

The Leaven: Building Bridges With Others |

Matthew 13:33

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- [0 : 00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we are encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. I'm Pastor Patrick Daly, and each week I share sermons that balance the grace and love of Jesus Christ with the truth of the Word of God.
- Together, we'll explore Scripture using observation, interpretation, and application. This helps us discover practical ways to live out our faith every single day.
- Let's dive in together into God's Word. Well, good morning, everyone. You guys can hear me all right? Well, I'm glad that you're all here on this cold morning.
- Pretty much anything below 32 degrees is awfully cold, I've got to admit. And we had this snow that was going on. I mean, that was really nice for a short time. Let's be honest here.
- And I've got to tell you, my wife took the van to go to a birthday party yesterday, and she got stuck on the ice. A certain road, you know, up a hill can get a little complicated with that.
- [1 : 04] So that was fun. And I'm very grateful for those that were able to get my, the van out of that area. Well, today we are going over, the sermon is titled today, The Leaven, Building Bridges with Others.
- And it's going to be based off of what we find in Matthew chapter 13, verse 33. I'd like for us to turn to there. It's just one verse. We have been going over through the parables of Christ.
- There are many parables that Jesus taught that are very simplistic, but yet they are very deep. And what's important for us is to try to understand what is the word of God saying?
- What can we observe? What can we interpret and learn? And what can we apply to our very lives? This last week, we went over the parable of the mustard seed.
- And what's really important for us as we turn our Bibles to the gospel of Matthew is how these two parables piggyback off of each other.
- [2 : 08] And it's this idea that God plants that which is small and it expands. We think of the kingdom of God and God's plan for humanity and how it started small and how it expands.
- We can think of salvation regarding this, how God had the plan for salvation in Jesus Christ. That which was hidden, the mystery of Christ that was revealed in the New Testament.
- The very fact that Jesus Christ was born, the miracles that he performed was fulfillment of prophecy. And we can see that God speaks in some incredible ways through his word.
- Amen. So let's turn our Bibles. Are we all there to Matthew chapter 13, verse 33? That's on page 973 in your ESVP Bible or whatever Bible of choice you wish to use.
- So last week I had us read the mustard seed and the leaven. And let's do that again today so we can see how they are closely knit together.

[3 : 13] So we'll read the mustard seed and verse 33. So starting from verse 31. He put another parable before them saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field.

It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown, it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

Right? And we understood when we were talking about the seed being planted into the ground, that it grows into this tree. And we can think of how scripture talks about how we are to grow in Christ and to bear fruit.

Well, then it goes on into verse 33. He told them another parable. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour till it was all leavened.

And what's fascinating about this before we pray and we go any further is that amount of leaven that was used was to feed hundreds of people. So that's something we should kind of take note right away.

[4 : 22] And we'll go further into the significance of that. But let's go ahead and pray together and we will expand on this. Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, we are grateful that we are gathered here today.

I pray that everyone today will know that they are loved by you. You created all of us in your image and you have a divine plan for each and every one of us.

We pray that our hearts may be like the soil that receives the seed of your word. We pray that we may come to know you, that we may grow in you, that we may bear fruit, and that we will do good in your holy name.

We pray that truth is spoken here and that lives are transformed. We pray for healing. We pray for comfort. And we pray for us to recognize that our brothers and sisters in Christ, may we all be on a journey to know you.

And upon knowing who you are, may we be on a journey in you. So be with us this morning as we are just not only going over the leaven, this remarkable, this very small parable, but also what it means to be Christ's leaven.

[5 : 41] What it means for us to build bridges with other people. In all of this, we all say together in the name of Jesus Christ, can I get an amen? Amen. You know, recently, I've had a lot of time to pray and reflect upon what is the theme for this year.

Every year at Ontario Community, we think of different themes, different questions that we can focus on for the entire year. And here we are in February already.

It's like, man, time's already flying by. It's important for us to go over what is God calling us as a church to do in this church context as well as our community.

And I'd like to show you that our theme for this year is building bridges. Building bridges. We have this image on the screen of this idea of a bridge.

What does it mean to build bridges? And how is this tied in with the leaven of Christ? Well, let's go to that next slide then. This helps us with our understanding that when we are doing the work of Christ, right, we are all called to know Jesus Christ.

[7 : 00] We are called to reach the lost. There are many people in our own lives that we know and those in the community who do not know the Lord. And it's important for us to share in the gospel message with others.

Sharing the death, the burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to evangelize, to share in your testimony to other people. This is the core of Christianity.

Sharing that salvation is free to all who believe. So we have, these are the three ways, right? Reaching the lost. These are the people who are yet to believe in Christ.

