

The 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. The scripture text is taken from Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

When we are in the middle of some struggle, it is easy to think that all there are, are problems, problems, problems and more problems.

When we face the evil in the world, or face some tragedy, it is so easy to focus on that, and only that, to see what is wrong in the world.

It is easy to fall into despair and to believe that the world around us is so messed up, that there is no hope for us at all, none.

Dr. Larry Crabb, a Christian psychologist, wrote in "Decision Magazine", he writes: "I could, wish with all of my heart that it could be done differently. But when it comes to suffering, which we don't orchestrate, but which God providentially allows, it really is a profound opportunity to believe that God is doing what is central to His heart."

He goes on to say: "One thing, I think we need to recognize is that God is not committed to giving me a comfortable life. If He were, He could be doing a better job of it! He has the resources, and I have a few suggestions, which He doesn't seem terribly open to.

So I presume, He has a higher goal. Either He is not very good, or I have to redefine what His goodness means. And obviously it is the latter.

As Christians, we believe that God is up to something, something wonderful, even when we don't see it, even when we don't always like it.

Even when it seems like the world is going to hell in a hand-basket. God is on the throne, God is in control and God is doing something. He knows what He is doing, even when what He is doing, seems to us, like it is insignificant and not always impressive.

Someone once wrote: "If we are confused, that is what we are supposed to be. The confusion is temporary. We shall see. The lesson, the purpose, shall reveal itself in time, its own time. It will make perfect sense, later."

In the end, this is where the world is headed, and it is in God's direction, happening in God's way.

It is, where God intersects the world and finite is touched by the infinite. The yeast is permeating the dough.

This is what God is doing in secret, hidden ways that the world does not see or appreciate. But God is taking the world somewhere.

It doesn't seem like much is happening sometimes, but it is not about appearances, it is about the unseen power of a God, who will never give up on redeeming the world.

The yeast is unseen, but it powerfully effects every part of the dough. The mustard seed is not see as it germinates underground and puts down its toots, but in the end, it is large enough for the birds to perch in.

The treasure is hidden in the field and must be found. The oyster must be opened, or the markets searched, to find that pearl of great price. What appears to be, is not always what is.

One Biblical commentator explains: "Jewish writers used yeast in a variety of symbolic ways, but Jesus stresses here the factor all had in common: its ultimate pervasive character. One leavens unleavened meal until the finish product is thoroughly leavened.

The amount of flour involved here, represents roughly fifty pounds, providing enough bread for over 100 people.

A housewife would not normally fix so much meal and could not knead more than this; the unnatural magnitude of the illustration probably suggests that the kingdom far exceeds daily examples to which it may be compared: That she 'hid' the yeast in the dough also exceeds the comparison and reinforces the image of the hiddenness of the kingdom in this age."

In other words, God's plan is much larger and much more different than we think. What God is doing, is not always visible. God starts with two very imperfect people. Adam and Eve. They fail.

Then God gives Noah a role in His plan to save the world. The ark lands on a mountain, Noah sends the animals out, and then Noah gets drunk off of his keaster, as he thinks his mission is accomplished.

Noah lies naked in his tent, a sign of his true condition before God. So God begins again with another imperfect man, whose name was Abraham.

Abraham made some very foolish decisions that would have derailed God's efforts to redeem the human race. However God is sovereign and will accomplish His purposes, regardless of Abraham's failures.

Jesus left His mission in the hands of his disciples, very imperfect men, who for the most seemed to be clueless for most of the time, while they were with Jesus.

Now let's jump ahead two-thousand years later, God has left His mission in our hands. Our imperfect, clueless, failing hands.

It is a miracle, that God's plan marches on, and most people do not even see it, because it is hidden from those who will not see.

But our God is sovereign, who passionately loves us, and the world, is at work in the world through us. (Difficult to believe isn't it?)

God does this in ways that we cannot always see, or even imagine. He is with us and for us. And this wonderful and faithful God is powerfully at work in the world, and fully determined to bring the world to His designed end.

All of the difficulties of life, all the opposition of an unbelieving world, all of the evil that has been perpetrated, put together, cannot squelch a single part of the plan of God.

And, the difficulties we face, serve a purpose. The scripture says (this is in the Book of I Peter, chapter 1, verse 6): "In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, being more precious than gold that, though

perishable, is tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (vs 6-8)

What an amazing thought, to realize that even the troubles of this world are used by God to accomplish His purposes. God does not cause them, but He does use them, God uses them in His plan to purify us and bring His blessing on us.

That’s why the Apostle Paul wrote in the Book of I Corinthians chapter 15, verse 57: “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord, your labor is not in vain.” (vs 57-58)

The hidden Kingdom of God is what brings hope and encouragement for today, and hope for the future.

What would our lives be like, if we lived as though this were true? What would we be like if we lived as though our hope was not in this world; as though our hope was not in our health, our government, our economy, or even our freedom?

What if we did not allow the government to take the place of God in our lives, and look to this godless secular entity for our prosperity, our freedom, and our security?

What if our hope was in something hidden? At least, from those who will not see? What if we hoped in God alone and His sovereign plan to reconcile the world and bring the world to an end, regardless of how things appear.

Again, what appears to be is not always what is. We see the dough, but not the yeast which is at work in it.

The dough is the world, and the yeast is the powerful working of the Holy Spirit of God in the world.

We see the mustard seed, but we cannot imagine the tree it will become. But God uses small seeds to make great trees, little beginnings with great endings.

We see the field, but not the hidden treasure in it. We see the world, but not the treasure of what it means to know God, and to be God’s people in the world, His redemptive agents.

We see the oyster but miss the pearl of Great Price. We see the mundaneness of life and miss the value of what God has hidden with life.

We see what appears to be obvious and miss the wonder. We see what is, and God sees what can be, what one day will be.

We often live as though God does not exist, even those of us who say we believe in him. We stagger under the weight of worry over how things are.

We only see what is before us, and fail to see what is hidden. Jesus said: “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.” (Matthew 11:25)

So what would our lives look like, if we really believed this and lived as though this were true? I believe we would live lives of hope, joy, and expectation.

I believe that we would trust God even more, when things seem to be as bad as they could be. I believe that we would trust that God is at work in our world, even when we see that the world has been turned upside down.

I believe that we would trust in the fact, that God is bigger than any problem and more powerful than any problem you or I could ever have.

Yes, we would praise God no matter how large any world problem that exists and looms over us, that regardless of circumstances, God is quietly working out His sovereign will.

We would want to be a part of what God is doing and join in His redemptive work, by giving ourselves in service to Christ, and to His Church, in any way or capacity we could, being a witness to His grace, that saves You and I, and to live faithful each and everyday.

God is in the business of deliverance, redemption, and renewal. Believe in Him, Trust in Him, live in Him, hope in Him, and be not afraid. Amen.

Let us pray:

Lord God, You make your presence known in the common, ordinary things of life, hidden from our eyes. Help us to see, that even when life seems to be out of control and the world is going crazy, by your Holy Spirit, remind us, that You are in control and that You can and will, work in, and through these things in life. By your Holy Spirit, help us to see, your hand at work in the world and in our very lives. All these things we humbly pray in the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.