

KINGDOM MYSTERIES: ITS COMING AND WORKING

Text: Luke 8:9-10

The two verses we just read come immediately after Jesus told his first parable recorded in scripture. They had never heard him speak to the people in this manner before and they were puzzled by it. A parable is both simple and complex, it's meant to convey truth and conceal it. At this point in the Lord's ministry there were many in the crowd who didn't believe he was their Messiah as well as some that did. The more truth you hear, the more you are responsible for, so he was actually having mercy on many by concealing the truth in parables. But the parables were also designed to reveal truth to people who genuinely wanted it. That's why Jesus said, "he who hath ears to hear, let him hear".

The word "parable" comes from a Greek word that literally translates to "placing side-by-side". Jesus told simple stories that was common to these people's everyday life and placed the truths of the kingdom of God beside them. That's why he would say "the kingdom of God is like" because he was comparing it to something they could grasp if they wanted to. Only God could speak in such a way as to conceal truth from unbelievers while conveying truth to disciples. When the disciples asked him why he was speaking to the crowd in parables he responded with "unto you it is given to know the MYSTERIES of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand". The parables are about kingdom mysteries. A mystery in scripture doesn't carry the idea that it's hard to understand, but that it was hidden by God until now.

Today I want to bring you a message about the mystery of how God's kingdom comes and works in our world. Let's read **Luke 13:19-21** It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it. And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. The meaning of these two parables is closely related, that's why they are told together but to understand the mystery part of this you must understand Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2.

God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream about a great statue. The head was gold, the chest and arms were silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs were iron, and the feet and toes were part iron and part clay. The image was a representation of the Gentile empires that would dominate the Mideast and control Israel's land. But Nebuchadnezzar dreamed

about a stone that was cut out of a mountain without hands that came rolling down and struck the image at the feet causing the whole image to be destroyed. Then that stone became a great mountain which filled the whole earth and the interpretation of that is:

Daniel 2:44-45 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream *is* certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. In the Old Testament perspective, the coming of God's kingdom is viewed as a single great event: a mighty manifestation of God's power which would sweep away the wicked kingdoms of human government and would fill the earth with righteousness. But the coming of God's kingdom is in two phases: the spiritual aspect first (that was a mystery) and the physical coming of it later to overthrow the Antichrist's kingdom. Both comings of Jesus Christ follow this same pattern: when he was born, it was only revealed to a few who he was. But when he was 30 years old, he was revealed to all Israel then. When he appears in the clouds to rapture his church and raise the saints, only believers will experience that and know it. But at the close of the tribulation, heaven will be opened and he will come in glory with his saints and the whole world will know it then.

Getting back to the mystery revealed in these two parables (the mustard seed and leaven). Jesus was revealing that the kingdom of God had indeed come but not in the manner you expected it to. The grain of mustard seed was the smallest analogy Jesus could make. A mustard seed is so small that it takes between 23-24,000 of them to make an ounce. But when it's planted it grows into a large shrub or in some cases trees. He said that the kingdom of God was like a single mustard seed planted in a man's garden that grew into a great tree. The meaning of this parable is that the kingdom has come to earth in a very small and insignificant way, not in a grand and glorious fashion. But even though it has come in a very small way, it will grow into something very great and be a blessing to the earth. The kingdom of God is here but it's not attacking human kingdoms, it's attacking Satan's kingdom. It doesn't make external and political changes in the order of things; it makes changes in the spiritual order and in the lives of men and women.

The world will yet behold the coming of God's kingdom with power. But the mystery, the new revelation, is that this very kingdom of God has now come to work among men in an utterly unexpected way. Jesus is the singular mustard seed that was cast into the earth and from his coming the kingdom of God has been growing for 2,000 years and there's not a nation on earth where the gospel has not been. John said in the Revelation that he beheld a great number in heaven that contained all kinds of races, cultures, peoples and languages

of redeemed people that no man could number. That is the picture of the great tree that grew from a singular seed.

Now let's talk about the leaven that was hidden in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. This parable trips up a lot of people because leaven is used mostly in scripture as a type of sin. The common interpretation of this parable is that the leaven represents sin and false doctrines that will be introduced in the church that will lead to its apostasy at the end of the dispensation. The only problem with that view is what Jesus said right at the start, "the kingdom of God is like" not the kingdom of darkness. Jesus used leaven in the parable not for what it is a type of, but for what it does! When a small amount of leaven was introduced and hidden in a bowl full of dough, it has living microorganisms that begin to work through and influence the entire measure of meal causing it to rise and be softened. The mustard seed parable had to do with the external growth of the kingdom of God, the leaven has to do with its internal influence. Jesus was hidden in a small Galilean city called Nazareth in the nation of Israel. He began his public ministry at 30 years old and chose twelve to be with him. He later sent them out to preach the kingdom all over the nation. He chose 70 more and sent them out. All this began with one man. After Jesus ascended back to heaven, Peter preached in Acts 2 and three thousand were saved. He preached again in Acts 3 and five thousand were saved. **Acts 6:7** And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. *Jesus was just one man, but his influence was felt over a nation throughout the world these last two millennia.*

How does this apply to us today?

The kingdom of God still comes to hearts, homes, and communities the same way today that it did then. God plants small and insignificant people in places where the kingdom of God doesn't have much or any influence. His power works through them until there's internal influence and external growth. This mystery working of the kingdom of God is how the Lord attacks Satan's kingdom.

What are the keys to being used for God's kingdom?

- **You've got to be small** - **1 Peter 5:6** Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: *"You can never be too small for God to use you, but you can quickly become too big"* – Lester Roloff
- **You must let Him place you** – The mustard seed didn't plant itself, the Gardner planted it where he wanted it. The leaven didn't hide itself; the woman hid it. You must let God place you where He wants to use you.
- **You must let His power work through you** – Its what's inside that makes impact!