

The Kingdom of Heaven Infiltrates and Enriches Everything It Touches

Daily Gospel / Liturgical Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Luke 13: 18-21.

Jesus said, "What is the Kingdom of God like? To what can I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that a man took and planted in the garden. When it was fully grown, it became a large bush and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches." Again he said, "To what shall I compare the Kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch of dough was leavened."

Luke 13:18-21

Introductory Prayer:

Lord, I believe in you with a faith that never seeks to test you. I trust in you, hoping to learn to accept and follow your will, even when it does not make sense to the way that I see things. May my love for you and those around me be similar to the love you have shown to me.

Petition:

Lord, help me to value and seek the invisible strength of the Kingdom of Heaven.

1. The Kingdom Grows from Small Beginnings:

Jesus tells us two parables to help us understand the Kingdom of Heaven. What does he want us to know about it? When he speaks about the mustard seed, he is emphasizing that something that seems inconsequential can grow to become something of great importance. Although the mustard seed is so small as to be nearly invisible, it grows into a small tree, big enough for birds to make a nest in. Its usefulness goes beyond its own needs. It can give shelter and support to others.

2. You Don't Have to Understand Biology to Be a Baker:

In the parable of the leaven, something similar happens. Leaven has a mysterious property. Although it seems to be nothing special itself, even a small amount of it, mixed with dough, causes the dough to rise. The Jews listening to Jesus didn't know why. They didn't know that the leaven contained yeast spores that under the right conditions of heat, moisture and nutrients, would begin to grow and produce carbon dioxide gas (which is what makes the dough rise). It was mysterious to them, what power the leaven contained, but they knew that just a little of it would transform a much larger quantity of dough, so that the resulting bread would not just be matzo, but a much larger quantity of light, airy bread that is much nicer to eat. In a similar way, grace transforms the ordinary acts of our day, making them much nicer in God's eyes.

3. The Church Transforms Societies:

Both these parables apply to the Kingdom of Heaven. As he spoke, Jesus had before him just a few apostles who still didn't grasp his message very well. The Kingdom of Heaven was so small as to be invisible, like the mustard seed. But it was destined to have incredible growth, such that it would begin to help all humanity and not just those who belonged to it. When he speaks of the leaven, he refers not just to the growth that the Kingdom of Heaven would undergo throughout the centuries, but to the transformation it would accomplish in the societies it entered. We see this in the world today. The Church has not only grown, but it has also come to affect many who are not in the Church and to transform society. The apostles, who did not see the Kingdom very clearly, had a hard time accepting this. We have seen much more, and yet we still doubt and hesitate.

Conversation with Christ:

Dear Jesus I have seen so much of your Kingdom that I should believe without hesitation, yet I still worry about the final triumph of your Kingdom. Help me to have a greater faith, not only to believe what you said, but to help the spread of the Kingdom continue to come true in my society and culture.

Resolution:

I will try to be more optimistic about the Church in society, seeing how it has influenced so much of what is best in our society ñ love for the poor, love for enemies etc. Knowing that it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, I will accept that as it has happened so many times in the past, just when things look bleakest for the Church, God turns the tables, and it enters into another Golden Age. Didn't John Paul II predict that we were just launching out into the New Age of Evangelization?