*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 3 - 8

“The Mustard Seed and the Yeast”

**Monday, October 3 Matthew 13:24-30**

*“Parable of the Wheat and Weeds”*

 Once again, Jesus compares the activity of the kingdom of heaven with everyday experiences. Here, a man sows good seed, but an enemy of the farmer attempts to disrupt the growth of good wheat by sowing among it *zizanion,* a kind of weedy rye grass with poisonous seeds, which in early stages of growth looks like wheat but can be distinguished easily at harvest time. When the servants report the growth of weeds, the farmer immediately recognizes that this was the work of his enemy. But the destruction of the weeds must wait until the time of the harvest. Were they to attempt to uproot the weeds, they would endanger the wheat because the weeds grow so closely intertwined with the wheat that both would come up.

 The kingdom of heaven has indeed come into this world, but its advance does not mean that the enemy will be completely vanquished during this age. That awaits the final judgment, which is surprisingly delayed. Having told this story to the crowd, Jesus will later explain the meaning of the parable to his disciples at their request (see 13:36-43).

*While Satan is allowed to sow his evil seed, Lord, his end is assured. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 4 Matthew 13:31-35**

*“Parables of the Mustard Seed and of the Yeast”*

 The proverbial smallness of the mustard seed as a metaphor that describes the kingdom of heaven would have shocked the crowd. Israel always believed that when God’s kingdom was established on the earth, it would be great; they were not prepared for an insignificant beginning. But through this parable Jesus declares that the kingdom is always present, although only as a tiny manifestation. What may not look like much to the world will in fact fulfill all God’s promises.

 With another surprising twist to what Israel had expected with the arrival of the kingdom, Jesus reverses the common connotation associated with yeast as representing sin for the purpose of once again prompting the crowd to try to understand the presence of the kingdom. Yeast is any number of different forms of fungi that multiply rapidly because of fermentation. Jesus uses yeast to symbolize the positive, hidden permeation of the kingdom of heaven in this world. As he teaches elsewhere, its work begins with the inner transformation of the human heart.

*You are at work in the world, Lord, accomplishing your purposes. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 5 Matthew 13:36-43**

*“Please explain to us the story of the weeds in the field”*

 The *sower* is Jesus, and by extension any of Jesus’ disciples who proclaim the Word of God. The *field* is the world, indicating that the kingdom will expand beyond Israel. The *good seed* are those who have been receptive to the preaching of the message of the kingdom, and have become Jesus’ disciples. The *weeds* are those who reject the gospel message. The *enemy* is the devil. The *harvest* is the end of the age, a reference to the judgment that will accompany the coming of the Son of Man. The *harvesters* are Jesus’ angels who will accompany him.

 With the primary players of the parable identified, Jesus gives additional explanation of the events that will transpire at his return. As he completes his kingdom on the earth, Jesus will send his angels to remove all sin and sinners from this world. At that time “the righteous” – Jesus’ disciples, who have experienced inner transformation and who are the wheat that has grown up throughout this age – will experience the full manifestation of the kingdom’s glory and will shine with unhindered brilliance.

*The time is coming, Lord, when you will visibly rule over all the earth. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONS*

October 3 - 8

“The Mustard Seed and the Yeast”

**Thursday, October 6 Matthew 13:44-46**

*“Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl”*

 Jesus for the first time speaks in parables to his disciples. They are still away from the crowds in the house, so the intent of the parables is not to conceal but to reveal further secrets about the kingdom. The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl make a similar point. In contrast to the parable of the wheat and weeds, which looks forward to the second coming of Christ and the completion of the kingdom, these two parables emphasize the present value of the partially inaugurated kingdom.

 In the parable of the hidden treasure, the kingdom of heaven is likened to a treasure that lies unnoticed because of its hidden nature. It is of supreme worth, of far greater value than any price one might pay to acquire it. No sacrifice is too great to live in God’s will and experience a discipleship relationship with Jesus as Master. The parable of the pearl makes a similar point. The secret to living in God’s kingdom in the here-and-now is to recognize its supreme value for today, and not just its future heavenly guarantee.

*I know the value of your kingdom, Lord; may it be realized in me today. Amen.*

**Friday, October 7 Matthew 13:47-52**

*“Parable of the Fishing Net”*

 Jesus concludes with a brief parable about a fishing net and immediately follows it with an explanation of its meaning. The parable focuses on the eternal consequences of the choice one makes with regard to the kingdom of God. There will be an end-of-the-age judgment when the good/righteous (those who have responded to the gospel and have entered the kingdom of heaven) will be separated from the bad/wicked (those who have denied the message of the gospel).

 After giving the final parable of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to the disciples in the house, Jesus asks them, “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus has in mind their understanding of both explained and unexplained parables. They did not have full understanding earlier when they requested explanation from Jesus, but now their narrative reply is a swift and confident: “Yes.” Jesus responds to their affirmative reply with a teaching about their future role: they have received “treasure”; now they are to share it with others.

*You give understanding, Lord, through your teaching and by your Spirit. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 8 Matthew 13:53-58**

*“Jesus rejected in his hometown”*

 Jesus returns to his hometown, Nazareth, the village of his family and the place where he spent his childhood. This return is somewhat surprising because, prior to the beginning of his teaching in parables, Jesus’ mother and brothers attempted to make contact with him, and Jesus seemingly rebuffed their visit (12:46-50). Perhaps as he returns to Nazareth, he is acceding to the request from his mother and brothers to return home.

 As Jesus begins to teach in the synagogue the people of his hometown are amazed, and they wonder from whence came his wisdom and power to do miracles. But, instead of believing that he is operating with God’s authority, they decide he is really no different from any of them for his human roots are the same as theirs. Thus, he is a hometown son who is trying to be more than he possibly can claim, and they take offense at him. Because of the hardness of their hearts, they are not open to Jesus’ ministry. Apparently, hard-heartedness and rejection prevent the ministry of the Spirit’s healing, even as it prevents the forgiveness of sin (12:31-32).

*I honor you, Lord, as prophet, priest, and king in my life. Amen.*