

## Sermon for Trinity 6 2020

“Jesus told them another parable. ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened’”

We must remember that when Jesus was speaking to the crowds, and specifically to the disciples, that which was to become the Christian church was miniscule. There were twelve men chosen from very ordinary lives who were confused about almost everything Jesus tried to teach them. The proof of this is found when Jesus is arrested, placed before a kangaroo court, and sentenced to die the shameful death of crucifixion. Where were the disciples? They were hiding as far away from Jesus as they could get.

When Jesus teaches in parables, he often needs to explain their meaning to the disciples. Last week they wanted to know what the parable of the sower meant. Today they want to know what Jesus meant when he spoke of the weeds in the wheat. Matthew recorded the explanation of both of these parables.

Remember that these followers of Jesus were to be the foundation of the church. Peter is described as the rock upon which Jesus would build the church. When we look carefully at this situation, we discover an infant church which reacts inconsistently and erratically to the circumstances around it. The running and hiding at the time of the crucifixion says it all. They were hardly an elite group of well qualified consultants. In fact, they were anything but such a group.

Confronted with the quality of person he has chosen to follow him he offered the parable of the yeast and the parable of the mustard seed. In both parables something very small is the subject, and out of the insignificant and small object something large was to grow.

The yeast is interesting because in Jewish understanding it was to be either consumed or thrown out at the time of the Passover. Why would Jesus liken the kingdom of God to something discarded? And yet, he describes the effect of yeast when placed in the flour. It permeates the whole loaf and has significant effect on the outcome. If you have ever made your own bread, there is that exciting time when the dough is placed in a warm spot and we can watch as it increases in size. This is what Jesus is attempting to teach. The church will be like this, the kingdom will be like this, the salvation message will permeate society, and the church, or at least faith in Christ, will grow into something huge and productive.

It must have been a hard lesson for the disciples at that time. They were under attack from every quarter. The crowds come and go depending on the level of risk involved in being seen with Jesus. It is frightening that the disciples have a wonderful leader who keeps talking to them about his coming death. To their ears this made no sense at all.

Jesus speaks of the mustard seed. It is a seed somewhat smaller than the head of a pin. This small seed will germinate and grow into a bush that defies the small beginning. Birds will come and nest in the bush that grows from such a small seed.

By now you will have gathered that Jesus is attempting to convince the disciples that even though they are small in number hardly a blip in society, they will be responsible for

spreading the gospel message of salvation in Christ. More than this, it is expected that they will be influential in bringing the whole world to accept this precious message.

What do they do when this role is activated with Jesus death? They run and hide. Peter, the rock, denies Jesus three times in one night. The future does not auger well.

We know today that the disciples did rise to the challenge and they did amazing things in terms of growing the infant church. They travelled the known world teaching of salvation in Christ. They became that which Jesus called them to be. They were the yeast and they were the mustard seed. They discovered and accepted their role, even though in many cases it would mean untimely death.

Thomas, the one who doubted Jesus the most, is reputed to have travelled as far away as India. When we think of the times and of the lack of transport of any kind, this is a remarkable feat for an individual.

If we would like to travel to India, pre Covid-19, we would simply hop on a plane and within a few hours we would land in India. From the Middle East it would be much faster. For Thomas the trip may well have taken years to complete. That is the fruit of conviction and belief.

Where does this leave us? Is the role of the disciple concluded? The answer is a resounding no. the role has been passed on to each one of us. We are the disciples in our age and the need for teaching salvation and faith is no less urgent for us than it was for the first disciples.

Of course, there will be times when we will run and hide. But, there will be other times when we will do magnificent things. There will be times when we will be instrumental in bringing others to understand the promise of salvation and who themselves will respond to Christ. The important factor is exactly that; others will respond to Christ, and the church, the kingdom, will grow.

It is our role to be the yeast and the mustard seed in our time. We are to permeate our society and we are to grow the family, the church.

This does raise the question of why we should do this. Are we looking for membership for the club? We could be forgiven for thinking so when we read or listen to the sometimes-confusing calls for membership in the church. It is usually triggered by the plaintive call for more people to attend and put money in the plate so that we can pay the bills. That is not very spiritual and it is unlikely to attract anyone to the faith.

We are not a club looking for members. We are sharing the wonderful gift of eternal life and we are bringing other people to accept this gift for themselves. It is in accepting this gift that they will know that they too are children of God, loved by God, blessed with the knowledge of God; and have come to believe that all of us are fed the spiritual food of the Body and Blood of Christ.

This is not our club. It is the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.