

GAYLORD UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
318 4th STREET, BOX 385, GAYLORD, MN, 55334
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
July 26, 2020

MEDITATION

Henry David Thoreau, 19th century

"I have great faith in a seed. Convince me that you have a seed there,
and I am prepared to expect wonders."

THE CALL

Psalm 105:1-11, 45b

O give thanks to God, call on God's name, make known God's deeds among the peoples.
Sing to God, sing praises to God; tell of all God's wonderful works.
Glory in God's holy name; let the hearts of those who seek God rejoice.
Seek God and God's strength; seek God's presence continually. Remember the wonderful works God
has done, God's miracles, and the judgments God uttered, O offspring of God's servants Abraham
and Sarah, children of Jacob, God's chosen ones. God is the Sovereign our God; whose judgments
are in all the earth. God is mindful of the covenant forever, of the word that God commanded, for a
thousand generations, the covenant made with Abraham, God's sworn promise to Isaac, which was
confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, saying, "To you I will give the
land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance." Praise be to God!

PRELUDE

Stacy Pauly

WELCOME AND NEWS OF THE CHURCH

Next Sunday, August 2, I will be present for drive through communion at 9:30 A.M at the
Jefferson Street entrance to the church. Drive by for communion, a blessing and a friendly
smile.

We will begin to meet together for worship August 16 at 9:30 A.M in the sanctuary. We will be
doing all we can to create a safe environment in which to gather. Masks will be required and
social distancing will be practiced in the building. Other information will be coming out vial mail
or email.

CALL TO WORSHIP *Mt 13: 31-33; 44-52*

One: The kin-dom of heaven is like:

All: A tiny mustard seed that carries the life of a tree

One: The kin-dom of heaven is like:

All: A tiny portion of yeast that makes bread rise

One: The kin-dom of heaven is like:

All: A tiny pearl of great price that we would give all our "stuff" to have

One: The kin-dom of heaven is like:

**All: A fishing boat filled with catch—good and bad together—With fisherfolk wise to
recognize the good.**

1 We sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad and built the lofty skies.
We sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at God's command, and all the stars obey.

2 We sing the goodness of the Lord that filled the earth with food;
God formed the creatures with the word and then pronounced them good.
Lord, how your wonders are displayed, where'er we turn our eyes,
if we survey the ground we tread or gaze upon the skies

3 There's not a plant or flower below but makes your glories known,
and clouds arise and tempests blow by order from your throne;
while all that borrows life from you is ever in your care,
and everywhere that we can be, you, God, are present there.

INVOCATION

Holy One,
you call us to find your kin-dom
already hidden in our world—
in tiny, transforming possibilities;
in beauty that calls us to surrender all;
in complicated choices that call for wisdom.
Reveal yourself here in this moment
And heighten our senses that we may find you
And join you in building this kin-dom of love, and hope, and peace.
In the name of the One who calls us to seek,
Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

PRAYER FOR GRACE AND WISDOM*1 Kings 3:5-12*

In today's reading from 1 Kings 3, The Holy One asks Solomon,
newly come to the throne, to ask for any gift.
Solomon ponders, and asks for the gift that will enable him to serve the people of God best:
an understanding heart, to know good from evil, and to lead the people in wisdom.
There were other reasonable gifts that Solomon could have chosen;
But he put the needs of the people at the center of his desire.

Let's take a moment in silence to consider our lives,
the many competing needs that confront us;
Let's ask for the discernment and wisdom that Solomon longed for,
that our choices may reflect generosity and the common good.

Silence

ASSURANCE OF GRACE*Psalm 119:129-136*

Holy One, your word gives light and understanding to all;
we open ourselves to you in prayer and find you already in our hearts,
leading us in the way of justice, compassion, and peace;
calling us to find you in our neighbors' need as well.
We give thanks.

GLORIA

**Glory be to Creator, and to the Christ and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.
Eternal life, A-Amen. A-Amen.**

SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 3:5-12

At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart towards you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?" It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you."

Romans 8:26-39

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs 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 yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"Have you understood all this?" They answered, "Yes."

And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old."

Sermon ***The Kingdom of Heaven is Like...***
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Pastor Dennis

People of God, grace to you and God's peace. Amen.

I would guess that most of you know the answer to this question: What was Jesus' favorite method of teaching? Lecture? Group discussion? Assigned reading? Parables? Jesus loved to tell parables. In fact, the gospels attribute about 50 parables to Jesus. And in our gospel reading for today we find 5 of these parables.

Jesus has just told his disciples that the kingdom of heaven has come near, and the disciples want to know, "What does that look like? Tell us Jesus about this Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus replies with 5 parables- short and seemingly simple stories that carry multiple layers of meanings. That's what we have in the gospel reading for today- several of these parables that Jesus tells back-to-back in order to shed some light on what he means when he talks about the Kingdom of heaven. Parables about a mustard seed, treasure buried in a field, a pricey pearl, a fishing net. Then there's one that we might focus on this morning: the parable about yeast in the flour. It's a one-liner! Jesus says, "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."

