

Matthew 13: 33; “Leaven & Salt Work Together”, Session # 2 on the Parable of the Leaven, presented by Pastor Paul Rendall, on October 16th, 2022, in the Adult Sunday School Class.

Matthew 13: 33 – “Another Parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”

This Parable, following on the heels of the Parable of the Mustard Seed, we should conclude that they are related to each other. This Parable of the Leaven also relates to the growth of the kingdom of God. But, while the Mustard Seed Parable is related to the outward, visible manifestation of the growth of the kingdom of heaven, growing from very small to very great, this Parable of the Leaven relates to the inward growth. In this Parable it is no less certain because the growth is based upon the certainty of grace bestowed by Christ in relation to the gospel and the word of God.

So what we are looking at here in this Parable is the growth and increase of the kingdom of heaven, both in the heart of the person believing in Christ, and also diffusion of the influences of truth and grace in the various nations and societies of the world to which the gospel comes with power. The growth inwardly is very mysterious, and sometimes slow in relation to our observation, but it is, because of God’s working, producing very tangible effects.

(Introduction)

Determining whether the Leaven in this Parable is good or bad.

There are some who think that because the Bible has many passages which talk about leaven in a bad sense, that it must be that our Lord is speaking of it here in a bad sense also. But it is not always the case that leaven is spoken of in a bad sense in the Scriptures.

a. Leaven in a Good Sense.

Leviticus 23: 15-17 – “And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed.” “Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.” “You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two tens of an ephah.” “They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven.” “They are the firstfruits of the Lord.”

This the celebration of the first-fruits and Pentecost, and the reason that leaven was to be brought put into this new grain offering, and put into the fine flour and baked with them, was because it the typical celebration of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was set down from heaven, and His gracious influences would permeate the preaching of the apostles and those gathered with them that day when Peter preached and 3,000 people were converted to Christ. This goes hand in hand with Christ’s Parable of the Leaven here.

b. Leaven in a Bad Sense

We must acknowledge that our Lord Himself spoke of the leaven of the Pharisees in this way. That is he was speaking of the leaven of hypocrisy which filled their teachings.

Matthew 16: 5-12 – “Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.” “Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” “And they reasoned among themselves, saying, ‘It is because we have taken no bread.’” “But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, ‘O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have

brought no bread?” “Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?” “Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?” “How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” “Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

Luke 12: 1 – “In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, ‘Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.’ “For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.” “Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.”

(Review)

1. What is leaven? Leaven is yeast that used in making bread which causes it to rise.

2. What is the Leaven in this Parable?

The leaven is the word of God’s grace and the Gospel of Christ accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. The woman is Christ’s Church, His Bride, His wife, who by her ministers and her saints, preaches the gospel and the word of God. In this Parable she takes it and hides this gospel of grace, this leaven, in three measures of meal till it was all leavened. This figure of speech of 3 measures of meal represents the Church’s definite work; of preaching Christ and Him crucified, of taking the gospel in every generation to the ends of the earth, all during this Church Age. There are many ways of preaching Christ and Him crucified, and Christ risen from the dead, in word and deed.

3. Why does the Woman “take and hide the leaven” in the meal?

The leaven or yeast of the gospel is the power of Christ and the Holy Spirit which the woman, Christ’s Church, takes and “hides” in the meal of truth. It is not as though she is hiding her light, for she is commanded to be the light of the world. Rather, she takes and “hides” her leaven in the meal by making her preparations in a private hidden way. She kneads the dough, and makes the cakes of her gospel presentation. Christ’s people think about how they hide their own glory, and set forth Christ’s glory as the Bread of Life in their gospel presentation. Christ’s Church in the preaching and sharing of the word shows herself to be Christ’s servant, even as Sarah did in making the bread for her Divine guest.

She places her knowledge of Christ’s yeast of wisdom and His resurrection power into what she is preparing to speak about in relation to Christ and the gospel. She labors secretly in faith and prayer for this. She preaches the law to break up the hard heart. She preaches humility in the reception of the word, so that the word will be Divinely planted. She preaches to herself by saying – Your word have I hidden within my heart, that I might not sin against You. (Psalm 119: 11) She “hides” this leaven in the preparations that she makes so that the recipe of her gospel preaching will turn out well.

