

WELCOME 26 August 2018 – 15 Pentecost '18 B

Matthew 13:33-35

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! It is great to have you here this morning. Please stay with us for morning tea after worship so we can get a chance to know one another better...

"One bad apple can spoil the whole barrel." Parents have said that forever to their kids warning them about their choice of friends...how the negative influence of one can harm the many. In the same way, but to positive effect, Jesus says the presence of his kingdom of grace & love will eventually impact the whole creation.

Jesus says his kingdom is like one of those little things...a small amount of yeast...hardly noticeable in a huge lump of dough...but its influence & impact is larger in proportion than its size...**ALL** of the dough is transformed.

Imagine...a love so powerful it reconciles bitter enemies, calms troubled hearts, replaces fear with hope, mourning with joy and drives out death & grants life that never ends...*Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough*

Be encouraged! What God has begun in Christ He will bring to fruition. *"Do not despise the small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin"* - Zech 4:10 Recognize the greatness of God's work even through what may appear to us as small & insignificant. In fact, we should always remember that God delights in using the apparently small and insignificant for His purposes.

We'll explore and experience that together today...

AND --- please hang around for our AGM...we'll set up some morning tea & get ourselves organized and then have our meeting.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord Jesus by the work of your Spirit you move into every corner of our lives. We thank you that your love and your wisdom grow in us until we resemble you in every thought, word, and action. Let today be another victory of your presence and power in us for the widened embrace of your kingdom and the visible reality of your glory in us. Jesus we pray in your Name...Amen.

14 PENTECOST '18 B – CONTRAST – PARABLE OF THE YEAST

- FAITH CHAT:**
1. What is 1 small thing someone did for you that made a big difference? Do they know?
 2. How can the little things you do in Christ's name exert an influence on others?

The dictionary says: Influence – the art of motivating & changing behaviour. Well now there's an app for that! I kid you not. Good On You allows you to be a global good citizen by rating brands according to their *ethical behaviour scale* & allows you to make your consumer choices according to your values. Track your impact tracks an item you purchase in support of a development or relief project somewhere in the world. It tells you where it went & when it arrived...etc...Pam & Gary are going to that very thing personally when they go to Africa & include their Compassion Sponsor-Child in their travels...We'll want to hear all about that!

But you know as well as I that more often than not...we have no idea the influence or impact we have on someone else...We may never know...What is 1 small thing someone did for you that made a big difference? Do they know?...*"The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put (hid) only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough."* (140 cups – 50 cups H2O 45ks dough 100 loaves 400 people) I regularly make bread...bread machine but it's still bread & has all the same stuff in it including yeast & even I know I don't use much yeast compared to the 3,4,5 cups of flour depending on the loaf. It seems inconsequential in size/per volume amount...but my family will tell you I keep an eye on the rising/not rising.

So Jesus here is talking my language...And we all understand...small things, things that seem insignificant, what doesn't look like much or in some cases may even happen out of our vision/we can't see/invisible...are sometimes huge.

When I first arrived in Oz I know I shared about the guy who kept me in church long enough for God to call me to be pastor. I am a pastor, I say w/ no hesitation, because of Jim Box & his wheelbarrow. Jim was just one of the old guys at the church I grew up in...old = 50? I was 15 so you understand the age thing...All I knew about Jim was his daughter Allyson was magnificent. She was a year older & the only interest I had in the Holy Cross Lutheran Church youth group was her. So the Sunday after I was confirmed the church had a working bee & my dad said it would be good for me to go with him...I did. As we got out of our car Jim walked up with his wheelbarrow & told me to stick out my hands. I did. The handles of the wheelbarrow landed firmly in my grasp. Jim's only comment: "Fits fine. Come w/ me." In about 2 milliseconds I did the 15-year-old-male calculus.

Jim is Allyson's dad. I want a shot at her I gotta go through him. This is going to be great!" So for the rest of the day Jim & I filled & emptied that wheelbarrow over/over/over & talked about all sorts of stuff...none of it Allyson...I was being careful. By day's end, I knew a little more about Jim than just his daughter who I never would take out on a date & I had another adult who cared about me & asked about my life whenever he saw me. I don't think Jim knew where that crazy old wheelbarrow eventually took me...but Jim was my yeast. There were others to be sure...I can name a bunch...I suspect you can too. This person here & that person there kneading their version of Christ's love & strength into our lives until one day the whole lump is transformed.

You may/not know who Chris Pratt is...actor. Guardians of the Galaxy, Jurassic World... Back in June he was given one of those "awards" by MTV...What I didn't know is that Mr Pratt is a Christian. His coming to faith story is fascinating, but he has begun to use his platform as an actor to knead his faith into the wide audiences to whom he has access. For instance...his acceptance speech at those MTV awards included 9 rules for life. Now some were silly...but they included "You have a soul. Be careful with it." – "Reach out to someone in pain. Be of service. It feels good & it's good for your soul." – "God is real. God loves you, God wants the best for you. Believe that, I do." – "Learn to pray. It's easy, & it is so good for your soul." – "Grace is a gift. Like the freedom we enjoy in this country, that grace was paid for with somebody else's blood. Do not forget that. Don't take that for granted."

