Tonight as we continue with our “Parables of Jesus” Sermon Series, I would to preach a brief message on a very brief parable, “The Parable of The Yeast.”

Please turn with me once again to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter thirteen. And let’s read VERSE 33.

*He told them 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.”*

P R A Y E R

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

If you will look closely at your Bible you will probably notice “The Parable of The Mustard Seed” and “The Parable of The Yeast” are given as “a pair” without any break in between.

Many believe the reason Jesus taught them this way was because they both describe “The Kingdom of Heaven” from two different perspectives.

For our time together this evening, I would like for you to consider these three simple thoughts:

First, we will consider THE ELEMENTS OF THE PARABLE. Secondly, we will consider THE TWO INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PARABLE And thirdly, we will consider THE APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE.

First, let’s consider…..

I. The Elements of The Parable (v. 33)
1. If you will look at verse 33 once again you will notice three elements: YEAST, A WOMAN and A LARGE AMOUNT OF FLOUR.

2. Let’s examine each of these elements individually.

(A) The first element is the **YEAST**.

Now when we think of “yeast” we think of these (hold up) clean little packets of “yeast” like you would buy in a grocery store.

That was not the kind of “yeast” Jesus was referring to. The “yeast” Jesus is talking about in this parable was more commonly known in Biblical times as “leaven.” No doubt you are familiar with the terms “leavened” and “unleavened” bread.

LEAVEN was a piece of fermented, decaying DOUGH left over from a previous baking that was worked into a new batch of dough to cause it to rise.

Once mixed into the new dough, the LEAVEN would begin to **MULTIPLY** rapidly causing the dough to rise and become fluffy BREAD once it was baked.

Because of the presence of the fermented LEAVEN in the dough, JEWISH BREAD often had a “sour” taste, like the SOURDOUGH bread we are familiar with today.

LEAVEN is often used in the scriptures to symbolize **INFLUENCE.** Most of the time “leaven” or “yeast” represents **BAD** influence.”

-In MATTHEW 16:5-12, Jesus warned His disciples about the “yeast” or the “leaven” of the Pharisees and Sadducees. The “leaven” of the Pharisees was their hypocritical, legalistic form of religion. And the “leaven” of the Sadducees was their skeptical, agnosticism.
- In MARK 8:15, Jesus warned His disciples about the “yeast” or “leaven” of Herod. The “leaven” of Herod was focused on sensuality and hedonism.

- In I CORINTHIANS 5:6-8, the apostle Paul warned the Corinthian Church to expel the immoral brother in their Church who was engaged in a sexual relationship with his own step-mother. To illustrate the danger of allowing this immoral man to remain in the Church in an unrepentant state, Paul said:

  “Don’t you know a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?”

  Some translations say: “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”

The point I want to make is this: Most of the time when you see “yeast” or “leaven” used in a symbolic way in the scriptures it is referring to a sinful or bad influence.

But in “The Parable of The Yeast” here in Matthew 13, “the yeast” or “leaven” seems to symbolize a “good influence. I will say more about that in just a few minutes.

(B) The second element in this parable is THE WOMAN.

v. 34  “The kingdom of heaven is like YEAST that A WOMAN took.....

Some commentators believe “THE WOMAN” in this parable represents THE CHURCH because they see “the yeast” as something GOOD the Church imparts to the Kingdom of Heaven.
Other commentators believe “THE WOMAN” is referring to the evil influences upon the Church like the JEZEBEL in the Church at Thyratira (Revelation 2:18-29) and the HARLOT upon the beast in Revelation 17.

(C) The third element in this parable is THE FLOUR.

v. 34 “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.

The Hebrew measure of flour Jesus is talking about here was three “satas” or three “seahs.” This is the equivalent of ½ bushel or 22 liters, which is roughly seven quarts of flour.

While Jesus may not have intended any special significance to there being three measures of flour, some commentators believe the three measures represents the JEWS, the SAMARITANS and the GREEKS. (Gentiles)

Well now that we have looked at the ELEMENTS of this PARABLE, let’s consider....

II. The Interpretations of The Parable

1. There are two very contrasting interpretations of this parable and it all has to do with whether the “yeast” represents a GOOD or BAD influence.

INTERPRETATION ONE
Those who believe the “yeast” represents a GOOD influence believe Jesus was teaching His disciples this truth in this parable:

Many Jews thought that the Messiah would come with great **POWER** and that the armies of His **KINGDOM** would subdue the Roman Empire.

Instead, Jesus taught in this brief parable that His Kingdom would influence the world quietly and inconspicuously, just like “yeast” working through the dough.

Like the Mustard Seed, the Parable of The Yeast teaches us the **KINGDOM of HEAVEN** would have a small beginning but eventually the influence of the Kingdom would be seen everywhere the **GOSPEL** was preached.

**INTERPRETATION TWO**

Those who believe the “yeast” represents a BAD influence believe Jesus was teaching His disciples this truth in the parable:

Because “yeast” or “leaven” refers to something that is “fermented” and “decaying” Jesus used the Parable of The Yeast to warn His disciples of the **EVIL** influences that would infiltrate the Kingdom of heaven as it grew larger.

Those who hold this interpretation of this parable believe the presence of false teachers and false doctrines that infiltrated the Church was just like the “fermented yeast” working inside the dough.

Instead of the world being **CONVERTED** by the Church, the Church in time would be **CORRUPTED** by the world.

Several Bible scholars believe “THE WOMAN” in this parable actually represents the Roman CATHOLIC Church, also known as “the apostate Church.”

2. Regardless of which interpretation is correct one thing is for certain: The focus of “The Parable of The Mustard
Seed” is on the OUTWARD growth of the Kingdom, while “The Parable of The Yeast” describes the what is taking place on the INSIDE of the Kingdom.

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Finally, let’s consider ......

III. The Application of The Parable

Let’s think of Christian Hope Church of Christ as “the yeast” and our community is the “dough.” Just like “yeast” this Church can do “little” things and yet have a big impact upon this community.

Operation There is Hope is a great example. Cleaning up a few yards, washing a few windows, cutting up some firewood, and doing some minor home repairs may not seem like a big deal, but just like a “little yeast” those things have a big impact upon the lives of others.

Let’s make this parable even more personal. Do you realize that because you and I are part of the Kingdom of heaven, we represent the Kingdom everywhere we go?

Regardless of whether you are at your place of work or at school or around non-Christian family and friends, your life silently and inconspicuously influences the lives of others, just like “the yeast” working through the dough.

Look all around you, find someone in need, Help somebody today! Though it be little---a neighborly deed, Help somebody today!

Many are waiting a kind loving word, Help somebody today!
You have the message, O let it be heard, Help somebody today!

Many have burdens to heavy to bear, Help somebody today!
Grief is the portion of some everywhere, Help somebody today!
Help somebody today, Somebody along life’s way,
Let sorrow be ended, the friendless befriended, Oh, help somebody today!