She does this so that her presentation of this bread of the word and the gospel, when partaken of, will by the power of God, will, she hopes, bring about the change of the New Birth. The bread of the word and the gospel will be eaten, it will be digested, it will be acted upon, and the person saved, or built up, or changed to be more like Christ. It will bring about, according to the purpose of God, regeneration, (this rising from the dead, spiritually) because the Holy Spirit accompanies the word with power, according to the Divine Purpose. It will bring about transformation by the diffusion of this substance of leaven, that is Christ’s power, to the life of the person believing in Him. The Church wants to see sinful people raised from their death in trespasses and sins. The Church wants to make disciples by the feeding Christ’s people with this bread. Since this bread is the staff of eternal life, she is careful with the ingredients of her recipe.

Matthew 4: 3 & 4 – “Now when the tempter came to Jesus, he said, ‘If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.’ “But He answered and said, ‘It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God.’”

(Today’s Lesson)

Colossians 4: 6 – “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”

Your speech being seasoned with grace, that is seasoned with salt, is a part of this hiding the leaven in the meal of your words that you are thinking about sharing with others. Leaven relates to the power of the word of Christ’s grace, salt relates to flavor, the wisdom and that discretion that is necessary for the shaping of the bread, and whether it will be desirable when it is tasted. In tasting of gospel bread the sinner must see that the Lord Jesus was loving, good, and kind to come down from heaven to do the will of God on their behalf. Faith can only be created in the heart of the sinner when they can taste and see for themselves that He is good. How blessed is the man who will fear Him, have regard for Him!

John 6: 57 & 58 – “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.” “This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead.” “He who eats this bread will live forever.”

Psalms 34: 8-10 – “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” “Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints!” “There is no want to those who fear Him!” “The young lions lack and suffer hunger; but those who seek the Lord will not lack any good thing.”

4. Salt controls yeast fermentation

<https://www.kingarthurbaking.com/blog/2020/07/29/why-is-salt-important-in-yeast-bread#:~:text=Adding%20salt%20prevents%20the%20yeast,at%20which%20the%20dough%20ferment>
s.

The Author of this article, Rossi Anastopoulo says –

a) Salt acts as a yeast inhibitor, which means that it slows down the growth and reproduction of yeast in your bread dough. Without salt present to rein in its activity, the yeast will go wild eating all of the sugar available in the dough from enzymatic activity, like an overactive Pac-Man machine. Adding salt prevents the yeast from reproducing too quickly, thus allowing you to control the rate at which the dough ferments.

Comparison of three bowls of proofing bread dough, each with different salt levels

I made three versions of our Hearth Bread to compare what happens with different salt levels. See how much more the two doughs with less salt proofed, than the loaf with normal salt?

If you bake bread without salt, you may notice the dough rising much more quickly than normal during the proofing stage. This is because the yeast is able to run wild without salt to slow down and control it. This might seem like a good thing – more proofing means lighter, fluffier bread! – but such rampant overactivity actually just results in a sticky dough that’s difficult to work with and is more likely to collapse. What’s more, the longer the yeast has to do its work (i.e., the slower the pace of fermentation), the more flavor notes are created in the bread, resulting in better overall taste in your final loaf.

b) Salt strengthens gluten

When added to bread dough, salt works to tighten the gluten strands that are formed, which makes them stronger. By strengthening these gluten strands, salt enables the dough to hold carbon dioxide more efficiently.

OK, so why is this a big deal? This ability is important because carbon dioxide is a byproduct of the fermentation occurring. If the gluten strands aren't strong, the dough isn't able to hold the carbon dioxide well; as a result, the dough ends up super slack.

