

**WS: LET'S REVIEW — Holding phrases for the four Gospels.** Memorize the following four statements! These hold the key to understanding the four Gospels.

**MATTHEW:** Jesus' Teaching Manual for living the deeply satisfied life;

**MARK:** Our mission is to awaken those spiritually asleep;

**LUKE:** Jesus and Jesus' message is the same;

**JOHN:** The meaning of our baptismal experience.

## TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

### IHOP BIBLE STUDY

#### # 17 Topic: "The Kingdom of God" – with commentary

**NOTE:** According to the Luke Chart, there are 7 hard saying in this theme. My plan is to take them in 4 sessions, and this is session # 4. Today's scriptures are:

**Luke 13: 18, 19:** "The Parable of the Mustard Seed; **Luke 13: 20 - 21:** "The Parable of the Yeast."

The purpose of the Gospel of Luke is told in the opening verses in the first chapter, ". . . it seemed good to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." It is this "orderly account" that provides the organization of our study material. **This is lesson number 17 of 29.**

**Read the assigned THEME at one time.**

**NOTE:** First off, it is observed that Luke mentions the Kingdom of God only in 13: 18 – 21. In these few verses, Luke gives us two tiny parables, yet they are powerful and descriptive. This is curious. In Matthew 13 there are six parables of Jesus concerning the "secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven (KOG)." Reflect for a moment on the difference of purpose between Matthew and Luke. Matthew is out to illuminate the "deeply satisfied life," that is lived in the Spiritual Oasis, e.g. the KOG.) Luke, on the other hand, is out to illuminate that Jesus and Jesus' message is the same thing. Luke's emphasis is on who Jesus is, rather than on our experience of the Kingdom of God.

Second, it may be helpful to you to turn to my book, *Old Christian Code Words* on pages 37 to 40 to refresh your memory on our treatment of the Kingdom of God. In the event you do not have a copy you can download it free at the following address:

[www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy](http://www.triumc.org/web1/biblestudy). The document is 46 pages. Or, you can email me for a bound copy for \$16.00 and this includes postage.

To begin your analysis of these short passages, remember that the Kingdom of God is not a place, it is an experience or a relationship. As an experience, the KOG is the "peace that passes understanding," or the sense of deep satisfaction. As a relationship, the KOG is standing in the presence of fulfillment. Marcus Borg quotes Teilhard de Chardin (in his book *The Heart of Christianity*) who uses the phrase "the *diaphany of the Divine* at the heart of the universe on fire; Christ, his heart, a fire, capable of penetrating everywhere and gradually spreading everywhere." (*The italics are mine.*) This is our relationship to the KOG.

#### I. **Luke 13: 18, 19:** "The Parable of the Mustard Seed."

1. Compare the experience of living in God's kingdom with the experience of living in this world.

**WS:** The difference between living in this world and living in the Kingdom of God is the significance of our Christology. Looking at our human experience without looking through the prism of the empty cross is to be left in hopelessness without hope. We all live in the world (a spiritual desert). When we are awakened to the experience of

hope, the meaning of cross, and the affirmation that we are not victims but victors, then our human desert is transformed into our spiritual oasis.

2. Jesus uses a simile here. How does the simile characterize the mustard seed with its tree. How is this similar to our experience of the Kingdom of God.

**WS:** Observe that the seed is planted "in the garden." The garden is the KOG. It is "in the garden" that we spiritually grow and mature.

3. What does this parable reveal about Jesus?

**WS:** Jesus Christ is our "garden." The garden is not a place, it is a relationship. As we are awakened, the significance of our awakening is the meaning of having a personal relationship with Christ. As we grow in "Jesus" we become the essence of what it means to be fully human/humane individuals.

4. What is the significance of the birds coming to the tree?

**WS:** Frequently, the gospel writers associate bird with the activity of the Holy Spirit. While I do not wish to make too much of this association, it is interesting to speculate that when we "plant" our spiritual seed in the "garden" that is Jesus Christ, then we experience the freedom that is the Holy Spirit. It is helpful to note that a Gut Trip Analysis of the term "Holy Spirit" is the experience of freedom to choose to be victims or victors.

5. What is the significance of the gender used in the parable?

**WS:** In these two verses, and in the next two verses, Luke changes the gender. In this lesson on the Kingdom of God, the gender is male; this is an association with the male dynamic of being the farmer/laborer. It might be said, in the parable Luke illustrates the 'harder side' of Jesus.

## II. Luke 13: 20, 21: "The Parable of the Yeast."

1. Characterize what yeast does in the chemistry of bread.

**WS:** Yeast permeates dough as salt permeates water. When salt is introduced into water, it can't be said that just some of the water is not affected—all of it is.

2. What is the significance of the amount of dough?

**WS:** Jesus tells this story using a large amount of dough. Perhaps, this means that "all of life" is affected with the KOG. At least, it points up that the KOG already is in our human dough, and it is a significant contributor to us.

3. What is the significance of the gender used in the parable?

**WS:** If the story above is about Jesus' manhood, then the gender change to the feminine principle in this parable illuminates the 'softer side' of Jesus.

4. What does this parable reveal about the message of Jesus?

The softer side of Jesus reveals a message of deep care for all of humanity. Both the softer side and the harder side of Jesus reveal that Jesus, as the Christ, permeates all of life. As we are awakened to this reality, the more the Kingdom of God is revealed in our lives.

**All right, folks. Talk to me.**