Now, I know that there are a lot of gifted and seasoned bakers in this congregation. I have been baking for many years but I still would not apply the words gifted or seasoned to my abilities! The parable that Jesus tells today reminds me of the bread dough started I was given. I had never used a bread starter before, but I was more than willing to give it a try. After all, what could go wrong? Right!

I got to work on the starter. The directions said I needed to feed starter and wait for 24 hours before making the bread. I put in the flour, sugar, potato flakes and water placed it into a bowl and began the 24 hr wait. The recipe never mentioned what type of container to put it in, so I chose a glass bowl. Filling about a quarter of the bowl, I covered the top with a plate and placed it on the counter and went to work. When I came home from work, that starter had been on the move. Like lava flowing from a volcano, goo streamed down the sides of the bowl. It moved across the counter and ended up on the floor. I grabbed a towel and tried to contain the dough. I called out for Lee in the next room for help. He came, took one look, howled in laughter and left to get his camera.

Eventually we managed to trap the doughy monster in a larger glass jar. Salvaging only about a quarter of the mixture. I screwed the lid on tightly. By the next morning, to my astonishment, the starter was oozing out from beneath the lid, running down the sides of the jar and again unto the floor. I grabbed the jar and unscrewed the lid. The pressure from inside shot the lid out of my hand.

The starter went flying. Some of it landed on the ceiling, some on the refrigeration, and even the door across the room. That starter was everywhere! Once again, I called for Lee to come and help. Once again, he burst into laughter and turned to get his camera. The cleanup took over an hour.

Now I learned many lessons that day: First, if you want to put the starter in a jar, don't tighten the lid unless you want to create a dough bomb. Secondly, I learned you need to HIDE every camera when you are trying out a new recipe. And finally, and most importantly, I learned in a vivid way the power that fermentation has to transform and to move and to make a difference. Jesus today says that the kingdom of Heaven is like yeast mixed and hidden in the flour.

Jesus says, that the kingdom is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." Now, Three measures of flour. Do you know how much that is? **That's a ridiculously large amount of flour---you'd need a 100-quart Hobart mixer with a dough hook as big as your leg to knead it! Translating into kitchen measures, 1.125 bushels is 144 cups of flour. Presuming we used a common recipe for basic white bread that uses 5 ½ cups of flour, 144 cups is enough to make 26 batches of bread of two loaves each, giving us a total of 52 loaves, each weighing about a pound and a half. If we're frugal but not stingy, we can get 16 slices out of a loaf, yielding 832 slices, enough for 416 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (we'd need 33 jars of jelly, and 64 of peanut butter).** About 80 pounds!

This woman is not Martha Stewart whipping up a couple delicate, exquisite little biscuits that together weigh less than a canary. No. This woman is a baker. She is emptying 16 five-pound bags of flour into the biggest mixing bowl you've ever seen. She's pouring in 42 cups of water. She's got a mass of dough on her hands. Can you imagine her kneading this dough- she's a combination of Julia Child and Hulk Hogan? The woman baking bread in this parable has a pretty big task on her hands. And Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like that. We have a God who wants to love and to bless an entire world. We have a God who wants all to know of God's unconditional acceptance of not just for some but for all people. We live in a world that is often filled with strife and hate and greed. But these are not the ways of God's kingdom. The woman in Jesus parable had a big task on her hands and so do we as followers of Jesus today.

But consider again the woman's huge mass of dough. It's not just flour any more. The yeast is in the dough, invisible-hidden, but permeating the mass, and having its effect. A mystery is bubbling away inside, with much more happening than meets the eye. The yeast is infiltrating the flour and a transformation happens. And so, it is, says Jesus, with the kingdom of God.

Maybe the call for you and me as followers of Jesus today, is to be more and more like yeast- infiltrating our world with the radical ideas of Jesus- you know, like the idea that all people are created in the image of God, or the idea that we are to love each other, or the idea that love is always stronger than hate, or the idea that it's not all about me, or the idea that everyone has a place at the table. Isn't God calling us to be like yeast and infiltrate our world today with radical Christian ideas until society has been so thoroughly transformed by these Gospel notions that they become the norm. Could this be the call for you and me as we live in this time of so many complex problems in midst, our nation and in our world? Could this be the role of church? Maybe the role of the church today isn't to solve all these complex problems. Maybe the church's job- our job- is to be like yeast- and in our daily lives to infiltrate our world with our Christ-like ideas about love and justice; to model compassion, forgiveness, and, for goodness sake, basic human decency. The preacher Tom Long puts it this way: "The parable of the yeast pictures the kingdom as a hidden force, working silently to 'corrupt' the world- that is to corrupt the corruption." I like that idea, that the kingdom is at work like a virus- a good virus- spreading through the world, "corrupting" our corrupt status quo with something that has the power to transform the whole world into something new.

