both grow together until the harvest.

And at harvest time I will tell the reapers, gather the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn. It's at harvest time that the reapers will have to go through the painstaking task of separating out the wheat from the wheat.

[13:55] Because bread was the most basic staple in their diet in Israel, ancient Israel, wheat was the most critical crop. And because darnel is a poisonous grain that looks so much like wheat, sowing darnel among the wheat rendered the field commercially useless.

This made darnel the perfect candidate for agricultural sabotage and people actually did this. So there was a Roman law that specifically and explicitly forbade sowing darnel in a neighbor's wheat field.

But this is precisely what the devil does. He is a spiteful saboteur. He is bitter that he doesn't have what God has.

And he tries to sabotage and spoil God's good work of building up the kingdom of heaven. Jesus begins to explain this parable in verse 36.

Then Jesus left the crowds and went into the house and his disciples came to him saying, explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field. Once again, Jesus starts to make that distinction between the crowds and his disciples that we saw earlier in verses 10 to 13.

[15:12] He speaks to crowds in parables, but he speaks plainly to his disciples and explains the parables to them because, as he said earlier, to the disciples it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to the crowds it has not been given.

Jesus explains in verse 37 that the master who sows the good seed, the wheat, is the son of man, Jesus himself. Then he says in verses 38 to 39, the field is the world and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom.

The weeds are the sons of the evil one and the enemy who sow them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age and the weepers are angels.

It's really nice and helpful to have a glossary of terms after a parable. You don't get this with every parable, but you can't get this wrong because Jesus told us exactly what it means. The resemblance between wheat and darnel and the fact that they can only be distinguished once they start to bear fruit I think is meant to teach us something about how to tell true Christians apart from false ones.

Matthew makes this point in numerous places throughout the gospel. Earlier in chapter 7 verse 15 to 20 Jesus warned us about false prophets who come to us in sheep's clothing meaning they look like believers but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

[16:32] He counseled us you will recognize them by what? By their fruits. Our grapes gather from thorn bushes or figs from thistles so every healthy tree bears good fruit but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire thus you will recognize them by their fruit. Like the wheat and darnel the only surefire way to distinguish true Christians from false ones is their fruit. Are they bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit? Galatians 5 22 33 love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self-control.

Every true Christian will bear in some measure the fruit of the Holy Spirit but we also need to be patient the young and immature wheat that hasn't borne much fruit yet is very difficult to distinguish from the darnel.

However it's only a matter of time. Every good tree bears good fruit. Every good seed will bear good grains and every true Christian will evidence love and good deeds.

[17:57] Similarly Jesus taught us in Matthew 7 verse 21 not everyone who says to me Lord Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of the Father who is in heaven. There are people who claim Jesus as Lord and pay lip service to him and yet their lives do not bear testimony to the Lordship of Christ.

They are not wheat but darnel and you can tell them apart by the grain in the ear. Even the church of Christ and I'm speaking here of the visible church is a mixed community of believers and unbelievers.

Paul warns about this in Acts 20 but that wolves in sheep's clothing will rise up from among the church from within the church to draw away disciples after them.

we do our best to vet new members and we conduct membership interviews and we'll be inducting new members later on today but even then we can't always ensure that only true Christians are admitted into the church which is why church discipline exists.

This mixed nature of the visible church troubles us because we like things to be neat and clean but even in local churches with the highest and most rigorous standards of membership inevitably there will be some darnel found among the wheat until the final judgment.

[19:24] The fifth verse of the hymn church is one foundation that we sang this morning says this though with a scornful wonder men see her the church sore oppressed!

By schisms rent asunder by heresies distressed yet saints their watch are keeping their cry goes up how long and soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

Every branch and denomination of Christianity throughout history has been by schisms rent asunder and by heresies distressed. This makes us weep and cry out how long oh Lord but this parable counsels patience and endurance not yet soon but not yet brothers and sisters when divisions and doctrinal errors mar the church of Christ mourn and pray and proclaim and contend for the truth but do so patiently perseveringly we are not to be the final judge of these matters in this life but when our Lord Jesus returns for the harvest he will separate out the weed from the darnel.

The mixed nature of the church I do think is one of the implications of this parable however I do not think it is the main point of this parable. Why do I say that?

Because in verse 38 Jesus tells us that the field is the world and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom the weeds are the sons of the evil one.

[21:00] the field is not restricted to the church he's not talking about just the church the people of God the visible community the gathered people no the field encompasses the entire world so then the good seed the wheat is the people of God scattered throughout the world and the weeds the darnel represent all unbelievers throughout the world not just the false Christians who have infiltrated the church.

