

“Secrets of the Kingdom”

“The Leaven”

Matthew 13:33

Big Idea – God wants me to be a contagious Christian.

Suppose everyone was a soul winner like you, read the Bible like you, prayed like you, attended church like you, what would the world be like?

Suppose every person in the world was the same type person you are. Husband or wife, son or daughter, father or mother, church member, citizen, employer or employee. Suppose every person was a soul winner like you. Read the Bible like you, prayed like you, attended church like you, had an attitude like you?

Would you want your companion, children, fellow coworkers, schoolmates, neighbors to be changed into the same type of Christian that you are? Why or why not?

Your life should be contagious to those around you. If you are a Christian you will “Christianize” those around you.

Godly influence is not something that you should have to be always concerned about. A Christian is a “Christianizer”; Christ- like in thought, in word, and in deed.

The influence part will take care of itself. Are you an example of a Christian that God would have you be? Look at this short story Jesus told about this...

Matthew 13:33 Then Jesus told another story: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and hid in a large tub of flour until it made all the dough rise.” 34 Jesus used stories to tell all these things to the people; he always used stories to teach them.

1. The back story on leaven

What was "leaven"? A small portion of fermented dough used to ferment other dough, (Holman Bible Dictionary).

Once inserted into a batch, it continues its process of fermentation until the whole batch has risen (Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary)

Today, we use the term "yeast" instead of "leaven".

2. Symbolic uses of leaven

In the Bible in the New Testament, "leaven" is often symbolic of corrupting influences or evil.

Jesus warned of "the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees", He meant their teaching and hypocrisy - cf. Mt 16:5-12; Lk 12:1

Paul wrote of how "a little leaven leavens the whole lump", when he spoke of the need to withdraw from the impenitent brother - 1 Cor. 5:1-13.

Therefore, some conclude that "leaven" in the parable represents something evil, but there is no reason why its use somewhere else must be the same here.

3. The meaning of the parable

The kingdom's growth will be pervasive...It will permeate, spread or flow throughout the world.

the loaf represents the world, and the leaven is the kingdom, so the reign of heaven (God) will gradually make its influence felt in the world.

This "reign of heaven" could be manifested:

In the form of the gospel (the "word" of the kingdom, Mt 13:19), as it was proclaimed to all creation - cf. Mk 16:15-16

In the form of the church, which spreads as people accept the gospel.

In the influence of the Word and the church, as their influence is felt in society.

This also illustrates the "invisible" growth of the kingdom

As leaven does its work with less than noticeable effect, so the spreading influence of the kingdom is often unnoticeable, but real nonetheless!

The kingdom's influence will be complete...

Speaking of the loaf, Jesus said "till it was all leavened"

No part of the "loaf" (world) will be untouched by the influence of the kingdom. Paul said the Gospel spread like this:

Romans 10:18 But I ask: Didn't people hear the Good News? Yes, they heard—as the Scripture says: "Their message went out through all the world; their words go everywhere on earth."

Romans 16:25 Glory to God who can make you strong in faith by the Good News that I tell people and by the message about Jesus Christ. The message about Christ is the secret that was hidden for long ages past but is now made known. 26 It has been made clear through the writings of the prophets. And by the command of the eternal God it is made known to all nations that they might believe and obey.

Colossians 1:6 This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God's wonderful grace.

23 But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News. The Good News has been preached all over the world, and I, Paul, have been appointed as God's servant to proclaim it.

4. The meaning for me today:

Leaven works from the inside out

God works from the inside out. Conversion and reformation must spring from the heart, from within. Paul in writing to the Church at Colosse is saying God works within to change the outside.

Colossians 3:1-4 -3 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Christ changes our ambitions to the heavenly—we seek those heavenly things by recognizing Jesus, who is in Heaven as our head and as members of his body we do his will in our life. He changes our mind from earthly to heavenly. To set our affection is to direct our thoughts and desires toward things in Heaven, cultivate an earnest desire for them, following the paths that lead to them. By faith we are crucified to ourselves, we have died to our own life and now we appropriate the life of Jesus into ours.

Leaven must make contact—it influences and is not influenced.

In the parable the meal would have remained unleavened unless the leaven had been placed therein, so many will remain non-Christians unless we make contact with them.

Church buildings don't fill up on their own. Do you know of someone you can invite to church, or share the Gospel with?

“Silent Violins”

Luigi Tarisio was found dead one morning with scarce a comfort in his home, but with 246 exquisite violins, which he had been collecting all his life, crammed into an attic, the best in the bottom drawer of an old rickety bureau.

In his very devotion to the violin, he had robbed the world of all that music all the time he treasured them; others before him had done the same, so that when the greatest of his collection, a Stradivarius, was first played it had had 147 speechless years.

Yet, how many of Christ's people are like old Tarisio? In our very love of the church we fail to give the glad tidings to the world; in our zeal for the truth we forget to publish it. When will we all learn that the Good News needs not just to be cherished, but needs to be told? All people need to hear it.

We don't have to have a special day at Church to invite someone. If we are growing spiritually each one of us will see to it that we grow numerically because we will freely share our hope (the Gospel) with others.