Floppy, slack bread dough made without salt

Though I was able to wrangle one loaf of no-salt bread into a fairly decent shape (on the left), look what happened to my second attempt at shaping no-salt bread dough (on the right). The lack of salt meant the gluten wasn't strong enough, making it a floppy mess.

As a result, it's very difficult to shape, and the resulting bread has poor volume. When I tried to form one of my salt-less bread doughs into a loaf to bake, the dough was slack and all over the place; it could barely hold its shape, and I struggled to form it into a cohesive loaf. Definitely not ideal!"

The Point of this is – That each of us who knows the Lord should hide leaven in the bread of the gospel that we prepare to share with others.

We must be those who use discretion by adding salt to our recipe of what we will say. We want to control the rate at which the dough ferments. We do not want our own presentation to overpower the hearer. We want to have discretion in what we say. We want the wisdom of Christ and the power of Christ to be the things that the sinner tastes, and sees that they are infinitely good. He needs to see that these things of being redeemed and saved and justified and sanctified, are all coming to him because the Lord is merciful and loving towards those who are thinking about their need of Him. The gospel must be put into this good and presentable shape, and not be limp or lifeless, when we present it to others.

5. Leaven never ceases its work until all is leavened.

Matthew 13: 33 – “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”

a. In regard to Individual Christians

Leaven does not change the substance of the meal or flour in which it is hid. But it does very much change its qualities. When it is placed in the dough it transforms the dough by its own power and makes it into something living and alive like itself. This is what the word of Christ's grace does by the power of the Holy Spirit in our heart and life when we believe in Jesus.

2nd Corinthians 3: 18 – “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (“From one degree of glory to another”, ESV)

The object of the hiding of the leaven in the meal, making our gospel preparations, and preaching the gospel to people around us, is that they will receive the bread of life, and be saved by partaking of it. And then because this gospel leaven is in them they will not only be raised from the dead spiritually, but they will also begin this transformation process of becoming like Christ Himself, being changed from one degree of glory to another by the Spirit of God. This is a very gradual process and lifelong, but eventually when we die, and all sin is removed from our spirit, we will be completely leavened.

b. In Regard to the Gospel's effect upon all the nations of the world.

Micah 4: 1-5 – “Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And peoples shall flow to it. Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion the law shall go forth, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, And no one shall make them afraid; For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. For all people walk each in the name of his god, But we will walk in the name of the LORD our God Forever and ever.”

Thomas Haweis' Commentary – “As a little of this diffuses itself gradually through the whole mass of meal with which it is mingled; so doth the gospel word when quickened by divine grace, powerfully diffuse its energy through all the faculties of the soul, and over all the members of the body; sanctifying the whole, communicating throughout a sweet savor of Christ, and working a blessed and universal change into his image and likeness; and spreading far and wide among all nations, the word of truth shall continue its mighty operations till all nations shall be brought to the obedience of the faith. Note, (1.) Divine grace works often imperceptibly, but irresistibly. (2.) Where the leaven of truth is hid in the heart, there its influence will infallibly appear; there will be a sweet savor of Christ in all we speak or do.”

Lange's Commentary on the Scripture – “This Parable, like the last, has its general and its individual application: (1) in the penetrating of the whole mass of humanity, by degrees, by the influence of the Spirit of God, so strikingly witnessed in the earlier ages by the dropping of heathen customs and worship:—in modern times more gradually and secretly advancing, but still to be plainly seen in the various abandonments of criminal and unholy practices (as e.g. in our own time of slavery and dueling, and the increasing abhorrence of war among Christian men), and without doubt in the end to be signally and universally manifested. But this effect again is not to be traced in the establishment or history of so-called Churches, but in the hidden advancement, without observation, of that deep leavening power which works irrespective of human forms and systems. (2) In the transforming power of the ‘new leaven’ on the whole being of individuals. “In fact the Parable does nothing less than set forth to us the mystery of regeneration, both in its first act, which can be but once, as the leaven is but once hidden; and also in the consequent (subsequent?) renewal by the Holy Spirit, which, as the ulterior working of the leaven, is continual and progressive.” (Trench, p. 97.)