Notice also that in this parable the word good seed is consistently and even awkwardly at times singular whereas the word weeds is consistently plural.

It's as if Jesus wants to communicate to us the wonderful spiritual realities that the true church only has one foundation and one cornerstone and that is Jesus Christ our Lord.

There is one gospel on which we stand for all eternity. there is one body and one spirit just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call one Lord and one faith and one baptism one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all there is an invisible spiritual unity that undergirds the entire people of God.

no matter how weak and frail and divided we may seem there is that underlying undergirding unity of the spirit.

[22 : 33] In contrast the weeds are variegated and many their misbeliefs and heresies are numerous. Within this world the believers and unbelievers coexist until the day of final judgment.

this I think is a helpful corrective to some Christians who predict a thorough and worldwide Christianization of the world leading up to the return of Christ.

I do believe that the gospel will grow the kingdom of heaven will grow as this passage teaches us but Jesus also teaches us here that the wheat and the weeds grow side by side in the field of this world.

world. But shouldn't there be a new world order now that the kingdom of heaven has broken up in upon this earth? What kind of mighty kingdom of heaven allows rivals and opponents to continue unchecked?

Shouldn't we as Christians be the ones who hold authority and power in this world? Why does God not do away with the wicked right now? The parable of the weeds answers those questions.

[23 : 51] God allows the wheat and the weeds to grow side by side until the appointed time of final judgment. So then don't be disheartened that Christendom is not the dominant authority and power that you wish it were in the world.

Don't doubt the reality of the kingdom of heaven just because there's much resistance and rebellion against God in the world. The kingdom of heaven is real no matter how powerful the kingdoms of this world might appear.

So don't be discouraged that the world's great powers today are sometimes antagonistic toward the church. These things should not surprise us.

2 Timothy 3.12 says all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted. 1 Peter 4.12 says beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you.

Opposition persecution these are the norm. These are normal. They're not strange. Jesus said in Matthew 5.10 blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[25 : 04] If you belong to the kingdom of heaven you will face these things. if you are of the good seed you will be persecuted. The weeds around you will try to deprive you of the nutrients in the soil and the water.

They will distract you from seeking the kingdom of God and seeking the righteousness of God first.

They will try to choke the spiritual life out of us and sometimes as a result following Christ and pursuing the kingdom will get hard but we must patiently endure.

Remember that this is the most precious thing. We must pursue seek. The kingdom of heaven is contested but it endures.

Jesus tells us that the wheat and the weeds will coexist until the harvest time and he tells us in verses 39 to 42 that the harvest is the end of the age and the reapers are angels.

Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire so will it be at the end of the age. The son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law breakers and throw them into the fiery furnace.

[26 : 15] in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus is speaking here of the final judgment. Many passages of scripture employ the language of harvest to speak of the final judgment and the ingathering of God's elect.

The fiery furnace continues the metaphor the farming metaphor where it's the oven where the unwanted vegetation is thrown into to be consumed. And here it functions as a metaphor for hell.

Hell is frequently associated with fire. Jesus calls it the hell of fire in Matthew 5:22 and 18:9. He calls it the eternal fire in Matthew 18:8 and 25:41.

Matthew 3:10 to 12 spoke of how God will cut down any tree that does not bear good fruit and throw it into the fire. And he said that Jesus has a winnowing fork in his hand and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his weed into the barn but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. This is the place of eternal torment reserved for the devil and his angels as it says in Matthew 25:41. And as our passage this morning tells us it is also reserved for the sons of the evil one.

[27:31] Those who follow the devil because they have rejected Christ. Fire is an appropriate metaphor for this eternal punishment because God is described in scripture as the consuming fire.

Hell is a place reserved for those who rebel against God and seek to usurp his throne. The one who dwells in unapproachable light. The consuming fire.

And when you seek to usurp his throne you're consumed by the holy just wrath of the consuming fire.

In that place Jesus says there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth symbolizing regret and bitter resentment when people grind their teeth gnash their teeth.

But in contrast verse 43 describes the final vindication of the sons of the kingdom of heaven. It says then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

[28:39] This is an allusion to Daniel chapter 12 verse 3 which prophesied that those who are resurrected to everlasting life will shine like the brightness of the sky above. They shine like the sun because they are united with Jesus Christ.

