

“You are the Seed”

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Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

[Jesus] put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” ...

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like...” This summer we’ve been examining a few of the parables that Jesus used to help teach people about God and about how God intends for us to live. Here’s some of what we talked about:

God is a partying God, One who celebrates whenever anybody who was lost is found. And God wants us to celebrate each time a person finds their way home or away from an addiction or illness or apathy...

Next, although we’re a nation founded on the idea of freedom, we can enslave ourselves to all sorts of things that will never satisfy us as much as living God’s way satisfies. Bishop Jung said in June that Children of God are never issues. These are good words to remember!

We read about seeds and soil and talked about seasons in our lives. Sometimes people aren’t ready to hear about God but the seeds can still be sown. Sometimes all the busyness and stuff that we have can distract us from living the way God would have us live. This seeds parable by the way is the one our young people studied during VBS last week.

When we read about that timid person who dug a hole and buried their master’s money, we were reminded that we can also fail to use what we have. We don’t all have the same gifts or the same opportunities but God expects us each to use what we have for God’s good intention.

Do you remember the chasm that exists between the haves and the have-nots? It’s up to us to level the field. We are the ones who need to dismantle the walls and build bridges. We’re the ones who have to speak up for the people that can’t be heard. And we have to keep it up – just like the man in one of Jesus’ parables who banged on his neighbor’s door in the middle of the night.

Another thing we talked about was the difference between what’s fair and what’s right. They’re not always the same thing. And while we like for things to be fair, we’re supposed to work for what’s right, just like God does.

Besides using parable to teach us about what God expects of us, Jesus also used these stories to help us grasp what God’s realm is supposed to be like. I say “supposed to be” because God’s realm here on earth is dependent upon how well we live into God’s intention for all of us.

A couple weeks ago, we heard the idea that God’s kin-dom is present in everything. And is for everyone. We talked about yeast – sourdough – reminding ourselves that just as everything from pearls and treasure to yeast and fishing nets can teach us about God’s kin-dom, everyone, and every church, can be a part of bringing forth God’s kin-dom on earth.

All of this leads us to today. What else can we say?

I chose to use the song we sang a few minutes ago as our sermon title today. “You are the Seed.” Or we...

We are the seed and the yeast and the salt. We are all this world needs in order for it to grow toward being the creation that God envisions. God has already given and will continue to give us what we need in order to make this happen. If...

If only we will do as God leads us to do – practicing acceptance, compassion and justice, sharing resources instead of hoarding them or burying them, treating simply everyone as neighbors rather than as strangers vs. friends.

We have been given access to this treasure, this pearl of great worth. We have what it takes to do God’s great thing in our communities. When we allow ourselves to be used by God, we are part of God’s miracle for the world. When...

The refrain of our song says, “Go, my friends, into the world, proclaiming love to all.” Don’t be like some people who proclaim loudly with their voices but their behavior says something else entirely. Proclaim love by living love, especially for the people you don’t like. Proclaim love by living love for the ones who feel unlovable. Proclaim love by living love for the ones with different lifestyles or voting habits or attitudes. Accept everyone, just as they are. Don’t try to change them. Just love them.

The refrain also says, “Be, my friends, a loyal witness.” What is your witness? By witness, I mean, “When people look at the ways you live and talk, what message do they hear?”

Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, “Your actions speak so loudly, I cannot hear what you are saying.” What are your actions speaking? Hopefully most people hear kindness, caring, and generosity. But what are other people hearing? You know when you’re not careful how you talk or when you roll your eyes or when you think no one important is around to notice?

I was reminded again this week that we may say we have certain priorities, but how we spend our time and our money is the real indicator of what matters to us. What are your real priorities?

For most of my adult life, I’ve said that relationships were my top priority. But until email and texting I was horrible at connecting with family and friends. I never liked writing letters so most of the time, I didn’t. I’m still not terrific at calls but I try to call my mother every week. (Awful, I know, but she’d wonder what was wrong if I called more than that!) I said relationships were the most important thing in my world yet too often I put my own views ahead of my relationship with my husband. We had some terrible fights over truly unimportant things.

Next month, our sermon series is going to be on the reality that we are, each of us, works in progress. None of us is perfect. None of us have “arrived.” I think we all need to hear this regularly. We need to stop punishing ourselves for things we cannot change so that we can get on with the business of living fully today in the ways that God leads us.

God will never be finished with us, no matter how badly we may mess up. God is always loving on us. We just need to get ourselves out of the way so that we can accept the love God offers and revel in the acceptance that’s already present.

So when you find that your priorities – the spoken ones and the lived ones – are not aligned, take a moment if you need to and feel whatever guilt may come. Then let it go, because any longer than that is not helpful. Extra guilt interferes with your ability to live today the way God would have you live. Just jump in and make this day the day that people can see God’s love clearly in you. Then tomorrow do the same thing.

This is our call. To live God’s love so fully and completely that when people watch us, we’re just so different from what they expect that they pause and wonder what’s going on. That’s what countercultural means. Jesus was countercultural.

Let’s go out from here and be countercultural ourselves.

Amen.