

Jesus explains with parables and metaphors. The kingdom of God is like a *mustard seed*. The kingdom of God is like *yeast*. The kingdom of God is like *treasure in a field*. The kingdom of God is like an *expensive pearl*. The kingdom of God is like a *fishing net*.

A Mustard seed is so small that it is almost invisible when sown. Yet from this small seed, a huge shrub develops, large enough for birds to nest and rest in it. This is an image of the kingdom of God. Its power is so great that no matter how small the work, no matter how small the seed that is sown, it grows into something great. The kingdom of God is a hospitable place where all can find shelter and rest. The kingdom of God, in other words, is not a thorny shrub where little birds are pierced, uncomfortable, judged, or unwelcome.

The metaphor also reminds us that we cannot do everything. All we can do is plant seeds. Some “seeds” might be virtually invisible to the eyes of others, insignificant, meaningless, unimportant. But, although we may never see the full-grown shrub, these seeds grow and develop into a work that is important and meaningful.

Yeast. Like the previous metaphor, that which is small yields an astounding product much larger than itself. In this case, the emphasis is not on *external* material growth, but something that is happening *inwardly*. The leaven works *within* the dough just as the Kingdom of God penetrates, permeates, and pervades the neighborhood, culture, and world into which it is introduced.

Dough without yeast is heavy, thick, inert, and tasteless. Dough into which leaven is introduced is completely different: light, airy, and filled with flavor. The kingdom of God is a change agent which causes expansion, development, movement, and transformation.

The Treasure in a Field and an **Expensive Pearl**. It was common practice in the first century A.D. to bury precious items in the backyard or field to protect it from thieves. Jesus’ parable supposes that someone finds a treasure in a field accidentally. He buys the field so he can legally claim the treasure buried in the field.

The purchase of a priceless pearl is a different matter because the pearl is not discovered by accident. It is found by someone shopping for precious gems. He finds this incredible pearl, and knowing its value, sells everything he owns to purchase it.

By this, Jesus implies a sort of “hidden” quality to the kingdom of God. The treasure is buried; the pearl is concealed within the shell. Some people stumble upon the kingdom of God accidentally. Some search for it and find it. Whatever the case, once discovered, you divest yourself of everything to take complete possession of this incredible “pearl of great price.” The kingdom of God is more precious than anything in this world. Give up everything to possess the kingdom!

A Fishing Net. This last parable announces that the kingdom of God is not just a present, spiritual reality, but also an inevitable future physical reality. This eschatological dimension of the kingdom reminds us that the tares will someday be separated from the wheat (13:24-30); someday the “bad” fish will be separated from the good (v. 38). The evil will be separated from the righteous. This may be the most exciting message of all: one day the kingdom of God will triumph over evil.

This is indeed good news for these people as it is for us today. For many people today, the times in which we live are dangerous, confusing, and overwhelming. We are beset by so many ways of thinking. Evil and unrighteousness are all around us. We are

beleaguered and “hunkering in the bunker” of despair and uncertainty.

Jesus’ message reminds us to step into the light of the certain victory and the triumph of God’s righteousness. Breaking news! We can leave all of this in the hands of God and go back to being the church, being a mustard seed, being the yeast in the dough. We should not bury our treasure or hide our pearl, but share them and their good news openly with the world.

So, what does all of this mean to us? Look at verses 51 and 52: Jesus asks, “Have you understood all this?” The disciples answer, “Yes.” Then, Jesus says 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.” Bring out the best china and silverware! Put your treasure on display! We do not, and should not, hide our light under a bushel basket (see Matthew 5:14-15). We are agents of the new kingdom! We are heralds and messengers breaking the best possible news upon a world eager to hear some good news!

Prayer: Gracious God, we are recipients of your great love and the good news of your gospel in our salvation. Enlighten the eyes of our heart that we may see; that we may know what is the hope to which you have called us: the hope of eternal life. We pray that you open doors in all areas which our lives intersect. May you pave the way for the conversations we will have. We pray that you would open doors in our workplaces, schools, leisure activities, and relationships. Make us aware of opportunities to bear witness to the greatness, the glory, and the goodness of Jesus. Give us a boldness to walk through these doors and proclaim the hope of redemption in Christ and the promise of eternal life, for the glory of Your name and for our good. We ask these things in the name of Jesus, your Son, our Savior. Amen

Breaking News

Sunday, July 26, 2020

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

When NBA legend Kobe Bryant perished in a helicopter crash last January, chances are that you heard about it when a “breaking news” ticker scrolled across the bottom of your tablet or TV screens. When we see these words, we know that something amazing, terrible, interesting, incredible, troubling, or heart-breaking has occurred. We also know that we are about to learn more.

Think back to the events of the morning of September 11, 2001. Where were you at the time? What were you doing when the news broke about planes flying into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon? This news, like all “breaking news,” broke into our consciousness. It broke into history. It ripped through our communities, shredding conventional ideas, traditional assumptions, and long-held beliefs.

Breaking news alters, modifies, shatters, and forever changes things. Other examples of breaking news include the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. in the 1960s, the moon landing in 1969, the *Challenger* explosion, the Columbine school shooting, and the Oklahoma City bombing. These events were indeed “breaking news,” news that broke in upon our consciousness and awareness. Our lives changed; something indeed had broken.

This is the meaning conveyed in our reading for today. The news that Jesus breaks is astonishing and incredibly *good* news. The kingdom of God is upon us and within us! The kingdom of God breaks into history to shatter expectations and turn everything upside down! In our text, Jesus provides context, giving the disciples new understanding and insight about this breaking good news.