Now...that may seem pretty weak sauce...but for someone with his public profile he is learning to see himself *in his words* as an "elder" for his young audience & he's not afraid to open that conversation & do his best to be yeast for his actor colleagues & for folks who look up to & listen to what their big screen *heroes* do/say. **BIBLES**

Briefly about the parable...*παράβολη* = lay 2 things side-by-side compare/contrast. In the last 2 parables, the mustard seed & the yeast, the contrast & comparisons Jesus makes would have felt like a slap to the head of the religiously astute folks around him. Why? Mustard plants are a pest...invasive, self-seeding, spread places you didn't expect/want. No one plants mustard seeds on purpose. Yeast, in the OT is often seen as a contaminant & when spoken of symbolically it implies disruption or corruption. It "spoiled" good flour offerings. Jesus 2x in succession says: Kingdom of Heaven is like this thing you think is bad. The comparison itself would have been jarring.

So why does he do that? 1st – I believe Jesus wants us to understand that the world's business as usual & the Kingdom that is now here in him are not the same... or in fact anything like one another. In this world you live & die by acquire, achieve, accumulate...all for I/me/mine & to hell with everyone else. All conditional transactions – if you do then I'll do...you earn it you own it...simple as that.

The kingdom Jesus inaugurates is ours as a gift...love, mercy, self-sacrifice, ultimate justice & restoration & rescue & renewal...We are chosen not deserving. We are beloved not measuring up. Every standard/ranking the world uses is turned on its ear. IN fact the great promise is that this world & all its dog-eat-dog survival of the fittest bloodthirsty stuff will be wiped away so the new can flourish & joy can triumph in us in God's presence

2nd – Hidden – *“The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took & hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”*

Absolutely...In the mixing you can no longer find the yeast All you will ever see are the results or the non-results...sometimes for whatever reason the bread doesn't rise...it happens. Jesus is saying that not everyone can see the working of this kingdom. Not everyone **wants** to see their status – control – autonomy - power challenged by grace of all things. Not everyone **wants** to be told that their value system is all packed up & leads nowhere but death. Not everyone will **see** that Life triumphs over death by death. Not everyone will **see** that honesty/integrity are superior to subterfuge & political one-up-manship. Not everyone will **want to see** that generous self-sacrifice is more joyful than mememe. There are none so blind as those who will not see but some choose blindness...**BUT** for those who are given the privilege of seeing the last the least & the lost embraced in love & sought as treasured children of the Father...for those who are given the privilege of seeing the Father's smile on them who see the Father's hand extended in tenderness who see that they are too loved in spite of themselves...there's joy...& true sight into the working of the Father's heart. And in that love & joy & there is true transformation & redemption & rescue & life absolutely fully totally completely new.

Imagine...a love so powerful it reconciles bitter enemies, calms troubled hearts, replaces fear with hope, mourning with joy and drives out death to grant life that never ends...Imagine a love so powerful that it heals wounds from deep down & is relentless in its working until all things are made new & whole. A love that knows no boundary & no exhaustion...129 times “unfailing love” in reference to how God acts toward us.

Jesus promises that God's creation restoring kingdom will infiltrate & disrupt **AND** ultimately claim every life & every part of life in all creation.

“...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven & on earth & under the earth, & every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” – Php 2:10-11

“For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, & every tongue shall confess to God.’” – Rm 14:10-11

The Bible tells us some of those knees will bend & tongues will confess in one final act of rebellion...It seems some will always vote “no” to joy – no to love – no to hope – no to healing just like they do now...but the yeast of the relentless love & re-creating power of God will transform the whole creation according to his purpose his plan & his praise...**AND** that includes you & me because of the life/death rez & rule of Jesus Christ

There is a reason we've begun to practice these 5 habits as a community living here as agents of that kingdom of grace & love & the re-creating power of the Father. You know what happens when you...

Bless – 3 people each wk 1 of whom is not yet a Xn

Eat – w/ 3 people each wk 1 of whom is not yet a Xn

Learn – Christ intimately as Lord leader & model for making disciples

Listen – to the Holy Spirit to engage with the people around you

Sent – see yourself sent by God to every place your life takes you

Your
Example
Always
Shines
Through

You don't have to be Jim Box/Chris Pratt...you have opportunities they will never have. You go places & know people they will never.. God wants to bless your kneading your hiding of the grace mercy & unfailing love & unlimited power of the risen Christ into this world that will transform it by the greater working of the Spirit.

Be encouraged! What God has begun in you in this world in Christ He will bring to fruition. *“Do not despise the small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin” - Zech 4:10* Recognize the greatness of God's work even through what may appear to us as small & insignificant. In fact, we should always remember that God delights in using the apparently small and insignificant for His purposes. He chose us.

Let's pray with that in mind: **Father God we are yours and yours alone. Let the mystery of your Spirit and the greatness of your saving grace transform all we are and all we touch in your name. Bring your fullness to our smallness so that this world might be drawn into your salvation through Jesus Christ. We pray in his name...Amen.**