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EXTRAVAGANT BEYOND ALL MEASURE

By Julie Mussché

An Excerpt From Today's Gospel Reading

Jesus proposed another parable to the crowds, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, "First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"

He proposed another parable to them. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all

the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.'"

He spoke to them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened..."

Then, dismissing the crowds, he went into the house. His disciples approached him and said, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field."

He said in reply, "He who sows good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seed the children of the kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age..."

MATTHEW 13:24-33; 36-40

Reflection

In reflecting on today's Gospel reading, I must imagine at some point the disciples were scratching their heads, wondering what Jesus was talking about. We know this because the Scripture passage elaborates this bit of information and expands on the intended meaning of the wheat and weeds story at the disciples' request. No doubt, their heads were spinning.

Now, the meaning of the other two parables seems clearer, not so mysterious in their symbolism or message. At the same time, they also invite reflection. My interpretation, "good things come in small packages." (Aesop) The Kingdom of God is analogous to a small mustard seed that grows large enough to offer comfort and shelter for the birds of the field. God's Kingdom, humble in origin, extends sanctuary for the spirit, aegis along life's journey. It buttresses community through the deep roots of faith, hope, and love.

Likewise, the action of a small amount of yeast mixed with simple flour and water becomes the nourishment of many. There is inscrutability in the chemical reactions that influence the leavening of bread. Have you ever watched bread rise? It is a wondrous, albeit ponderous thing. There is no rushing the spectacle and, in this context, there's wonder in God's Kingdom, and there is certainly no getting ahead of Grace. It is active and expansive, feeding the soul, giving life to and unifying community, an extravagance beyond all measure.



Wild mustard in Newport Back Bay, CA
Photo by Julie Mussch é

For Pondering

- How does Jesus using parables open up the Word for you?
 - When have you incorporated parables to convey something complex or intangible?
 - How has your spiritual and life journey been enlivened by the parabolic moments along the way?
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For Prayer

*“Teach me your way, Lord,
that I may rely on your faithfulness;
give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear your name.*

*I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify your name forever.
For great is your love toward me...”*

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