We can think about the culture in which we live today. There's so many voices, so many TikTok influencers out there, and so many people who are saying, this way is right or this way is wrong.

But we know as Christians that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. And so we build bridges by reaching the lost.

[8 : 05] And the second one then is restoring the broken. For some of you, you may have heard me use the language of those that are de-churched. There's a lot of people out there who might have been hurt.

Might have been hurt by a person. They might have been hurt by a moral failing. They might have even been hurt by a church. And it's very tragic when we, as the body of Christ, we hear about these things, we read about these things, or we know someone who's experienced this.

The church, it is so important for us to create a culture where healing can happen, where restoration can happen. That's why it's so important for us to recognize that no matter who you are, where you come from, what it is you have been through, or what it is you are going through, that Jesus Christ extends that invitation for you to belong with the body of Christ.

In the same way that Christ calls you to receive salvation, be with your brothers and sisters in Christ. And the reason why we speak to this is because there are people who have, I think of my own context, I think of my own story, the people that I have met who grew up in church and have walked away.

And usually, it's the most ridiculous reasons, let's be honest here. Sometimes it is something that's much more deep than we cannot discount that. But it's so important for us to extend the hand, letting people know, man will fail you, but God will never fail you.

[9 : 44] That God loves you, and he made you in his image, and he calls you for much greater things. That is why it's so important for us when we're talking about building bridges, that we are focusing on the core tenets of our faith.

We focus on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We focus on the fact that Christ calls us for greater things in our lives. That God has a better way for us.

And very often, unfortunately, we are all sinners that are in need of a Savior. And we have got to allow for people to heal, and to be reconciled, and to be restored.

So that's the second thing, restoring the broken. And that third thing of building bridges is raising up disciples. Believing in Jesus Christ is the beginning.

It's not the end of your life. It's the end of your former life. But it's the beginning of your walk in Christ. And you are called not to remain as an infant, not to remain as a baby, but to grow.

[10 : 52] Opening your Bible, and I mean, how many of you have read the same verse over and over, but God has spoken to you in a different capacity? That's what's so important for us to read and study the Word, to be active in prayer, and to become the man or the woman that God has intended for us in our own life.

For some of us, we can think of people that might have, that are completely different. Maybe you identify as one of them. Maybe you can think, man, I was not happy with who I was back then, but God has molded me.

Maybe you can identify with that. And that's how we build bridges in this year, 2025. And how is this all connected then to what we're talking about? Well, when we think about last week, and we think about this week, we talked about the mustard seed being planted into the soil and growing, much like how our hearts must be ready to receive the Word.

Our hearts must be ready to say yes to Jesus Christ. And in the same way, right? So the mustard seed, it starts small, and it expands. It grows. When we're talking about the leaven, the kingdom starts hidden, but it expands in power.

When we read about leaven, and we, I mean, we should all think about baking, yes? How many of us have baked before? You don't have to raise your hand.

[12 : 23] Your body language is good enough, right? So I have to tell you, I am not a cook. I'm just not. And I'm very blessed to be married to someone who loves cooking.

I did not put an image on the screen here, but when we first moved out here, my wife went through this sourdough phase. Yeah, you've probably been through the sourdough phase, right?

And she made her first loaf of sourdough bread, and let me tell you, for that being her first time, I was not convinced. I think she knew how to cook sourdough bread, or how to bake it kind of thing.

We think of the leaven. We think of baking, right? We think of this kind of imagery of, when we go back to that verse, right? A woman took and hid the three measures of flour till it was all leavened.

And we see on here, we can look at this from a truly a literal sense, right? You have a woman who's basically making bread here, and is going to feed a bunch of people.

[13 : 29] That's a very, that's one way that we can read it. We can also look at it when we think of the leaven of Christ. And I want to make a real quick distinction here, because some of you may know in your notes, 1 Corinthians 5, verse 6, and Galatians 5, verse 9, where leaven is used in a negative sense.

It's basically saying that a little leaven can lump the bunch. It's along those lines, right? We're not talking about the negative sense of leaven here. In fact, when we're looking at this connection with the mustard seed, it's being used in a positive sense.

So the leaven of Christ, we're talking about that which is small and is expanding. And we can think about, when we're thinking of the leaven, something that's growing through transformation, right?

Isn't it kind of amazing when you're seeing bread bake, right? When you think of things that are rising, so to speak, that's kind of a very, very interesting parallel.

We also see that the woman taking and hiding the leaven. Now, there's a lot of debate on what this means. It can mean the Lord, right?

[14 : 46] The Lord spreading the kingdom, right? Putting that which is small and expanding it, being salvation through Christ. It can also be viewed upon as the church, right?

