

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

October 2, 2016

1. The Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23

The true nature of the kingdom of God begins with relationships of genuine agape love from deep within the heart. The kingdom of God is a matter of the heart as it begins when a man's heart is changed to have agape love. This change comes through genuine repentance that brings about the eternal joy of salvation and a renewal of the right spirit within the heart. The right spirit is the Holy Spirit who drives away all fears and grants the believer love, power and a sound mind. The nature of the kingdom of God is therefore spiritual as it transforms the heart into the image and likeness of God. No wonder when John the Baptist came in the scene, the kingdom message he brought was "repent for the kingdom of God is near". And when Jesus arrived in the scene, He came with the same message but saying, "repent for the kingdom of God is here". Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God. This new movement about the kingdom of God and the prerequisite of entering it through repentance was further propagated by the apostles and is today preached by the ministers of the gospel. Matthew calls this spiritual kingdom the kingdom of heaven in his gospel, whereas Mark and the physician Luke in their gospels call it the kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are one and the same thing. The kingdom of God is where God's will is done; for Jesus taught us in the disciples' prayer, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as is in heaven".

Since the kingdom of God is spiritual, humans could not comprehend its nature when Jesus established it. Therefore Jesus had to use parables to help man understand it. Parables are physical stories that are embedded with spiritual truths or messages. Parables cannot therefore be taken literally or interpreted naturally since they are metaphorical or figurative stories. Today we begin the teaching of Jesus on the true nature of the kingdom of God with the parable of the sower.

Thus our text of the day reads: "That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. 2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear." 18 "Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: 19 When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. 20 The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. 21 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 22 The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. 23 But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown'" (Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23).

We just completed sermons on the early ministry of Jesus that concluded with the opposition and controversy to Jesus' identity and message of the kingdom of God. Those concluding events occurred approximately at the same time as the events described in John 6, when many of the disciples were leaving Jesus because they were disappointed with His claims of Messiahship. They could not understand the true nature of the kingdom of God because they had anticipated more of a political physical kingdom, whereas Jesus' kingdom was a spiritual relationship with God. In our sermon on last Sunday Jesus demonstrated to us that family relations are important but kingdom (or spiritual) relationships take precedence over the physical relationships as the later are temporary while the former are eternal. In the narrative in John 6, Jesus had to ask His closest disciples whether they, too, were about to leave Him. Peter answered on behalf of the disciples that there was nowhere else to go because Jesus alone had the words of eternal life (John 6:68).

Now back to the parable of the sower. This is not a parable about sowing seeds – it is a parable about hearing the message of the kingdom of God. Mark actually begins his version with a call to listen (Mark 4:3 - "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed"). Dr. Luke ends his version with the call to his readers to be careful how they listen to the message of the kingdom (Luke 8:18 – "Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them"). Matthew in his narrative of this parable added the Jewish proverbial saying that whoever has ears should listen well to the kingdom message (Matthew 13:9 – "Whoever has ears, let them hear"). This parable – the simple analogy of a farmer sowing seed in Palestine by the method of broadcasting or scattering – is about how a person hears and understands the message of the kingdom of God.

The point is that in order for the message of the kingdom to germinate and flourish, the ear, heart and mind must be prepared for hearing, receiving and understanding the nature of the kingdom. And honestly, this parable has borne itself out with those who have heard the message of the kingdom (as preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, Apostles and ministers of the gospel – past and currently): some were snatched away, others fell away when discipleship became difficult, some other heard the truth but could not sacrifice the pleasures, worries, cares and riches of their own lives to follow Christ faithfully and fruitfully, while yet others heard and followed and brought others to Christ as they became faithful in obeying the word of God and fruitful in serving Him. Those disciples who had been willing to hear and had prepared their ears, hearts and minds and believed the kingdom message and repented, are able to understand the message to bring forth fruit in their faith and lives according to the abilities, gifts and capacities God has granted them. So they produce fruit, yielding fruit a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown in their lives.

