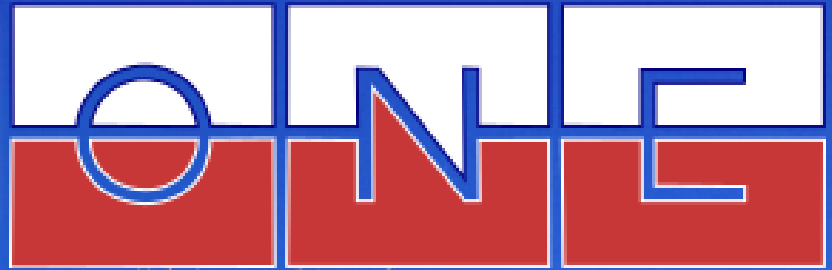


INSIDE:

+ **Meaningful Parables
from the Bible**



A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance
August 2023

**“FOR IN GATHERING THE
WEEDS YOU WOULD
UPROOT THE WHEAT
ALONG WITH THEM.”**

- MATTHEW 13:29



ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

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Editor's Note:

This month we asked our writers what parable in the Bible has had the most meaning in their life and in what way.

Parable of the Yeast

Written by:

Cheryl Glassman

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough," Matthew 13:33 (NAB).

I remember the first time I ever created homemade dinner rolls. I was a young married woman of about twenty-six. I hadn't paid much attention to cooking when my mother was doing it. I know some girls my age did, but I was more interested in consuming the finished product.

I married my sweetie, a local Volga German, whose mother was a great cook. My husband's sister was also a fantastic cook, and she

would send me recipes from time to time. One of the recipes was for dinner rolls. I decided to give it a go. The recipe called for a small amount of yeast. I had never used yeast prior to this. I was amazed at what happened to that little rolled up piece of dough I placed in a bowl and covered with a dish towel.

There are many parables and many ways to think about what they might mean. Jesus knows this, and he knows each person has had a unique experience to equate with the story he is telling. The Parable of the Yeast is also known as The Parable of the Leaven. It is one of the shortest parables of Jesus and can be found in Matthew 13:33 and Luke 13:20-21.

Personally, I like short and to the point. I have gone to many a workshop wherein the presenter talked so much that I almost regretted being there. Our Lord knew when to spend more time on a subject and when to make it short and sweet. When I first "reacted" to the Parable of the Yeast, it was some time after I had made the dinner rolls.

The people of Jesus' time knew exactly how yeast worked. His parable made them think of kneading the dough and how a small amount of yeast was worked into the dough. The people of our communities know this as well. It is like that with our faith. We can start with our own small faith lives, or even something that we have kept within our hearts; but when we share it, it can

Parable of the Yeast (Continued)

create an opportunity for the love of Christ to grow.

I think of the many ancestors of this area who worked the yeast into the dough, hands gnarled from many hours of painstaking work. It is like that with Jesus - he sees the work we do in our daily lives; but he also sees in us the ability to nurture, nourish, and grow in our own faith journey. This, in turn will be seen by others and, like the fragrant aroma of baking bread, we can permeate the earth with our love of Jesus!

As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 (NAB), we must use good yeast, and serve in good faith, as to not tarnish with negativity. *"Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?"* Hypocrisy, like that of the Pharisees, can also be like rising bread - a negative idea or word by a person of influence or friend can cause bigotry, vanity, or corruption.

But the cool thing is the good yeast can be placed in different kinds of flour - like the diverse people in our

communities, nation, and world. We must also realize that, like the rising of the dough, sometimes it will take a bit of time. Our own faith life must also continue to grow and evolve as long as we live. Isn't it truly amazing how our Lord finds such interesting ways to get our attention?



Cheryl Glassman is the Director of Music at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.

Prodigal in the Pigpen

Written by:

Rev. Jonathan E. McCottry Sr.

We are familiar with the term "The Prodigal Son" which is a popular term used to identify Jesus' parable in Luke 15:11-32 (NKJV). English translations do not use the term prodigal meaning "reckless" or "wasteful," though they speak of the younger son's wasting or squandering his property. "The Prodigal Son" is a designation for this parable told in defense of Jesus' practice of fellowshiping with sinners. In many circles, the fact that

this lad went to the far country condemned him to the sinners of the world, thus his life was characterized as lost outside of the church.

A careful look at the elder brother is proof that one can be in the fold, but out of the faith. This parable, however, focuses not on the reckless-then-repentant younger son, but on the waiting father who rushes to welcome his child home and calls all, elder brother included, to share the joy of homecoming.

