Our scripture this morning comes from Matthew 13:33. While you’re finding that, an old Indian chief was talking to his grandson. He said, “Within me, there are two wolves. One is good, and one is evil. Each day, they fight one another, each ferociously battling to subdue the other. It is a never-ending battle.” The little boy, looking with wonder into his grandfather’s wrinkled face, asked, “Grandfather, which one will win?” His grandfather responded, “The one that I feed.”

**Matthew 13:33 Another parable He spoke to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.”**

We’ve been in the parables of Matthew 13 for several weeks now. We heard about those who unintentionally find the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven. We heard about those who go out seeking the Kingdom of Heaven. We understand that the Kingdom is like a dragnet, capturing souls of all different kinds, for the angels to sort at the end of the age.

This morning, we’re again with Jesus, as He compares the kingdom of heaven to leaven. We’re most familiar with yeast. I used to watch my mother take a packet of yeast, mix it in warm water – it didn’t look like much, and pour it in with flour. She’d work the dough, then she’d set it on the counter, covered with a dish towel. After a while, she’d uncover the bowl and that little ball of dough was now a great big ball of dough. The yeast had leavened the whole lump.

Jesus compares the kingdom to leaven. The parable before us is a short parable, but it’s not short on meaning. It’s incredibly powerful. Today, we’ll consider the individual effect of leaven, the community effect of leaven, and the long-term effect of leaven. First, there is an individual effect of leaven. What we allow to come into our lives is changing us. Matthew 6:22 tells us that our eyes are the lamp of our body. What we concentrate on is what we become! When we allow hate and division in, we become hateful and fearful. When we watch evil, we become evil. Notice, it doesn’t take much to change the whole lump. Likewise, it doesn’t take much to change our souls – a little evil goes a long way… a little dirty joking, a little dirty thinking, a little hating of someone that wronged us. In Mark 8:15, Jesus warns about the leaven of the Pharisees. Our souls react to the leaven we allow. The Holy Spirit grows when we open to good. Likewise, evil spirits grow when we open to evil. Leaven has an individual impact.

Long ago, when there were no yeast packets sitting in the cabinet, a piece of dough was taken from a leavened loaf and hidden in a new measure of flour. This small piece of dough leavened a new batch of dough. Before baking, a small piece of dough was transferred to yet another measure of flour to start the leavening process all over again.

Likewise, Jesus speaks of the community effect of leaven. The church in America today is not the church of America in the 1940s. Bring the people from the 1940s into a church today and they’d be shocked at some of what they see. Some churches no longer have Bible scripture in the sermon. Many churches have done away with Sunday school altogether. These changes have come because of the leaven that has been allowed in the church. Like yeast is made up of individual cells, so the leaven of the church is made up of individuals who have led the church down either a biblical or an unbiblical path. Proverbs 29:2 When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan. It doesn’t take many in a righteous church, living an unrighteous life to turn the church in an unrighteous direction. Each individual has a duty to the community that we call our church to live righteously and fill ourselves with righteous leaven, each of us is that pinch of dough. Each individual coming in the doors of the church is leavening the whole community. We are all leaders in God’s Kingdom.

Finally, Jesus is the ultimate leaven for the kingdom of heaven. We are leavened individually. We are leavened communally. Jesus, coming in the form of a baby, born in a manger, is the leaven that started small and has changed the world! He is our focus individually. He is our focus communally. From a single man to over two billion people worldwide, He leavened the world, one soul at a time. He sent the Holy Spirit. He tore down the veil between us and God. He is the plague that death dreads. He destroyed the power of the grave. 1 Corinthians 15:55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Through the leaven of Jesus, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are leavened. We grow individually when we hide the word of God in our hearts and we allow the Bible to leaven our souls. We grow communally when we bring our spiritually leavened soul into the church. The Kingdom of God grows as the church sends its leaven out into the wider world, loving as Christ loves, helping others as Christ instructs, giving generously as Christ gave to us. We are the leaven to a lost and hurting world. We’re hidden among unbelievers. We’re light in a darkened world. We’re a lamp set upon a lampstand, casting light to all who will see. We carry with us Christ’s leaven.

Are we consuming the right things? Are we leavening the church with our presence, in such a way that we are changing this world for Jesus Christ? I see signs all the time that say – Be the change you want to see in the world. Christian was a term meaning “little Christs”. Are we little Christ’s being the leaven of love this world so desperately needs?