The significant lesson for us today from this parable of the sower and the soils is that we must prepare our ears, heart and minds for the Word of God take root, grow and flourish in our lives. Paul commended some first-century Christians in Thessalonica in the same way, thanking God that they received the Word of God, not as a teaching from humans, but for what it really is – the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

In summary, the message for Jesus' disciples (and for us today) is simply this: Some will never receive the Word, some will begin and fall away, and some will receive the Word and keep on growing producing fruit a hundredfold, sixtyfold and thirtyfold according to their abilities, gifts

and capacities bestowed on them by the Lord. This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "The true Nature of the Kingdom of God" is reflected in the following:

- The parable of the sower.
- And let the church say, "Amen!"

What kind of heart do you have? What fruits are you producing after receiving the Word of God? Do you know Jesus who can transform you to start producing good fruit? If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

October 9, 2016

2. Why Did Jesus Teach in Parables?

Matthew 13:10-17

The kingdom of God is spiritual and as such humans could not comprehend its nature when Jesus established it. The natural man has no knowledge of the kingdom of God and therefore Jesus had to use parables to help man understand it. This is because each time we see or hear spiritual matter our natural being cannot understand it. On last Sunday we said parables are physical stories that are embedded with spiritual truths or messages. Parables cannot therefore be taken literally or interpreted naturally since they are metaphorical or figurative stories. And so parables have to be interpreted in the light of the spiritual in order to have a clear understanding of the spiritual truths or messages embedded in the metaphorical or figurative story. Since inquisitive minds always want to know, today we shall attempt to answer the question: "why did Jesus teach in parables?"

Thus our text of the day reads: "The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" 11 He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand. 14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: "You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. 15 For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’ [Isaiah 6:9-10 (see Septuagint)]. 16 But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. 17 For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it” (Matthew 13:10-17).

Jesus taught in parables because parable teaching was a favored rabbinic style. The Jews were familiar with the parable form of teaching. So when the disciples asked Him, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?” Jesus’ response was, “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them”. Jesus was fully aware that the crowds were willing to hear Him, but they were not really ready and willing to hear or accept His kingdom message. Moreover, His knowledge and understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom was not at par with the crowds – it was far beyond what the crowd could comprehend or imagine. So Jesus explained in a Jewish proverbial statement that the crowds surrounding Him were expecting some teaching, though they were not ready for the deeper matters of the kingdom, or willing to understand the true spiritual nature of the kingdom.

The proverbial statement which was well known in rabbinic Judaism is that those who have will receive more and those who have not will lose even what they had. This proverb implies that if one does not take the opportunities presented, the opportunities will be denied. And since the Jewish leaders refused to believe in Jesus, the implication is that even their opportunities to believe will be denied. Jesus then made reference to Isaiah 6:9-10. This reference must be seen in relation to the calling and commissioning of Isaiah. Isaiah was to preach to the rebellious Israel even though many would not repent and believe His message. You must be sensitive to the poetic presentation of Isaiah 6 to understand the message it conveys. It was impossible for Israel in its unfaithful heart to see and hear God’s message. In such a condition, for Israel or any human being to turn to God for healing is ludicrous.

In contrast to the stubborn Jewish leaders, the disciples believed Jesus message. As such, the secret things of the kingdom made sense to them. This was another reason why Jesus taught in parables. The Jewish leaders who were looking for the wrong kingdom still found some message in Jesus’ teachings in parables, but the disciples who believed the message of the kingdom were in a position to receive and accept the deeper spiritual nature of the kingdom.

To conclude, there are two fundamental principles in interpreting a parable to note: First, determine the context of the parable in the light of its origin in the overall text. How does the parable fit into the full story or narrative that it is intended to enlighten? What was going on historically when the parable was told? Secondly, determine the central truth or lesson the parable is intended to illustrate or teach. While you may apply a parable in a variety of ways, it had only one central lesson or principle when it was originally used. Always endeavor to maintain the interpretation within that principle or lesson bearing in mind that a parable is an earthly story with a central spiritual truth or lesson.

