

Meditation on Matthew 13: 33
This woman is adding the yeast of God's Kingdom
to the flour of earthly life.

³³ 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.”

Jesus' concept of the kingdom of God was a complete reversal of the thinking of nearly everyone in Israel in his days. And therefore he told people stories of farmers and seeds and women and baking. “To what should I compare the kingdom of God?” he said. “It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

This is a comparison that comes from everyday domestic life: preparing a dough and baking bread were the classical everyday tasks of every woman in Old and New Testament times. And women were supposed to see themselves in Jesus' talking of the kingdom of God. While he talked, and while they listened and understood, he'd upgraded the reality of women's lives. Female tasks and talents were thought worthy to be an image for the kingdom of God! That was new, and good and liberating news in Jesus' time, because religion and worship had always exclusively been exercised by men using images of the men's world to talk about their faith and their God. From then on this could be different...Jesus had made all the difference!

Stanley Hauerwas, an American theology professor, who has influenced my theological thinking, once wrote:
“Jesus' concept of the kingdom of God was a right-side-up kingdom in an upside-down world.”

What he means is:
Jesus' kingdom would not come with an outward show of power and success.
It would never be a military victory or a political kingdom.
Jesus' kingdom was an interior kingdom of the ordinary people.
A kingdom of the heart.
Jesus never sat on a kings' throne, but he's always ruled the world in ways that most kings never dreamed of.

Jesus is ruling the world by winning and ruling the hearts of people.
And he has reigned over more people than any king who has ever lived

or ever will live.

The problem for many is – at all times – that it seems to be an invisible kingdom. It does not come about with signs of power and prestige.

It can only be described in simple words of everyday life and tasks.

Some people might not even notice it.

But Christ is changing the world by changing the people...

far beyond military and political kingdoms of this world.

Yeast hidden in a lump of dough became an image for the kingdom of God. It started ever so small in the person of Jesus.

But there was a lot of power and energy in this small beginning.

And eventually it released unspeakable creativity and strength.

In the end everything would be penetrated; everything would be filled by God's creation living God's kingdom...

...and we will all enjoy the blessing of his reign.

The kingdom of God is not, first of all a "call to duty", but an invitation to enjoyment!

It promises joy and peace for those who enter...

...and membership of a subversive movement.

To understand what that means please, listen again to a thought from Stanley Hauerwas:

"We who are part of the kingdom of God," he writes, "live in a parallel kingdom with the kingdoms of this world..., the kingdoms of time and fashion, society and public opinion. These kingdoms are in conflict.

And all who believe are facing a spiritual challenge."

But the means we work with, says the Bible, are not the means of the world. The means we work with are prayer, righteousness and joy in the Holy Spirit. And as God changes us, he changes the world.

As things begin to change in us, they also change around us.

We begin to influence the world and win others to the kingdom and help to make them free.

The kingdom of God, Jesus said, was like yeast in a lump of dough.

It was worked into the dough and caused tremendous change.

The little bit of yeast affects all of the dough.

It does its work while hidden and almost unseen.

But somebody of course needs to mix it in and knead it,

to store it in a warm place, cover it with a cloth, watch it, wait for it, care...

And that again is an image for God's choosing us:

us all with our little, individual lives to make an eternal difference.

We are God's partners in this world..., messengers..., witnesses...,
co-creators to mix yeast into the flour and plant the seed in the ground.
People can work for and help God to establish his kingdom.
They don't do God's share, but they spend much energy and effort in that
which can only be done by human beings with hands and hearts and skills.

God can't knead the dough, form the bread, heat the oven, plant the seed
and water it.

God asks his human beings, God asks us to quietly and faithfully work
until his kingdom comes, and his will is done, on earth as it is in heaven.

God gives us power and patience, trust and persistence,

because he knows how hard it can be at times:

he knows how often we think we work in vain,

how strongly we fear that our actions are without success,

and how much we'd love to see our commitment contributing to improve
life in God's world.

God knows... And he expects us to carry on and persevere – just as he
expected Jesus to do so. God is full of irrepressible hope, and he shares this
hope with us.

We can take the message of Jesus, his stories and teachings as yeast for us.
We can bake the bread of life and feed and nourish many with it...

...so that all of us – just as Jesus did – can work for justice and stand up
for the truth.

...so that we can all be open for others and accept different opinions and
beliefs.

...so that we can all support sisters and brothers from different nations
and cultural backgrounds, no matter what they eat or drink or look like, no
matter how they celebrate communion and in which language they read
their Bible or any other religious book.

With small steps and with a smile on our faces,
we can work for God's kingdom to come true.

Some might say, it costs too much.

Others may be suspicious.

Still others might not want to take the trouble to change...

...but, as long as only one person says the truth,
relinquishes power,

takes time for a friend,

invites a stranger,

speaks words of love,

puts trust and faith in others,

as long as only one person does that,

God's kingdom is here and is waiting for us.

Amen.