**Research: Parable of the Woman with Three Measures of Meal**

**Matt. 13:33-35**

33 The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.

“Leaven is applied to that substance which is small in quantity, yet thoroughly pervades a thing by its influence. The NT uses it in both a positive (Matt. 13:33) or negative sense (e.g., ‘a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump’)” (Thayer 273).

The Greek word for “hid” is *egkrypto* and means “to conceal in something; to mingle one thing with another” (Thayer 1470).

“Kingdom of heaven” in Greek is *basileia* and it means “royal power, kingship, dominion, rule; the right or authority to rule over a kingdom” (Thayer 932).

“The general thrust of this parable is the same as that of the mustard seed. The kingdom produces ultimate consequences out of all proportion to its insignificant beginnings. If there is a distinction between this parable and the last one [mustard seed], it is that the mustard seed suggests extensive growth and the yeast intensive transformation. The yeast doesn’t grow, it permeates; and its inevitable effect, despite the small quantity used, recalls Jesus’ words in 5:13. In both parables it is clear that at present the kingdom of heaven operates, not apocalyptically, but quietly and from small beginnings” (*EBC* 8*.*319).

“[The yeast] is secret, silent, steady; pervading all the faculties of the soul, and all the kingdoms of the world, as leaven, or yeast, though hidden in the flour, and though deposited only in one place, works silently till all the mass is brought under its influence” (Barnes 65).

“When placed under a microscope, the working of leaven looks like a veritable battlefield. There is assault and penetration in the face of determined resistance until peace descends after the whole has been conquered” (Abingdon 12).

“The parable of the mustard seed portrayed the outward manifestation of the kingdom and its blessings in the lives of men; Jesus’ parable of the leaven described its invisible workings. As leaven is the fermenting element that causes dough to rise and become light, so the leaven of Christian truth would ultimately permeate the world’s thought to regenerate and transform the individual and society” (Shotwell 266).

In *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, Mary Baker Eddy writes about the spiritual significance of leaven in the chapter, “Science, Theology, Medicine.”

117:28-25 np

Jesus bade his disciples beware of the leaven of the

30 Pharisees and of the Sadducees, which he de- Leaven

fined as human doctrines. His parable of the of Truth

"leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures

1 of meal, till the whole was leavened," impels the infer-

ence that the spiritual leaven signifies the Science of Christ

3 and its spiritual interpretation, — an inference far above

the merely ecclesiastical and formal applications of the

illustration.

6 Did not this parable point a moral with a prophecy,

foretelling the second appearing in the flesh of the

Christ, Truth, hidden in sacred secrecy from the visi-

9 ble world?

Ages pass, but this leaven of Truth is ever at work. It

must destroy the entire mass of error, and so be eternally

12 glorified in man's spiritual freedom.

In their spiritual significance, Science, Theology, and

Medicine are means of divine thought, which include spirit-

15 ual laws emanating from the invisible and in- The divine

finite power and grace. The parable may and human

import that these spiritual laws, perverted by contrasted

18 a perverse material sense of law, are metaphysically pre-

sented as three measures of meal, — that is, three modes

of mortal thought. In all mortal forms of thought, dust

21 is dignified as the natural status of men and things, and

modes of material motion are honored with the name of

*laws.* This continues until the leaven of Spirit changes

24 the whole of mortal thought, as yeast changes the chemical

properties of meal.

34 All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:

“The Greek’s wording puts the emphasis on parables: Jesus did not speak to the crowds without using them. ‘*Choris paraboles’* (without a parable) does not mean that he told nothing but parables to the crowd but that he said nothing to them without using parables. In short parables were an essential part of his spoken ministry” (*EBC* 8*.*320).

“The word for parable in Greek is *parabole* and it means “placing of one thing by the side of another, juxtaposition; in a metaphor it is comparing, comparison of one thing with another, likeness, similitude; an example by which a doctrine or precept is illustrated; an earthly story with a heavenly meaning; a pithy and instructive saying, involving some likeness or comparison and having perceptive or admonitory force” (Thayer 3850).

“The word *parable* is derived from a Greek word signifying to *compare together*, and denotes a similitude taken from a natural object, to illustrate a spiritual or moral subject. It is a narrative of some fictitious or real event, in order to illustrate more clearly some truth that the speaker wished to communicate. In the time of Christ it was in common use” (Barnes 62).

35 That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

“The word fulfilled in Greek is *pleroo* and it means “to make full, to fill up, to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally; to render full, to complete; to fill to the top; so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim; to consummate; to make complete in every particular, to render perfect; to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, to bring to realization, realize; to fulfill, i.e. to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment” (Thayer 4137).

“When you say **‘foundation of the world’** to a Jewish listener or reader, you are really referring to Genesis 1, where they get their information about foundation of the world. What do we find? What has been kept secret from the foundation of the world that we find in Genesis 1? Illustrated, perhaps, by these two parables? ‘Male and female created he them’ (Genesis 1:27). Each possessing dominion. Look at the co-equal responsibilities here. Here is mustard seed ‘which a man takes and sows and it grows, so that birds of the air can lodge in its branches.’ Separately, but in a complementary way, leaven and mustard seed are not that far apart in one sense. Both must do their work unobserved. You can’t tear the loaf apart to get at the leaven. You’ll ruin the work. You can’t tear the earth apart to get at the seed. It’s a hidden thing. Both male and female, both man and woman are responsible for sowing and hiding until it grows and becomes leavened. The concept of woman’s contribution coming in as the last, also agrees with the order in Genesis 1. It also fits in with the symbolism here, because leaven is something left over from a previous batch. It links into something which previously existed. Matthew states that these ‘things have been kept secret from the foundation of the world’” (Crisler, *Gospels Vol. 1*, 54).

Mrs. Eddy writes:

*Mis* 174:30

The leaven which a woman took and hid in three

measures of meal, is Divine Science; the Comforter;

the Holy Ghost that leadeth into all Truth; the "still,

1 small voice" that breathes His presence and power, cast-

ing out error and healing the sick. And woman, the

3 spiritual idea, takes of the things of God and showeth

them unto the creature, until the whole sense of being

is leavened with Spirit. The three measures of meal

6 may well be likened to the false sense of life, substance,

and intelligence, which says, I am sustained by bread,

matter, instead of Mind. The spiritual leaven of divine

9 Science changes this false sense, giving better views of

Life; saying, Man's Life is God; and when this shall

appear, it shall be "the substance of things hoped for."

**588:7**

**HOLY** **GHOST**. Divine Science; the development of

eternal Life, Truth, and Love.