That which is small, expanding the gospel message going. There's some other debates on it, on what else it can mean. Some have even debated that the three, what is it?

The three measures of flower representing the Trinity. Some have argued that it means the three days in which Christ died and rose again on the third day. There's some debate on that.

We really, we can see that in Genesis, it's actually in your notes. It's Genesis chapter, let's see. I think it's in Genesis.

I think it's Genesis, yeah. Genesis 18.6 is where you see a very similar language in that, which is preparing the way for God working kind of thing.

[15 : 48] So there is some debate on that. But we can see that looking at other parables, that it could be the Lord, it could be the church spreading the kingdom, that which is small and expanding. And when we're looking at the parable of the mustard seed, it's the same context.

That helps us with our understanding, right? The Lord bringing Christ into humble beginnings like the seed, like the leaven, and expanding by having salvation available for all.

And the church doing the same thing by spreading the gospel message to others, something that's small and is expanding to others. And then finally, the three measures of flower, transformation, all people, nations, and maturity in Christ.

I mentioned how these three measures of flower can feed hundreds of people. And that's actually, when you're reading it just literally, that's pretty significant. And there's some debate, it's about 100 to 300, somewhere between there, but it's still a lot of people.

And when you're thinking of this woman who's preparing this bread, that's very interesting. So we can still see that it's something that's small, that it is expanding, and that goes to completion.

[17 : 00] And we can see this in the gospel message, transformation in our own lives, we can see that it is connected in some incredible ways. And that then leads us into this next slide then of what can we learn?

What can we interpret from this verse? I put these verses, but really it's one verse here. The first thing then is that Christ's leaven transforms from the inside out.

And I wanted to make a distinction between Christ's leaven and this negative leaven. Because there's verses where you see positive and negative attributes, but again, the leaven that's mentioned here is viewed upon in a positive and not a negative light.

And so leaven works from the inside out. It takes time though. And when we think of the case of transformation, it will happen.

We think of how God works in and through our lives, God transforms us from the inside out, from how we think, our ability to love, and even our ability to act with other people.

[18 : 08] God calls for us to be transformed, right? Just as it says in scriptures, do not be conformed to the patterns of this age or the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

And so when we're thinking of this leaven, one of the incredible things is that God works in such incredible ways, very often we don't see it.

That's another way we can look at the comparison between the mustard seed and the leaven. There's a lot of people who view this as the mustard seed is the external manifestation of the kingdom, and the leaven is the internal, meaning that which we cannot see.

You can debate on that if you'd like to, but in any sense, it is transformation, and that God does work in some incredible and unseen ways. One of my favorite books of the Bible is actually the book of Habakkuk.

And there's a verse in there where basically you have Habakkuk saying, all these terrible things are happening. God, I don't know what's going on. And God responds by saying, look, I'm doing something that even if I were to tell you, you would not believe it.

[19 : 19] And then he goes on and tells them, which is the amazing thing. But that's one of many verses where we think about that God works behind the scenes. I know for us as humans, we like to see tangible things.

We like to see things when they're working, especially if you are someone that likes to work with their hands. You like to tinker with things. I know my twin boys, they love taking everything apart, especially books that are not meant to be taken apart, right?

But the reality is we like to see how things work, right? I mean, most of us, I would think. But there's some things that we cannot see and there's some things we just do not understand.

That can be not only in the natural world, that can be in the scientific community, and certainly it exists in the spiritual realm. It looks like... Can someone get the door for Tim out there?

And so we think of, in Isaiah chapter 55, that God's word never returns void, but it accomplishes his purpose.

[20 : 25] Do you not realize that the word works in incredible ways? When we've looked at this language of the seed or we're looking at this language of the leaven, that God transforms that which is small and expands it.

And in Galatians, do not be weary in doing good, right? Knowing that transformation takes time. And ask yourself, has God been working in your life in hidden ways?

Well, it's kind of a hard question to answer, isn't it? If it's hidden, you can't see it, but more often than not, you'll see it after the fact. You'll see, oh, okay, God, you were working in this capacity.

I just didn't see it at the time. It's just like how people say hindsight is 20-20, right? And so the second thing then is that the church is called to be his leaven to the world.

Right? Leaven must mix. Now this is, leaven must mix into the dough to have an effect. Much like the seed being planted into the ground, the leaven must be mixed with the dough to allow for transformation to happen.

[21 : 36] Do you understand the magnitude of that? When we're thinking of, well, transformation that we, being the leaven in this case, are called to transform the world, to transform our communities, and we're called to be transformed in our own lives.

It's not just about hearing the word of God and just growing individually. It's acting upon that transformation. It's just like when you receive salvation, you're going to want to tell people about it.