Later in Matthew 17 verse 2 at the transfiguration when Jesus is transfigured into his heavenly glory for a brief time it says that his face the fact that the righteous will shine like the sun it identifies the righteous the people of God with Christ because they are united with him they are one with him because of their faith in him and those who are united to Christ then become children of God we become as God's people collectively God's son because we are in his only son Jesus Christ so that we can rightly be called it can be said of us in the kingdom of their father as Jesus says in order to enter the kingdom of heaven we must receive the son of heaven in describing his death and resurrection

Jesus said in John 12:24 truly truly I say to you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone but if it dies it bears much fruit where did the singular good seed come from that produces this weed harvest it's Jesus Christ himself his life death and resurrection he died in our place to take our sins and he rose from the dead so that sinners might be declared righteous so that orphans can be adopted as children of God that is the good news that we proclaim and that is the good seed that we sow and scatter all over the field of this world Jesus is the good seed that bears fruit within us so have you received the son of heaven into your life only those who have done that will be declared righteous and only the righteous will one day shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father seeds in this world the kingdom of heaven is contested it starts small and in many ways it's hidden but on that day there will be nothing to hold back the glory of the kingdom of heaven Jesus tells another parable likening the kingdom of heaven in verses 31 to 32 he says the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field it is the smallest of all seeds but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches a mustard seed is a proverbially small seed it's about one millimeter in diameter it's the smallest of all seeds among the commonly cultivated seeds in that part of the world and yet when it is planted in your garden the mustard seed grows into a tree that's larger than all the garden plants so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches Jesus is speaking of the small humble beginnings of the kingdom of heaven when Zerubbabel led the Jewish exiles out of the Babylonian captivity and brought them back to Jerusalem he rebuilt the altar and laid again once again the foundation of the temple of God in Jerusalem on top of the ruins of the former temple and at that point the altar and the foundation didn't seem like much and of that it says in Zechariah 4:2 whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice and shall see the plum line in the hand of Zerubbabel that was a day of small things of small humble beginnings but one day they will rejoice to see the glorious temple of God be built Jesus is echoing that exhortation about the kingdom of the itinerant preachers dependent on other people's hospitality and they're proclaiming the kingdom of heaven and they're doing this mind you at the heyday of the

[33 : 44] Roman empire one of the greatest civilizations and one of the most enduring and influential empires in human history and in that day and age when you see Jesus and his ragtag group of disciples would you have believed Jesus claimed has come where is it Jesus you mean this you and your twelve disciples would you have believed Jesus then when he told you that the kingdom of heaven would outgrow and outlast the Roman empire the last Roman emperor was deposed in 476 AD even the Byzantine empire the remnant the eastern remnant of the Roman empire destroyed by the Ottomans 500 years ago but the church of Christ which is the medium and the visible expression of the kingdom of

God is still standing is it not isn't that remarkable similarly in Matthew 18 18 Jesus gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven to his church the people he says whatever you that's you plural referring to the church of Christ which is the immediate antecedent whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven whatever you lose on earth shall be lose in heaven do you know that God has given that kind of glory that kind of authority to his people the church does the church of Christ seem weak and insignificant to you don't let the mustard seed beginning for you this is a mighty kingdom against which even the gates of Hades cannot prevail Jesus said do you know fellow Christian that you are you are an ambassador and a diplomat for this very kingdom of heaven isn't it so degrading when when foreign diplomats and heads of state come from all over the world to the White House and then they grovel at the feet of our country's leaders flattering them and trying to ingratiate themselves to this powerful state don't live like that in this world for your ambassadors of the kingdom of heaven don't cower in fear you represent the king of kings and the lord of lords he is seated right now our lord at the right hand of the father far above all rule and authority power and dominion above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the age to come so live like that the lord is my light and my salvation whom shall

I fear the lord is a strong hold of my life of whom! shall I be afraid don't fixate on the mustard seed origin fix your eyes on this seed's eternal destiny look at verse 32 the mustard seed of the kingdom of heaven will become eventually a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches in the Old Testament the image of a tree with birds!

nesting in them is frequently depict! powerful kingdoms For example Daniel 4 10 of Babylon as a tall tree that soars to the heaven and it says that the beasts of the field found shade under it and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches and all flesh was fed from it in that metaphor the beasts of the birds that take refuge in its shadows the birds that make nests in it represent all flesh the people who are fed from it similarly Ezekiel 31 verse 6 describes the kingdom of Assyria as a tall cedar tree and it says that all the birds of the heavens made their nests in its bows and under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth to their young and under its shadow lived all great nations so then these birds perching on the tree represent the nations that are fed and nourished by this great empire that are in its orbit and under its influence so when