With this perspective, it is not difficult to determine the nature of the parables in Matthew 13, for in each instance Jesus either related the parable to the kingdom or says “the kingdom of heaven is like... (Matthew 13:9, NIV). Therefore these parables are about the kingdom of God. Finally, what is the historical setting for the parables in Matthew 13? It was the time when Jesus was running into increasing opposition from the scribes and the Pharisees. It was also at the time

when many of the disciples were leaving Jesus because they did not understand the nature of His messianic reign or kingdom (which is a spiritual rather than a physical one). This is why He taught them about the kingdom in parables. This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "The true Nature of the Kingdom of God" is reflected in the following:

- The parable of the sower.
- Why Jesus taught in parables.
- And let the church say, "Amen!"

Do you understand the truth(s) in parables? Have you received the message of the kingdom? If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

October 16, 2016

3. The Parable of Wheat and Tares

Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43

Jesus taught in parables because it was the rabbinic style of teaching to captivate the audience and capture their attention. This is because the kingdom of God is spiritual and humans could not comprehend its nature as the natural man has no knowledge of it. Therefore Jesus had to use parables to help man understand it. Parables are physical stories that are embedded with spiritual truths or messages. Parables cannot therefore be taken literally or interpreted naturally since they are metaphorical or figurative stories. Hence a parable has to be interpreted in the light of the spiritual truth it contains within the context of the parable and in the light of its origin in the overall text as well as how it fits into the full story or narrative that it is intended so as to enlighten the central truth or lesson it is intended to illustrate or teach. The parable of the Wheat and Tares is our focus of discussion today.

Thus our text of the day reads: "Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25 But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26 When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. 27 "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' 28 "An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' 29 "No,' he

answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’” 36 Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.” 37 He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 40 As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear” (Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43).

This parable of the wheat and the tares (a problematic weed found growing among crops that resembles the crop), like the parable of the sower, received additional attention and explanation by Jesus (vv. 36-43). This parable is also similar to kingdom parable of the net (Mathew 13:47-52). The parable of the wheat and the tares explains that in the kingdom of God one can expect mixed crop growing together. Good seeds are sown but the enemy comes in and sows bad seeds secretly when everyone is sleeping. The wheat (good seed) is the word of God while the tare (bad seed) is the falsehood that the devil sows subtly without people realizing it. This falsehood is first due to human fallibility and weakness but also because Satan is busy working on human minds. As such Satan succeeds in planting seeds of false teaching or sometimes doubt in human minds consequently leading to the case of a mixed crop in the kingdom of God that it is hard to distinguish the wheat from the tares because they so much look alike. The temptation for the disciples is to intervene and attempt to pluck out or separate what they consider to be the bad seed. Jesus says, no, not so quickly you must refrain from doing so because you are not in a position to determine all the circumstances and you may end up plucking the wheat instead of the tares. This parable emphasizes that the judgment of the crops (a person’s faith) is beyond the disciples and must be left for the reaper or harvester Himself (Jesus).

Jesus actually explained this parable in Matthew 13:36-43 that it will be the Son of Man and His angels who will do the reaping and judging. Even the well-meaning and good-intention disciple can judge another person too soon! Therefore the message in this parable is simply – judging is not the responsibility of the disciple. The role of discipleship is planting not reaping; witnessing not judging. Only Jesus will take care of the reaping or judging and do a far better job than humanly possible. The message of this parable is especially meaningful to the disciples of Jesus who must have been disappointed that many did not believe and receive Jesus and His kingdom message, and that many were leaving Him at that time. Likewise, the message must have been meaningful to Matthew’s disciples who found themselves in a Gentile and hostile world that deserved judgment. Perhaps, this message is just as powerful and more meaningful today in church life, especially when members are prone to quickly judge others and in many cases even write them off.