Such a division of the father's goods during a lifetime was common in the

East. Abraham in his lifetime bestowed the main body of his possessions on Isaac, having previously allotted portions to his other sons. This was not a matter of Jewish law; it was a free gift on the part of the father.

This young man, who was a Jew, left his home for one of the world's great marts, such as Carthage or Alexandria, Antioch, or Rome. And there wasted his substance in riotous living.

Although this is an extreme case, only a small number of the publicans and sinners whose hearts

Prodigal in the Pighpen (Continued)

the Lord touched so deeply, had sinned so sincerely as the young man in this story.

He left his sheltered life of the confines of home, in indecent haste to be free from the orderly quiet home-life. Ingratitude, utter forgetfulness of all duty, and the wildest profligacy were the sins of the prodigal son.

This is "the pearl of parables", "The Gospel within the Gospel." The three parables of Luke 15 have been misnamed. Rather than to call them: "The Lost Sheep", "The Lost Coin" and "The Prodigal Son", they should be called "The Searching Shepherd, "The Seeking Woman" and "The Waiting Father".

Our emphasis is on the lost and the real hero is the one who searches, the one who seeks and the one who waits. The Word gives focus on the found. It was the searching shepherd that leaves the ninety-nine. It was the searching woman who lit a candle. It was the waiting father who stood at the gate during all hours of the night. He wanted to see to it that his son received not only a welcome, but is shielded from the negative onslaught of vitriol because he is now

considered an outcast rather than a family member.

Often Jesus' parables were about the simple life and the simple things in life. Jesus placed a direct hit against the establishment of the hierarchy of the Jewish church by compelling them to overlook self and consider the simple people and simplistic issues of life. In the first two parables of Luke 15, Jesus showed how the church leaders should have acted toward the poor and the less fortunate.

Still there was yet one more message to deliver. This message grips the core of the spiritually encrusted the holier than thou kind of Christian. This message hits hard at the one within the church who feels that the sermon that is preached is for the other person rather than they themselves. This parable addresses the sinner who needs the gospel and without such this prodigal sinner is already lost.

The subject of this story is not derived from humble life. The family pictured is one belonging to the wealthy class. There was money to be distributed; there were estates to be cultivated; means existed to defray the

cost of feasting on a large scale, not to mention the costly clothing and even precious jewelry. This story was founded upon the lives of some of the friends of Jesus who were no doubt living at the time of the story. To many of us, the demand of the youngest son is out of place and quite obstinate and refractory.

Much is to be understood about the bereaved father who went daily to the gate to examine the horizon with the anticipation of his home bound son. The younger son, the prodigal, will always describe those in disgrace, just as the elder son will always remain a pattern of propriety.

This parable is delivered in three stages. First the rejection of home: here was a son-sick of home. Next, we have the return to home: here was a son - home sick. Finally, we see the reception at home: here was a son-home bent.



Rev. Jonathan E. McCottry, Sr., of Hays is Pastor Emeritus of the Southwest Region Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists.

A Faith-Filled Abraham

Written by:

Father Damian Richards

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go,” Hebrews 11:8 (NAB).

The theme for this month was to write about our favorite parable and how it has impacted our prayer life. But when I heard this, my thoughts went to this verse from Hebrews. I pray this verse every time I make a Holy Hour, and it has had a deep impact on my relationship with Jesus Christ.

First off, some context. Chapter 11 of Hebrews begins with a definition of faith, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,”* Hebrews 11:1 (NAB). The author of Hebrews then begins a reflection on the faith of Abel, of Enoch and of Noah. Through faith, they saw past this temporary world to the true world of heaven. Abraham and his ability to trust is singled out for special praise.

Hebrew tradition tells

that Abraham was a follower of God before he heard his call to the Promised Land. Hebrew tradition also says that Abraham defended his faith in God against the pagans in his home country. In other words, Abraham was a faith-filled man before that Call from God in Genesis. Abraham had a relationship with God and was living out his faith. Abraham had his life planned out.

Then, when he was 75, God tells Abraham that He has plans for him. And instead of arguing with God or insisting on his own plans for life, Abraham obeys. As we know from Genesis, Abraham has to struggle. His faith is tested. Yet he doesn't give up. He trusts God. And he becomes the founder of a great nation. It is Abraham's ability to trust in God which resonates with me.

You fall into habits in ministry. You set up a schedule and run that schedule. You grow complacent. You can fall into a rut and do things this way because this is the way you do things, like Abraham before God called him.

It is a cliché in ministry that you have two

schedules: the work you plan on doing and the work God wants you to do. When I first got ordained, I thought that my schedule was the most important. I would get upset if I got called up to the hospital unexpectedly.