[38 : 34] Jesus says that the birds of the air come to nest make nests in the branches of the mustard tree of the kingdom of heaven he's saying that the nations of the earth will come and find refuge in it that's exactly what God promised to do in Ezekiel 17 22 23 he promised that he will take a twig a branch and then he will plant it on the hills on the mountain of Israel and that it would grow from it and will grow into a mighty tree upon which the nations will dwell under it will dwell every kind of bird of course the branch is Jesus he's called the branch of the Lord in Isaiah chapter 4 verse 2 he's called the righteous branch from the root of David that we just sang about in Jeremiah and indeed the tree of the kingdom of heaven planted with Jesus the branch is growing mustard seeds don't grow overnight of course no plants ever grow overnight right but isn't even our local church a micro cosmic representation of this parable in cat's baptism last week and in the induction of new members today do we not see the ongoing fulfillment of this parable our members represent nations and tribes from all over

Wales England all kinds of European ancestry there's too many to name there from Nigeria and Egypt Brazil Mexico Ecuador Vietnam Indonesia Philippines China Korea Turkey Kyrgyzstan Jews and Gentiles from all nations and tribes taking refuge and making their nests in the tree of the kingdom of heaven do we not see that do we have any doubt that we will see in the end the fulfillment of Revelation 7 9 to 10 after this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb this is the heartbeat and

the mission of our church this is why we share the gospel with our neighbors and evangelize this is why we must go to the ends of the earth in foreign missions because

God said the kingdom of heaven will comprise an innumerable multitude from every nation from all not some all tribes and peoples and languages because the ancient of days on the great white throne and because the lamb the slain lamb of God who has risen seated at the right hand of God our father our savior Jesus Christ they deserve that worship deserve that allegiance deserve that glory Jesus tells yet another short parable in verse 33 the kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened in this parable Jesus teaches us that the kingdom of heaven is hidden but nonetheless present and spreading when we hear the word leaven we sometimes think of yeast but yeast was not readily available in those days they had a different ingenious way of making dough rise and that was to use leaven which is a fermented dough from an old batch that is set aside and combined with a new batch in order to produce fermentation in the new bread all you need is the first batch of dough that is fermented and you can save a little bit of it to use with the next batch and then you save a little bit of that for the next batch and so on

I think some of you make sour dough right Erica Brittany who else you make sour dough yeah yeah Shelly as well it's like using sour dough starter the leaven is added to three measures of flour maybe the three has a symbolic significance referring to three types of people from a Jewish perspective the Jews Samaritans and the Gentiles I'm not sure but the tiny bit of leaven will spread ineluctably until the entire batch of dough is leavened through in the same way the kingdom of heaven though seemingly small and unnoticeable at first will spread gradually until Christ returns and when Christ returns at that final judgment as it says in Romans chapter 14 verse 11 every knee shall bow to the Lord and every tongue shall confess to God and of course Jesus who said I am the bread of life in John 6 is the original bread he's the original batch the original leaven we keep taking from it and once that process starts you can't undo that think about it you mix the leaven into the dough like how are you gonna take the leaven out you can't take it out it's an irreversible process empires kings and tyrants throughout history have all tried they have tried to expunge the scriptures they have tried to cut off the gospel they have tried to burn the books they have tried to squash and persecute the people of God and there's but there's no way of ever getting rid of us the leaven has already been added and has begun its irreversible process of spreading so take heart church of

[44 : 47] Christ the kingdom of heaven will triumph in the end so in that sense the meaning of this parable is very similar to the parable of the mustard seed however there is a unique nuance and an emphasis to this parable pay attention to this verb used in verse 33 it says that a woman took and hid the leaven in three measures of flour that's a very interesting word choice think about it imagine a woman baking and she's like hiding the leaven like why do you hide the leaven you don't need to hide the leaven why does it just say that she put the leaven in the three measures of flour the word choice is intentional it speaks of the hiddenness of the kingdom of heaven Jesus prayed in Matthew 11 25 I thank you father lord of heaven and earth that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children this is what