In conclusion, brothers and sisters do not be too quick in judging or writing off others in the church. We are at different stages of growth. Allow everyone to grow to maturity bearing their own fruit. Then Jesus will determine at the judgment who is who since only He knows the heart of every individual to distinguish the true believers from those who just profess to be believers

but are not. This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "The true Nature of the Kingdom of God" is reflected in the following:

- The parable of the sower.
- Why Jesus taught in parables.
- The parable of the wheat and the tares
- And let the church say, "Amen!"

Do you understand the truth(s) in parables? Have you truly believed and received Jesus and the kingdom message? If not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful and faithful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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Synopses of Sermons Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE 128TH ANNUAL SESSION OF THE EBENEZER DISTRICT MISSIONARY BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION: A UNIFIED BODY IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE SAVIOR

OCTOBER 19, 2016

Complete Unity of the Body

Ephesians 4:1-6

- Let me appreciate Pastor Jacobs, my son in the ministry and pastor of New Popular Spring Baptist church for such a great introduction.
- Moderator Pulliam and the Officers of Ebenezer District Association; Sister Warren – President of the Women auxiliary and her staff; Dignitaries and officials of Camp Hill City, Tallapoosa county, and state of Alabama; fellow Pastors and Ministers of the Gospel and their wives; Officers of our various churches; brothers and sisters in the Lord and friends, we greet you this morning in the precious name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and savior.
- Please allow me to first recognize the presence of God here in our midst today as we welcome the Holy Spirit to minister to us on this day; and secondly my wife, who has stood with me through the thick and the thin these thirty-six years since we have been married; thirdly my children, grandchildren and church family members. Today we have the responsibility of preaching the introductory sermon for our theme for the Association that reads: "A Unified Body In Solidarity With The Savior". {PRAY}
- Please allow me to submit to you upfront that if the Church is to be a unified body it must understand that it is a spiritual organism and therefore it must walk in the spirit and in the newness of life that Jesus gave us when we were born again (had our spiritual birth into the kingdom of Christ).

- Thus our text for this introductory sermon, “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:1-6).
- For a few minutes allow me to speak using as a subject: Complete unity of the Body. The true body of Christ, also known as the Church, has complete unity. Each member is required and urged to be eager to maintain this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. You cannot be part of this Church unless you have been born again of the spirit. The Church is a spiritual body and only those born of the spirit can be part of it. The key question then is: Have you been born again? You are born again when you repent of your sin and accept Jesus as your Lord and savior. It is only then that you are given the right to become a child of God and qualify to be a member of the Church with complete unity since you would have then had the Holy Spirit that creates the bond of peace.
- To maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, certain characteristics are required of those born of the spirit. Paul in our text urges the members of the Church are:
 - First, to walk in a manner worthy of the call to which you called. The question at hand is have you been called or did you just follow somebody? If you were called, you will remember your calling was from darkness into God’s marvelous light. Therefore walk as children of light.
 - Secondly, to walk with all humility and gentleness. This is because the focus is not on any part of the body alone but on the complete body that consist of fellowship with the Father, Son and the Spirit. Otherwise everything becomes politicized and everyone thinks they are somebody. Consequently there would be factions, cliques and favorites. In that case it is not the true Church with complete unity of spirit in the bond of peace.
 - Thirdly to walk with patience, bearing with one another in love. The church is a masterpiece of a relationship founded on agape love. In the true church genuine love is the bond that produces peace because love is of God.
- The church is therefore a spiritual organism with complete unity. The text of the today states in vv.4-6, “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6).
- The one call is the call to respond to and accept Jesus Christ and the kingdom message to repent of sin and have hope with eternal life. Therefore, if you are here and desire to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and personal savior today, we invite you to come now. And if you have already said yes to Jesus and are saved, but you are not living for Him because of the effects of your sinful behaviors, you too we invite you to be reconciled to God today. Perhaps you are new in the area or have been searching for a Church home, where you can continue to experience God’s love, joy of salvation and fellowship with other believers who have put their trust in Jesus Christ, we invite you to consider uniting with any local bodies of Christ represent here in Ebenezer District. I am positive the pastors of these congregations are ready to help you grow in Christ. Remember it is a choice that you must personally make! The word has been preached and the invitation has been given. May God bless you as you come either as a candidate for baptism,

rededication or as one with Christian experience. Why don't you come as the Choir leads us in a song?

