

SCRIPTURE STUDY SHEET FOR AUGUST 8, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Reflecting on the Sixth of the Six Great Ends of the Church
The Church is for “the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.”

Matthew 13:1-3; 24-34
COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE

¹That day Jesus went out of the house and sat down beside the lake. ² Such large crowds gathered around him that he climbed into a boat and sat down. The whole crowd was standing on the shore.

³ He said many things to them in **PARABLES**:

²⁴ Jesus told them another **PARABLE**: “The **KINGDOM OF HEAVEN** is like someone who planted good seed in his field. ²⁵ While people were sleeping, an enemy came and planted *weeds* among the wheat and went away. ²⁶ When the stalks sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “The servants of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Master, didn’t you plant good seed in your field? Then how is it that it has weeds?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy has done this,’ he answered.

“The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us to go and gather them?’

²⁹ “But the landowner said, ‘No, because if you gather the weeds, you’ll pull up the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both grow side by side until the harvest. And at harvesttime I’ll say to the harvesters, “First gather the weeds and tie them together in bundles to be burned. But bring the wheat into my barn.”’”

³¹ He told another **PARABLE** to them: “The **KINGDOM OF HEAVEN** is like a **mustard seed** that someone took and planted in his field. ³² It’s the smallest of all seeds. But when it’s grown, it’s the largest of all vegetable plants. It becomes a tree so that the birds in the sky come and nest in its branches.”

³³ He told them another **PARABLE**: “The **KINGDOM OF HEAVEN** is like **YEAST**, which

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Matthew tells the story of Jesus as a cosmic epic. It doesn’t begin with Jesus. God has been at work for a long time. Salvation, the main business of Jesus, is the coming together in formal form of themes and energies and movements that had been set in motion before the foundation of the world. Matthew provides the comprehensive context by which we see all God’s creation and salvation completed in Jesus, and all parts of our lives – work, family, friends, memories, dreams – also completed (*or fulfilled*) in Jesus. (from The Message)

PARABLE:: A parable is, literally, something “cast alongside” something else (that’s what *para-* means). Jesus’ parables were stories that were “cast alongside” a truth in order to illustrate that truth. His parables were teaching aids and can be thought of as extended analogies or inspired comparisons. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN:: In the original Greek *basilea* is the word for Kingdom. It can also be translated as reign, empire, kingship, rule, or sovereignty. It’s both a geographic space and a temporal realm, and also indicates the activity of the king (ruler) himself, his exercise of sovereign power.. Most often in the other gospels Jesus uses the expression **KINGDOM OF GOD**. Matthew prioritizes Kingdom of Heaven. They’re pointing to the same thing: a different reality that is already but not yet in our own reality. It’s where God is already ruling the world, where the world is like heaven (the realm of God’s total sovereignty).

is like:: These words (or the expression “is comparable to”) indicate that this is a simile, which like a metaphor is used to make comparisons and stimulate the imagination. An allegory or analogy on the other hands seeks to explain something, sometimes point by point. What is Jesus doing here in these three parables which are similes?

weeds The poisonous weeds here are *dandelions*...

a woman took and **hid** in a bushel of wheat flour until the yeast had worked its way through all the dough.”

³⁴ Jesus said all these things to the crowds in **PARABLES**, and he spoke to them only in **PARABLES**. ³⁵ This was to fulfill what the prophet spoke:

I'll speak in **PARABLES**;

I'll declare what has been hidden since the beginning of the world.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Why would Jesus talk about God's empire in the world in parables, and not just spell it out? (*He quotes Psalm 78:2 – why?*)
- Which of the parables most speaks to you and your imagination? Why?
- All three parables (and others in this chapter) are about the Kingdom of God. Describing it as 1) a force that may have small beginnings, but grows mightily in a form we wouldn't expect. 2), the kingdom of God exerts its influence from within, not from without. 3) the effect of the kingdom of God will be comprehensive. 4) although the kingdom of God works invisibly, its effect is evident to all. How have you experienced these aspects of God's sovereignty or powerful presence in the world?
- The Church is called to exhibit the Kingdom of Heaven to the world, to reflect its truth, presence and paradoxical power. What does that mean? How do we – how do you – do that?...in our actions with others?; our actions with each other?; with ourself?; and how we think about the world?
- How is the Spirit of God inviting you – or us as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word about the Kingdom of Heaven in this time of great financial inequality, racial reckoning and the widening impact of the COVID pandemic?

... (*Lolium temulentum*), which cannot be distinguished from wheat in the early stages. Once past the early stages of growth, however, the weed's roots become entwined with those of the wheat. Workers thus could not uproot the darnel without damaging the wheat. Once the wheat was fully grown and ready to be harvested, the darnel would be easily distinguishable from it. It was commonly uprooted and then used for fuel.

mustard seed:: According to ancient sources, mustard was grown in gardens, but also at times seen as a foreign invader because as small as it is, it sprouts rapidly all by itself without cultivation and would vigorously take over a garden (comparable to mint). It was widely grown and used as a spice, and as a medicine (like Vick's vapor rub on your chest when you have a cold). It was also a symbol of power used by sovereigns to invoke the power to take over or subvert other nations (like how it would do in a garden). Incredibly small, yet radically powerful, mustard was subversive. It is described like the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 4:10-12 which represents the greatest of all kingdoms "at the center of the earth, and its *height was great reaching to heaven*, visible to the ends of the whole earth. The animals of the field found shade under it, *the birds of the air nested in its branches*, and from it all living beings were fed."

YEAST :: In most of the Bible yeast is seen as a negative thing, representing corruption by sin or evil. Think of the unleavened bread of the Passover or the words of the Pharisees. "⁶ Jesus said to the disciples, "Watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Matthew 16:6. And yeast, or leaven, is a powerful fungus that can cause a lump of dough to rise into bread, ferment liquids into alcohol, or cause painful infections. Although microscopic, with time it grows and transforms all that it touches. Here the woman uses it to make bread for more than 100 people (*a bushel = 50 lbs enough to make bread for an army!*). Notice how she **hides** the yeast in the flour stealthily, not innocently. The yeast is a hidden force working to corrupt the world.