Jesus called in chapter 13 verse 11 the secrets of the kingdom of heaven that are revealed to these little children those who humble themselves before God in repentance and faith and follow Christ but these are hidden from the proud for Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field only some can perceive the true worth of the kingdom of heaven that's why it is hidden that's why it's a hidden treasure the kingdom of heaven does not look from the outside very impressive to the sinful world didn't Jesus say in John 18 36 my kingdom is not of this world if my kingdom were of this world my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews but my kingdom is not from the world Jesus refused to fight back when he was unfairly framed and crucified he did not call upon his disciples to bear the sword and fight against the Romans he did not call upon his angels to fight against those who were crucifying him because his kingdom is not of this world why then did so many Christians throughout the world fight to have authority and power in this world throughout history many Christians have been unable to resist the siren call of power because they were mistaken in their understanding of this hidden nature of the kingdom of heaven the kingdom of heaven is hidden the leaven spreads and transforms but it does that imperceptibly from the inside out from one gospel conversion and transformation to the next it is not imposed forcibly!

externally on others the visible power structures of this world are not what the kingdom of heaven is about I am interested I think like many of you here and like many men interested and fascinated by politics and I think being active informed voting citizens is an important way to love our neighbors and submit to our governing authorities and if you actually end up entering into politics which I think some of you are planning on doing then you must be a faithful representative of Christ in it and your politics will likely be for you the single greatest way of loving your neighbor not counting of course sharing the gospel with your neighbors which is the most important so all that is caveat I don't want you to hear what I'm not saying I don't think that you should be passive uninformed inactive citizens in this democratic republic but also I want to ask you don't be consumed by your politics why because the kingdoms of this world come and go and one day if the Lord carries the United States too will be no more but the church of Christ will continue to stand the kingdom of heaven will continue to grow so don't think that just because Christians are not in power in Congress or in the Supreme Court or in the White House that the kingdom of heaven has stalled it hasn't it's growing you might not see it it's growing no the kingdom of heaven is growing and it's spreading and the leaven of the kingdom of heaven is inexorable unavoidable Jesus said in Luke 17 20 to 21 the kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed nor will they say look here it is or there for behold the kingdom of God is in the midst of you the kingdom of God is in the midst of us or as most scholars think to translate a different way it is within you it is not visible or observable like the kingdoms of this world but why do so many seek to find and establish the kingdom of

[50 : 12] God in this world in the way that it can be observed we are so easily beguiled by grandeurs of power but the kingdom of heaven does not look like the United States capital in Washington D.C.

with the iconic neoclassical dome and the National Mall the kingdom of heaven does not look like the palace of Westminster the gothic revival masterpiece that houses the parliament in London the kingdom of heaven does not look like the palace of Versailles in France or the grand Kremlin palace in Moscow or the massive great hall of the people in Beijing the kingdom of heaven does not look like even the Vatican city or its impressive Sistine chapel and the Saint Peter's Basilica no the kingdom of heaven resides in little children like you and me little children who have submitted to the lordship of Christ that's where the rule of Christ is that's the seat the power the authority of the kingdom of heaven that's why I counted my greatest privilege to belong to God and to be counted among the saints the greatest the cream of the crop the most powerful elites of this world have nothing on the weakest saints of

God you are the people of God kingdom of heaven manifested but if you are not yet here's this final exhortation if you are not yet part of this kingdom of heaven the final point the kingdom of heaven is new but old it says in verse 34 to 35 all these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables indeed he said nothing to them without a parable this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet I will open my mouth in parables I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world Jesus quoting from Psalm 78 verse 2 he's saying I am the fulfillment of that prophecy I am the one uttering parables things in

Jesus Christ 1 Peter 1 verse 20 tells us he Jesus was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God Jesus is that hidden treasure his gospel is that hidden treasure his gospel is that good seed that spreading and growing like leaven all throughout the world and so how can you make sure that you have ears to hear how can you make sure that you can be counted among the people of God and members and citizens of the kingdom of heaven it has everything to do with what you make of Jesus Christ to enter the kingdom of heaven you must receive the son of heaven do you receive him as your king do you believe that he has died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins and he was raised from the dead so that he could remove you and take you from the dominion of darkness and bring you into the kingdom of light there's only two spiritual camps in the world you're either in the kingdom of darkness or you're in the kingdom of light you're either sons of the kingdom of heaven or you're sons of the evil one the devil and if you choose to follow

Christ the king you will never regret it you will never regret it so pray together father thank you for sending your son the son of heaven to be our king lord we were hopeless and lost enslaved by the tyrant of this world the evil one the prince of the power of the air but you have delivered us you have delivered us and we belong to you oh so lord with that great hope help us to endure patiently as we

await the consummation of that kingdom of heaven help us be faithful ambassadors of that kingdom
of heaven in

[55 : 20] Jesus name we pray amen