During my holy hour the next day, as I was reflecting over the work I had done the day before, I realized that unexpected hospital visit led to a moment of grace with a scared family; while my original plan of checking office work off my to-do list didn't tell anyone of God's love. I didn't get ordained to balance checkbooks. I got ordained to share Christ.

I can't remember when I first truly heard Hebrews 11:8 and its praise for Abraham's courage to follow God. But it resonated with me. God is filling my day with chances to share Christ with people. I need to take that chance. Just as Abraham took a chance when he responded to God's Call.



Fr. Damian Richards, Pastor of St. Nicholas of Myra in Hays & St. Francis of Assisi in Munjor.

The Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat

Written by:

Rev. Christine Wagner

“He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field, but while everybody was asleep an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, ‘Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?’ He answered, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The slaves said to him, ‘Then do you want us to go and gather them?’ But he replied, ‘No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn,’ ” Matthew 13:24-30 (NRSV).

I love this parable of Jesus. It gives me all kinds of hope. Aren't we all very much like a field full of

wheat and weeds? God plants good seed yet being human and not angels nor yet little gods, we go to sleep. We doze off for a time and are unaware. We shut our eyes to our blessings and God's purposes; we go blind and deaf and numb. We sleep. As darkness descends, the enemy strikes, planting seeds of evil in the slumbering soil of our being. When the wholesome wheat arises in our lives, so do the weeds.

Of course, our first urge is to tear those weeds out of there. But listen to the wise Master in today's parable as he responds to the slaves ready to go and do just that. *“No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them,”* Matthew 13:29 (NRSV). A deep and counter-intuitive wisdom is at work here. We must take it inside ourselves—chew on it and digest it to release its full power into our blood and bones. Taken as an image of the human soul, this parable provides nothing short of a revelation about ourselves and our God for those who have ears to hear.

Consider your life. It all

started with good seed in good soil. God is love beyond measure. You are created by the love of the Maker of all life, from the tiniest microbe to the farthest flung galaxies. *“God created humankind,”* Genesis sings, *“in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them,”* Genesis 1:27-28 (NRSV). *“God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good,”* Genesis 1:31 (NRSV)...very good. You are created very good. Don't forget that! The seed is good. The field where it is planted is good...very good. Your Master is a God of incalculable blessings. You are blessed!

You are also prone to sleepiness. The Lord our God neither slumbers nor sleeps, but we do. Everybody was asleep, the parable tells us. No one is exempt from what happens next. An enemy comes and sows weeds in the very good field, weeds among the rising green shoots of excellent wheat. And then the enemy disappears. We don't know exactly how sin arises in our lives and we

The Parable of the Weeds Among the Wheat (Continued)

don't know where it goes. But, oh my, do we see and hear and sometimes taste and smell sin's awful effects.

Isn't our first response to want to eliminate our perceived defects or at least to hide them? We hate ourselves for being so weak: so fearful, so perverse, so needy, so bad! Surely, that's not me! Not who I really am. Certainly, not who God intends me to be. Yet, trying to uproot our own noxious habits we may unwittingly pull out what is best in ourselves along with them. Wheat and weeds not only look deceptively similar, but their roots are also hopelessly intertwined.

As the Master in the story advises the workers eager to rid the field of tares, *"No, for in gathering*

the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them," Matthew 13:29 (NRSV). Take this to heart. It is not our job to finally judge what in our life is worthy and what is not. Certainly, we cannot judge others. We are not wise enough to know the wheat from the weeds. Sometimes what our culture values is the very thing that God hates; sometimes even our churches get it wrong. Sometimes what God loves about us looks to us like our most embarrassing flaw.

Friends, we are planted in God's field—good seed sown by God's loving hands, hands that know full well the enemy is always up to something and will find us sleeping. We grow, wheat and weeds mingled together, until harvest time.

As we trust the Master's hands for the planting, so can we trust them for the reaping. Yes, in the end there is a harrowing and a harvest. God will collect the weeds, all within us which does not serve God's purposes, and burn them. Ah, and the wheat, the beautiful golden grain may surprise us. God will gather it in at last. Sorted and separated, our souls made whole and holy, we will find ourselves where we've always belonged—in God's own very big barn.



Rev. Christine Wagner is the Transitional Minister at First Presbyterian Church of Hays where she first became a member more than 33 years ago.

“ALL THESE THINGS JESUS SAID TO THE CROWDS IN PARABLES; INDEED, HE SAID NOTHING TO THEM WITHOUT A PARABLE.” — MATTHEW 13:34