- And if you are reading this on the Internet why don't you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write and tell us at pastordatiri@mtraveler.org?

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Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

October 23, 2016

4. The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Matthew 13:31-32

During the course of Jesus teaching His disciples He used the metaphor of the mustard seed twice to illustrate significant lessons on faith (Matthew 17:20) and the parable of the kingdom (Matthew 13:31-32). Jesus, the master teacher, taught in parables because it was the rabbinic style of teaching to captivate the audience and capture their attention but His teachings were uniquely different with authority unlike the scribes. Parables are physical stories that are embedded with spiritual truths or messages. Parables cannot therefore be taken literally or interpreted naturally since they are metaphorical or figurative stories. Hence a parable has to be interpreted in the light of the spiritual truth it contains within its context and in the light of its origin in the overall text as to how it fits into the full story or narrative to enlighten the central truth or lesson it is intended to illustrate or teach. The parable of focus today is the parable of the mustard seed.

Thus our text of the day reads: "He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."(Matthew 13:31-32).

At the time Jesus was teaching in Palestine, the mustard seed was considered the smallest seed. It would be fine to assume that the size of the mustard seed was well known to Jesus' audience. In fact the size and growth of the mustard seed is an excellent metaphor for the humble beginning of the kingdom of God. Requiring faith as a mustard seed to do great things as moving mountains is saying faith is required for great work in the kingdom since it has a humble beginning. At that time the expectation of the Jews was a triumphant arrival of a physical kingdom and immediate expulsion of the Gentile enemy but that is not how the kingdom of God, which is spiritual, was and is going to work out. The Messiah did not come through a princely or royal house but to the house of a lowly carpenter. Truly, the beginnings of the kingdom were in fact small with the calling of one or two disciples at a time, to the selection of the 12 and then to about a congregation of 120 disciples by the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:13-15). Despite the humble or insignificant beginnings, the kingdom slowly grows and matures significantly. The mysterious growth of the kingdom is not the result of human intervention and work but the working of God's grace and power through the Holy Spirit. Recall, the church exploded in growth after the arrival of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost!

The meaning of the parable of the mustard seed to the disciples is simple. The kingdom of God begins small and insignificant but given time it grows into something significant under the control of the Holy Spirit. Therefore be careful not expect too much too soon in the kingdom of God. Otherwise, falsehood and false teachers will be encouraged to infiltrate the kingdom of God

and ruin it. Be aware of some of these mega churches! As such the lesson for the church today is one of encouragement and warning at the same time to give the seed of the kingdom time, give people time to grow according to their giftedness and give God time to work on people's lives through the Holy Spirit.

In the parable of the mustard seed one can also deduce a significant lesson and warning for the church today with regards to the triumphalism or the expectation for the church to burst in and be great by human standards. This is a fallacy that leads many to devise human techniques or gimmicks to grow the church in their own way. Secondly, there is no church that is perfect (recall the parable of the wheat and the tares!). So the church will always be made up of humans who are not yet "there" (perfect). The church like a mustard seed will grow into a shrub (because mustard seed plants are shrubs) until its transformation through the Holy Spirit and the renewing of the mind with the word of God that the church would become a tree and provide shelter for others. Furthermore, we, the true members of the church will experience the work of God in our lives and continue to grow towards maturity, but it is only when we reach the end (the eschatological goal of the Christian age) that we will be fully triumphant. Along the way in this pilgrim's journey we will experience many wonderful victories over Satan and the world, but there remain many battles to be fought and much weakness to be revealed. The weaknesses keep you humble to allow the Holy Spirit to keep working on you a "shrub" to become a "tree" that provides shelter for others. And we know that the final victory has been secured for us already by Jesus' death and resurrection and this will be fully revealed at the end too. Jesus' disciples and the church in those early days of the kingdom needed to hear this message, but more so do we today, 2000 years later.

