

**“Tell Me the Stories of Jesus:
Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort”
“Hidden in Plain Sight”**

We are in our summer sermon series “Tell Me the Stories of Jesus: Parables that Challenge, Convict and Comfort.” Using Amy-Jill Levine’s book *Short Stories by Jesus* as a springboard, this series will help us look at the stories Jesus told in a new ways. Jesus’ listeners may and probably did hear these stories very differently than we do in the twenty-first century. We have listened to parables about farming and gardening and parables about merchants and cities. Today’s parable is about a woman doing something pretty ordinary in Jesus’ time, but on an extraordinary scale. She was ready to make more bread than one person or household can eat! This hidden yeast grew to feed and take care of a community. Jesus told parables in one sense to hide things from people who did not or chose not to understand. For those who are willing to listen and learn, the yeast of the kingdom is growing and changing lives and communities. *Is the yeast of the kingdom of heaven growing in your life and spirit? How is it with your soul?* --
-Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like you to remember from today’s sermon: **“Hidden in Plain Sight”**

Prayer for the Week

Bakerwoman God, I am your living Bread. Strong, brown, Bakerwoman God. I am your low, soft, and being-shaped loaf. I am your rising bread, well-kneaded by some divine and knotty pair of knuckles, by your warm earth-hands. I am bread well-kneaded. Put me in fire, Bakerwoman God, put me in your own bright fire. I am warm, warm as you from fire. I am white and gold, soft and hard, brown and round. I am so warm from fire. Break me, Bakerwoman God! I am broken under your caring Word. Bakerwoman God, Remake me. Amen (prayer by Alla Bozarth)

Study Guide

Monday, 7/24/17 Romans 8: 18-25

In the eighth chapter of Romans, Paul is focusing on freedom. The seventh chapter pours out Paul's frustration, and perhaps ours as well, at our inability quite often, to do what we know is right, good and just. The eighth chapter is Paul's deep conviction that we can be all we are created to be through the grace we have received in Christ. We are free through that grace, that love and that faith. In fact, we have the Spirit supporting us and caring for us as we strive (in the terms of Wesley) toward perfection. Perfection is not about being error free, but about being motivated by love and grace. In this particular reading, Paul puts our struggle to live motivated by love and grace in context of all creation. Human beings are not the only ones who are looking for the harmony and peace offered by God. Creation itself, the whole wide world is seeking the very presence and grace of God. All creation, all of humanity is seeking the hope, love and grace of God. *Where do you see the whole of creation, the world itself groaning and waiting on God's redemption? Where do you see the signs of hope and the signs of God's action in the world?*

Tuesday, 7/25/17 Matthew 13: 33

In the gospel of John, Jesus speaks of being the bread of life. In Matthew, Jesus uses the image of yeast and flour and a woman who makes enough dough that it would feed an amazing amount of people. Three measures of flour equals 40 to 50 pounds. Can you imagine that much flour and how hard a woman would have to work to "hide" the yeast in a way that would create bread? The kingdom of heaven is extravagant, and what is hidden will come to light in the end and a feast will be held with that much bread. No one family could eat that much before it would spoil. *How is the kingdom of heaven being hidden in your life and how is it growing and creating love and grace in the world?*

Wednesday, 7/26/17 Matthew 13: 34

Jesus uses so many images and short stories to share about the kingdom of heaven. A sower goes out to sow some seed, wheat and weeds, a merchant, treasure and a woman with yeast, flour and bread. Both rural and urban images and male and female images are what make the kingdom of heaven. Jesus spoke using parables and in Matthew 13:13, the crowds cannot yet hear or know what Jesus is talking about. Like the yeast, it is hidden in the flour, but sooner or later, the yeast will leaven the whole loaf or loaves. The time is coming when it will change people and create a kingdom of love and grace. *Are you receiving the word of God's kingdom? Is it being made real in your life and spirit?*

Thursday, 7/27/17 Romans 8: 18-21

The whole creation "groans" in labor pains for what will be revealed. These words are so powerful and speak to the longing I believe every human being has. Paul contrasts his suffering to the promise of the kingdom of heaven. That creation and all of God's children will be brought into freedom, into love and grace. Jesus uses the imagery of the kingdom of heaven as an image of what God is doing and will do. All creation and all God's children are eagerly waiting for that time and place when there is no war or hatred or illness. This kingdom will be one of joy, abundance and peace. *How do you experience this longing for the kingdom of Heaven? How do you live in the tension of the kingdom being both present and not yet here?*

Friday, 07/28/17 Romans 8: 22-25

We are saved in hope, Paul writes. Using the image of a woman in labor (all creation is groaning and suffering labor pains) waiting to be set free and for adoption as children of God. Now earlier, Paul notes we are already beloved children, but still, we don't see the end result of the kingdom of heaven, at least not yet. Jesus notes that it is like yeast hidden in flour, it is present and growing and changing the whole body. So as believers, we wait, hope and see glimpses of the promise of God's reign of justice, righteousness and peace. *How are you living out your faith in hope as you wait for the kingdom of God that is not yet here?*