I hear people asking these days, "What can I do. Given the issues and problems of the day, what can we do?" There's most likely a lot we can do. It's a good time to discern and reflect on what we all can do. But it seems to me, that in this little parable of the yeast, Jesus is calling all of us in our daily lives to be God's yeast in our world: to love when it doesn't make sense to love, to forgive even those who stand against us, to speak of others- even our opponents in the best and most charitable ways, to heal and tend, to act with compassion and grace toward others, to do the work of justice, to love kindness. My friend, what if we did this with each friend, neighbor and any person we meet, today and again tomorrow and the next day? And day after day, and week after week, until it started to take hold and others followed our lead- like a little bit of yeast hidden in the flour that eventually leavens the whole works. Yeast that turns our bushels of ordinary flour into bread that feeds and heals the whole world. The Kingdom of Heaven is like that. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN

"CHRISTIAN, RISE AND ACT YOUR CREED"

NCH #537

1 Christian, rise and act thy creed;
let your prayer be in your deed;
Seek the right, perform the true,
raise your work and life anew.

2 Offer others hope and joy,
and God's worship your employ;
Giving thanks in humble zeal,
learning all God's will to feel.

3 Come then, law divine, and reign;
faith that doubt assails in vain,
Perfect love bereft of fear,
born in heaven and radiant here.

Prayers of the People:

Leader: Loving God, in this time of worship and praise we pause in prayer for your people in challenging situations and in need of guidance. Lord in your mercy...

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who are wandering through life and need a sense of purpose, direction and courage, we pray for the presence of your Holy Spirit to surround them and give them vision. Lord in your mercy...

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who desire to serve to bring hope to the down trodden and justice to the oppressed. Lord in your mercy...

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who are hospitalized for whatever reason of body, mind, or spirit, we pray for healing and release from the torments that plague them. Lord in your mercy...

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For those who are on the front line of battles of body and justice, of freedom and peace, we pray for health and endurance to persevere. Lord in your mercy...

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For your church worldwide. That it might be a seed of faith, a source of joy, an instrument to bring your reign to earth. May it be the witness to your word, your grace, and your righteousness. May it be the leaven in society that might bring love and respect for one another.
Lord in your mercy...

People: Hear our prayer.

Leader: For the community faith throughout the world and gathered in spirit as the Gaylord United Church of Christ. Bring wisdom in all that is done. Bind us together in one spirit as we pray;

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses and we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For you are the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Three-fold Amen. Amen. Amen. A-A-A-Amen.

Invitation to the Offering

Our God calls us to seek and find the hints of the Kin-dom in our world, and to nurture its growth among us.

We will use our gifts, tithes and offerings to rebuild the body of Christ.

(Thank you for your continued support of the ministry of GUCC. It is enabling us to be a witness of the Good News throughout the world during this time in which God's word is most in need. Tithes and offering can be dropped off at the church on Wednesdays between 9 and 4 at the north door. They may be mailed to GUCC, Box 385, Gaylord, MN 55337 or donated via the webpage listen2god.org. Thanks, again for your generous donations)

Dedication Prayer

Grow these gifts in your love,
Bless our offerings, our hearts and our hopes in your love
To make us worthy of your work for your Kin-dom in heaven,
And among us here, even now.
Fill these gifts and each of us with your goodness. Amen.

Sending Hymn: "God of Grace and God of Glory"

NCH #436

1 God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your power;
crown your ancient church's story,
bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

2 Cure your children's warring madness;
bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.

3 Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of your salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.

Benediction

Go forth in Wisdom, in hope, in courage

With hearts open to recognize the signs of the reign of God in our midst,
and courage to create more space for grace in our lives and our world.



Postlude

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Remember in Prayer: Bill Cowell, Eunice Gasow, and Aggie Schue. We pray for others who have been ill or are home bound and those at Oak Terrace and Golden Hearts. We pray for health and healing for all people everywhere. We pray with anticipation for the day we can all gather again with our church family. Pray for the ministries of our church. Pray for those serving in the military and for our local and national leaders during these trying times.

If you have a prayer request or would like to receive a call from Pastor Dennis call his office at 237-2595 (leave a private voice mail) or his cell 763-258-3371.

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Pastor Dennis is usually in the office each Wednesday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

He can be reached at the office, 237-2595 (private voice mail) or his cell: 763-258-3371.

E-mail: dmckee545@gmail.com

Website at listen2god.org

Giving our Gifts to God:

**Tithes and Offerings can be sent to Gaylord United Church of Christ
P.O. Box 385 Gaylord, MN 55334 or**

**Dropped by the church office on Wednesday between 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
*Thank you for your continued support for the ministries of this church.***

- ❖ You can view our Church Service online by Friday or Saturday each week. Click on the link to view Service at: <https://listen2god.org/weekly-message/>
- ❖ Weekly devotional available each Tuesday at: www.listen2God.org/worship/devotionals
- ❖ UCC Church Directories are available for pickup inside the north door each Wednesday.
- ❖ Our From the Heart Offering for July is for Worldwide Mobility P.E.T Project. Your donation can be mailed in or dropped off at church on Wednesdays. *Thank you.*