In conclusion, brothers and sisters do not be too quick in judging or writing off others in the church. We are at different stages of growth. Encourage everyone to grow through the help of the Holy Spirit to maturity. Then the church will cease to be a shrub and become a tree where others can find shelter because of its love one for another. For Jesus humble Himself, experience life in the flesh yet without sin. All the same He was falsely accused and crucified. He died not for his own sin but for ours. He was buried and but rose up early on the third day obtaining for us victory over sin, Satan and death. Therefore, we too must begin by humbling ourselves through repentance to enter the kingdom of God. This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "The true Nature of the Kingdom of God" is reflected in the following:

- The parable of the sower.
- Why Jesus taught in parables.
- The parable of the wheat and the tares
- The parable of the mustard seed.
- And let the church say, "Amen!"

Do you understand the truth(s) in parables? Have you truly believed and received Jesus and the kingdom message? If not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with

wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful and faithful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don't you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama

Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. Keith Torbert & Summarized by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

October 30, 2016

5. The Parable of the Leaven

Matthew 13:33-35

To emphasize the fact that once the kingdom message is received, its effect on the transformation and maturing of the believer is a slow process. To hasten the process could lead to disaster. So Jesus used the parable of the leaven to teach about this process since women were quite familiar with baking bread that required the use of yeast mixed thoroughly in the dough made from flour to produce good bread. Jesus, the master teacher, taught in parables because it was the rabbinic style of teaching to captivate the audience and capture their attention but His teachings were uniquely different with authority unlike the scribes. Parables are physical stories that are embedded with spiritual truths or messages. Parables cannot therefore be taken literally or interpreted naturally since they are metaphorical or figurative stories. Hence a parable has to be interpreted in the light of the spiritual truth it contains within its context and in the light of its origin in the overall text as to how it fits into the full story or narrative to enlighten the central truth or lesson it is intended to illustrate or teach. The parable of focus today is the parable of the leaven.

Thus our text of the day reads: "He told them another parable: "He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds [Or about 27 kilograms] of flour until it worked all through the dough." 34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world" [Psalm 78:2]" (Matthew 13:33-35).

This brief parable, whose images were well known to the disciples and Jesus' audience in Palestine at that time, is a repeat of the message provided by the parable of the mustard seed. Baking bread was an everyday common experience in ancient days, especially among the Jews. It was widely known that leaven spreads throughout the loaf, but the maturing of the leaven and its leavening power take time. If you hurry this process, you end up with a lump of hard bread that is useless because it will be inedible. However, if you give the leaven to work its way throughout the dough, it produces a wonderful and palatable loaf of bread. So it is with the message of the kingdom of God. Please do not expect too much too soon. If you do, it is a process towards disaster. This is because whenever you interfere with the process of "slow leavening" and growth in kingdom matters, it is call that ends up with a catastrophe. Therefore give the power of God to work in people, and do not expect too much too soon, then you will behold the transformation and maturing of the believer in due course.

In conclusion, brothers and sisters do not be too quick in judging or writing off others in the church. We are at different stages of growth. Encourage everyone to grow through the help of the Holy Spirit to maturity. Then the church will cease to be unpalatable and become something to be desired for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. For Jesus humble Himself, experience life in the flesh yet without sin. All the same He was falsely accused and crucified. He died not for his own sin but for ours. He was buried and but rose up early on the third day obtaining for us victory over sin, Satan and death. Therefore, we too must begin by humbling ourselves through repentance to enter the kingdom of God. This is the word of God for the people of God, and let God's people say amen.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude remember that "The true Nature of the Kingdom of God" is reflected in the following:

- **The parable of the sower.**
- **Why Jesus taught in parables.**
- **The parable of the wheat and the tares**
- **The parable of the mustard seed.**
- **The parable of the leaven**
- **And let the church say, "Amen!"**

Do you understand the truth(s) in parables? Have you truly believed and received Jesus and the kingdom message? If not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful and faithful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you bear good fruit. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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