Paul says *“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. “Romans 1:16*

Leaven works persistently.

It's amazing how much good can be done by just one person, or just a few working together. Lot could have saved a city and Jonah did. Starting with 12 men Christ changed the course of the world. We should never say I can't do that, I don't mean much.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me.” Philippians 4:13

Leaven changes the substance that it comes in contact with.

In the home Christians change strife to peace, selfishness to selflessness, harshness to kindness, hate to love. In the church we should change, indifference to zeal, pessimism to faith, turmoil to peace, defeat to victory.

Christians on the job or in school or wherever they are, should fight against evil by changing dishonesty into integrity, impure speech into wholesome language, immorality to purity. The world needs the preserving influence of Christians being the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We are not to conform, we are to transform.

We are to overcome the world, not to be overcome by the world. Leaven influences and is not influenced.

1 John 5:3-53 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Leaven works by contagion until the whole is leavened.

God wants the whole man—the inner man first to control the outer man. Matthew 6:24. .no man can serve two masters. Through us God wants to reach others. Jesus uses leaven in this parable as a symbol of the wholesome influence Christians should have, we are to influence the world to become Christ-like.

Teddy Stoddard certainly qualified as “one of the least” interested in school. He was musty, his clothing wrinkled, hair never combed, and whenever Miss Thompson, his fifth grade teacher, spoke to him, he always answered in monosyllables. He was unattractive, distant, and just plain hard to like.

His teacher said she loved all her class the same, but deep down inside she wasn't being completely honest with herself. Whenever she corrected Teddy's papers, she got a certain pleasure out of putting big red “X's” next to his wrong answers, and when she put an “F” on the top of his test papers, she always did it with a flair.

She should have known better, she knew more about Teddy than she wanted to admit. His records read:

1st Grade: Teddy shows promise with his work, has poor home environment.

2nd Grade: Teddy could do better. His mother seriously ill. He receives little help from home.

3rd Grade: Teddy is a good boy. He is a slow learner, his mother died last year.

4th Grade: Teddy is very slow, but well-behaved. His father shows no interest in him.

Christmas came, and Miss Thompson's class brought her presents. They piled their gifts on her desk and crowded around to watch her open them. Among them was one from Teddy. His gift was wrapped in plain brown paper, and held together with scotch tape. On the paper he had written these simple words, “For Miss Thompson, From Teddy.” When she opened his present out fell a gaudy rhinestone bracelet, with some of the stones missing, and a used bottle of cheap perfume.

The other boys and girls began to giggle and smirk over Teddy's gifts, but Miss Thompson at least had the good sense to silence them by trying on the bracelet, and spraying some of the perfume on her wrist. Stretching out her hand toward the children she asked, "Doesn't it smell lovely?" Taking their cue from the teacher, the children agreed with "oo's" and "ah's".

At the end of the school day, Teddy lingered behind after the other children had left. He slowly approached her desk and said, "Miss Thompson, my mother's bracelet looks real pretty on you.

And you smell just like my mother, the perfume was hers too. Whenever I miss her, I smell her perfume and it reminds me of her! I'm glad you liked my presents."

When Teddy left, Miss Thompson got down on her knees and wept as she asked God to forgive her.

The next day the children were greeted by a new teacher. Miss Thompson had become a different person. She no longer was just a teacher; she had become an agent of God's love. She was committed to loving her class, and doing things for them that would live on after her. She helped all the children, especially the slow ones, and especially Teddy. By the end of the school year Teddy showed dramatic improvement. He had caught up with most of the class, and was even ahead of some.

She didn't hear from Teddy for a long time. Then one day, years later, she received a graduation announcement with an enclosed note.

Dear Miss Thompson:

I want you to be the first to know that I will be graduating second in my high school class. Thank you for believing in me when no one else did.

Love, Teddy Stoddard

Four years later, another graduation announcement.

Dear Miss Thompson:

I've just been informed that I will be graduating first in my college class. The work was challenging, but I enjoyed it. Thank you for all that you have done for me.

Love, Teddy Stoddard

Finally she received the most exciting graduation announcement of them all.

Dear Miss Thompson:

As of today, I am Theodore Stoddard, M.D. How about that? I wanted you to be the first to know. I'm getting married next month, the 27th to be exact. I want you to come and sit where my mother would sit if she was alive. You are the only family I have now; Dad died last year.

Love, Teddy Stoddard.

Miss Thompson went to that wedding and sat where Teddy's mother would have sat. She deserved to sit there, she had done something for Teddy that he would never forget.

The only way for the leaven of the Gospel to reach and influence the whole world is for every Christian to make sure they have within themselves the qualities of leaven that Jesus requires.

1. Leaven works inwardly-God works from the inside out.
2. Leaven must make contact .It influences and is not influenced.
3. Leaven works persistently.
4. Leaven must change the substance that it comes in contact with.
5. Leaven works by contagion until the whole is leavened.

Suppose everyone was a soul winner like you, read the Bible like you, prayed like you, attended church like you, what would the world be like?