

For Such a Time as This

A Daily Devotional

Wednesday, April 24, 2024



From Matthew 13:

He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

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

Since these are two of my favorite parables and there is much here to consider, let us linger for yet another day over the possible interpretations that present themselves.

There are three different meanings: first, considering the mustard seed, there is an indication that in the kingdom of heaven, from small things great things come. Secondly, in the story of the hidden leaven is conveyed the possibility of the universal pervasiveness of God’s gracious action – read here that God’s mercy in Jesus Christ, though hidden, ‘contaminates’ or raises all of human life like yeast hid away in a flour mixture. And thirdly, taken together, the parables may bespeak of the great patience that the lover of God may need when considering God’s work – it happens, but it takes time.

A fourth dimension to the parables presents itself when the two are looked at from the perspective of who is the acting character: the Sower with the mustard seed is male; the baker who hides the leaven is female. The work of the kingdom of heaven is thus not gender-specific: male or female may both equally and satisfactorily represent the work or action of God in the world.

Well, well ... this is truly radical for the time. Jesus implies that it makes no difference whether one is male or female regarding the work of God. To our modern (or more properly defined – ‘post-modern’) ears, such equality is not news. But to the original hearers, this would be earth-shattering – ground-breaking – even possibly heretical! For the original hearers, women had their place of deferential treatment, but along with the deference came a diminution of the stature of the female. Women were appreciated, but not considered an equal in either the things of the world or the things of God. Men were understood to be the normative being. Afterall, God was most often (though not exclusively) envisioned as male (Father, King, Lord etc.).

Could, just for a moment mind you, Jesus have been about directing his original hearers away from their cultural, societal, and religious prejudices to consider that maybe, just maybe, God was about doing something new – something different – something remarkable – something even counter-cultural? Could this still be a viable interpretation for us today? As Jesus says: ‘Let those with ears, hear.’

Prayer for the Day: (From *The Valley of Vision*) [Same as yesterday, but just as good today!]

O Lord, I confide in thee and lean upon thee, and need thee at all times to assist and lead me. Amen.

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