

The Yeast (Matthew 13:33-35)

³³[Jesus] told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.” ³⁴Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. ³⁵So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.”

1. In the above parable, what does the yeast represent? What does the dough represent?

2. Jesus' picture is easy to understand: When yeast is added to a batch of dough,

_____ it may cause the dough to rise.

_____ I don't know; I don't bake.

_____ it permeates, causing the whole batch to rise.

_____ portions of the dough will rise.

3. In a companion parable—that of the mustard seed (Matthew 13:31,32)—Jesus revealed that one of the characteristics of the gospel is that although unimpressive in appearance, it has the power to grow and create a vast kingdom. What characteristics of the gospel are revealed through the parable of the yeast?

4. The rising of a batch of dough is the visible, outward evidence that yeast is in the dough and that it has permeated the entire batch. Make a list of the internal changes that are worked in a person by the gospel as well as the external evidence of these changes.

Internal -

External -

5. The Lord told Nicodemus the Pharisee (John 3) that no one can enter God's kingdom unless he is born again by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the gospel. He then went on to speak of the Spirit's work. Explain Jesus' words in the following passage and how they relate to the parable of the yeast.

“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

6. Like so many of Jesus' parables, this one teaches us about the efficacy of the gospel. With what comfort and confidence does this teaching fill us..

as we worship?

as we partake of the Lord's Supper?

as we take time for family and personal devotions?

as we share Jesus with a coworker or friend?

7. React to the following statements:

- Perhaps the best example of the quiet and invisible nature of the gospel is the baptism of an infant.
- When we return to our seats after receiving the Lord's Supper, we should feel that our faith has been strengthened.
- Sometimes you can tell that the yeast of the gospel is not at work on the inside because there doesn't seem to be any "rising" on the outside.

8. Why did Jesus use parables to teach?

Helps: (1) The yeast is Christ and his gospel that work in the dough of human hearts and lives. (2) Yeast permeates a batch of dough, causing the entire batch to rise. (3) The gospel of Christ works quietly and invisibly (nonetheless powerfully) like yeast in a batch of dough. (4) The gospel has the power to turn people's hearts from unbelief to saving faith in Christ. With faith, there is the beginning of a renewal of the image of God in which a person's will, intellect, and emotions are in harmony with those of God. This renewal of God's image will give evidence of itself in a person's thoughts and desires, as well as in kindly words, loving actions, treatment of spouse and children, etc. (5) We can understand the Spirit's working as little as we understand the blowing of the wind. We know that the wind blows because we hear and feel it. Yet, when will it blow and from which direction? Likewise, we know that the Spirit works within us because we believe in Christ as our Savior. Yet no one can fully comprehend all the workings of God's Spirit. Part of the mystery lies in the gospel's nature to work quietly and invisibly within human hearts. (6) We can find comfort and confidence in the truth that, although we may not perceive that the gospel is working, it is working nonetheless. The gospel works quietly and invisibly to call people to faith and to strengthen faith. (7) Discuss the fact that, although an infant may appear no different on the outside after being baptized, a wonderful and saving change has taken place on the inside by the power of the gospel. This is an objective truth, even when we may not subjectively feel or sense that our faith has been strengthened (for instance, after receiving Holy Communion). While Jesus said that the yeast of the gospel in one's heart will be evident in one's outward life, we must be very cautious in our judgments, especially in the case of weak or immature brothers or sisters. (8) Verse 35 indicates that Jesus, in perfect obedience to God, used parables to fulfill Old Testament prophecy (Psalm 78:2). Scripture tells us that the Lord also used parables to conceal sacred truths from those who rejected him as Savior but to reveal these truths to his followers.