

“The Kingdom of Heaven”

1 Peter 2: Select Verses

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In the Kingdom of Heaven parables Jesus is trying to shrink the immensity of God’s love, joy, peace, life, and abundance into an illustration that enables us to perceive a glimpse of the glorious grandeur.

Matthew 13:31-33 NLT “Here is another illustration Jesus used: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed planted in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but it becomes the largest of garden plants; it grows into a tree, and birds come and make nests in its branches.” Jesus also used this illustration: “The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.”

These two parables illustrate phenomenal results from seemingly insignificant beginnings. Our God is a God of extravagant abundance and overflowing grace.

A person invests a small amount of effort planting a mustard. God provides the seed, soil, sun, moisture, everything needed for growth. The growth is super swift and beyond all expectations, from a seed to a tree. Mustard only grows into a shrub, yet God propels it into a towering Redwood tree in one summer. The birds are likely a reference to temple outsiders who suddenly are welcomed, forgiven, healed and give a majestic, solid, safe home. God’s grace draws all to abundant life in a spectacular home. God will nurture small, seemingly insignificant loves, joys, and blessings into infinite majesty for all to enjoy.

Parables stretch our mind revealing that God is not as we thought. God is like a woman who delights in nourishing the world. Three measures is 144 cups of flour, producing 52 loaves of bread, enough for 416 sandwiches. In that day hand mixing and cooking in a wood oven 52 loaves is lavish. God is serving us to nourish us and the world with the delightful aroma of fresh baked bread. God is our gracious host. God will provide every need, for everyone, for eternity. A tiny amount of yeast enlarges an entire bowl of bread so will the grace of God germinate a dynamic glorious reality.

Charles Hoffacker writes, “Life is an ungainly, promising mass of dough, on its way to becoming abundant bread. Just as yeast permeates the entire lump, so the kingdom is present everywhere, and everywhere it becomes manifest for those with eyes to see. If we look around us and within us, we can recognize the presence of the kingdom. That kingdom is at work, just as yeast is active in the dough. And as yeast is invisible and known by its effects, so the kingdom is hidden, concealed, buried deep in ordinary circumstances, yet known by its effects. Look at your life in the light of grace. Something is there for you to find. ... That something is the activity of the kingdom, yeast bubbling away in your corner of the lump. And when you find the kingdom among the realities of your life, nothing prevents you from finding this same kingdom present as well in the circumstances that surround you, in the lives of other people, and everywhere you choose to look. ... As it takes faith to believe that bread will rise, so too faith is necessary to see the kingdom manifest in the everyday and the ordinary. We must exercise patience and discernment wherever God places us. Then we will see that what seems like a dead lump is in fact bubbling with divine life.”

The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast hidden within the flour that is becoming an irresistible force, raising humanity to eternal life, where all rejoice, love, and dance in harmony. We are messengers

of the power and love of God. We are only able to perceive a snippet, yet even that snippet changes everything and produces blessings beyond our grandest dreams.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a boy who saw a beautiful young lady working at the Hallmark store. They became friends. He discovered that her personality, compassion, and laughter are magnificent. They fell in love and got married. The love of the lady transformed the man from a shy, timid person, who dreamed of living in the mountains as a hermit, into a pastor who enjoys helping others experience the grace of God. Together they are blessed with two marvelous children. That first spark the boy felt as he saw the lady has grown into a joyous marriage that is bringing out the best in each person, inspiring their lives of service as they both strive to bless others and parent children who are caring, joyful, loving, and tenacious.

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a backpack that is always with you, enables you to comfortably carry a great load and provides food, shelter, water, and entertainment.

Jesus said, **Matthew 13:44-46 NLT** “**The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!”**

These two parables illustrate the infinite value of the Kingdom of Heaven and the joy of discovering something priceless while pursuing the ordinary. Once one experiences a snippet of the Kingdom of Heaven, they gladly exchange wealth, power, and status to enjoy God. Our experiences of God reconfigure our priorities and reshape us into wonderful people.

A person finds a treasure while trespassing on a field. The joyful treasure is unexpected and undeserved. The person strives to live into a treasured life by buying the field. Where do you encounter God? How do you get embraced by God’s grace? What fills you with joy? How will you reconfigure your daily life so you can enjoy more of God’s treasure? How can you enjoy what is life-giving for you? Perhaps, enjoying a delicious meal with your spouse, family or friend. A stroll through the labyrinth. Making sandwiches. Reading a book. Making a run-down property into a shelter for others. Riding a bike. Fishing. Eating cookie dough. Playing a game. Looking at an eclipse. Savoring the beauty of creation. Listening to music. Enjoying art.

The Kingdom of Heaven is all around you and in you. You are a treasure. Rejoice in the ways you are a treasure. The Kingdom of Heaven is being able to see everyone and everything in a transformed frame. It is seeing treasure in every person. Give thanks for the treasures you see in yourself and others.

What is your pearl of Supreme value? For what do you make drastic life-changing decisions?

Barbara Brown Taylor sums up Jesus’ purpose and method in telling us these stories: “If we want to speak of heavenly things... we may begin by speaking about earthly things, and if we want to describe that which is beyond all words, we may begin with words we know, words like: woman, field, seed, bird, air, yeast, bread; words like: pearl, net, sea, fish, joy. The kingdom is like these things; the kingdom is found in these things. These are the places to look for the will and grace and presence of God. If we cannot find them here we will never find them anywhere else, for earth is where the seeds of heaven are sown and their treasure is the only one worth having.” Amen