It's just like learning a new discovery, right? Or learning something that the word of God is speaking through to you. Don't you want to share that? We are called to expand by sharing the kingdom of God, by sharing in the gospel message.

And so in that, when we think of the church, we think of the body of Christ, parts that make up a whole, that we are better when we all work together in the name of Jesus Christ.

Not being divided, like when I'm mentioning those that have been hurt. We help heal those. I mean, it's no different. When you scratch your finger, do you not give it a band-aid?

[22 : 55] Right? When you trip and fall, do you not wash your face or whatever it is? You get your hands dirty, you wash it after a while? It's no different than with the body of Christ.

We help one another out. We bear one another's burdens. We help each other grow and we work together for the glory of God. That's important for us.

And so the church is meant to be a bridge to other people. You can think of those, again, who do not know the Lord. Certainly you can think of someone who's not a Christian.

Certainly you can think of someone who has been hurt or someone who's been away. It doesn't even have to be hurt. It can just be, they haven't been part of the body in a long time.

Could be life just happened, right? We've had that happen before. We just got too busy. We can think about that. And it's a reminder for us when we're thinking about being His leaven, just like how we are meant to be salt and light unto the world, exhibiting the light of Christ to others.

[24 : 04] as I've mentioned many times before, being an ambassador for Christ. And so, ask yourself the question then, where is God calling you to be a bridge of transformation for others?

when we're thinking about not only the leaven, but we're thinking about this year, I want us to think about this. How can we be a bridge to other people? How can we be a bridge for healing?

How can we grow the kingdom this way? This is how we do it, is by building bridges together. And then finally, we have the kingdom of God is, is it stoppable?

No, it's unstoppable and it's expanding. That is encouragement for us. We look at Scripture in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 7.

Of the increase of His government and of peace, there will be no end. Referencing the kingdom.

[25 : 17] That's powerful. You usually see that passage for Christmas, right? But it's important nonetheless. Or we also think of the Great Commission that we're called to go out and to make disciples.

Right? Baptizing though. Baptizing believers in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Maybe you can think of a part of our culture that needs to be transformed.

There was a previous sermon I gave about Christ, the transformer of culture. That we shouldn't be afraid of the world, nor should we become the world.

But we are to be those ambassadors for Christ, transforming the world in the name of Christ. And part of that is in what we say. Part of that is in what we do.

About building relationships. It's about who do you know that you can talk to? Who do you know that you can be present with? We think of that kind of transformation.

[26 : 23] That should encourage you. I certainly know it encourages me in my walk with the Lord. Knowing that there is healing and transformation that comes from the Lord. And we are called to continue the mission of Christ.

The leaven that expands. And then in all of this, we finally have the application. How can I apply and live out this verse?

I know, again, I put verses, but how do we live that out then? Well, first and foremost, you trust in God first. You've got to believe in Jesus Christ.

You've got to believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians chapter 15 verses 1 through 4 is the most simplistic way of understanding the heart of the gospel.

That is non-negotiable. That is what we believe in. That by believing in Jesus Christ, we are saved. And we are called to put on the new self, to grow in Jesus Christ.

[27 : 31] Let God transform your life. Just as I put here, let God work from the inside out. Some of us may know that song, right? From the inside out.

That hill song. I guess it's a classic song at this point. Time flies, right? But in any case, there's a truth to that. Spiritual growth takes time, just like the leaven takes time to spread through the dough.

We can think again. That which is hidden will expand. That which is planted, that which is small, it transforms our lives and it transforms other people.

Ask yourself, where do you need to trust in God? Maybe it's believing in Jesus for the first time. Maybe you've had your hesitations.

Maybe you've even had your doubts. Maybe it's time to return and to come back to the Lord. The second thing, then, is to be a bridge builder for someone.

[28 : 40] Who do you know that doesn't know the Lord? Who do you know that's been disgruntled or been discouraged or maybe just life has happened that you can talk to?

Maybe invite them. Whether that's coming to church, whether that's praying for them, whatever that looks like. Be a bridge builder. When we think of the things that even we're doing here at Ontario Community, we have a lot of partnerships with different organizations.

The Building Healthy Families, the Treasure Valley Relief Nursery, just to name a couple of them. It's us being present in the community, being a representative of Christ.

That allows for conversation, which allows for the building of a relationship. It's not about shoving things down anyone's throat. It's about relationships.

It's about knowing people. Right? Just as Christ walked alongside and did life with the disciples, so too should we follow in the footsteps of Christ.

[29 : 53] So transformation, it happens through relationships and quite honestly, it happens through questions and interactions. Just a simple, what do you believe in?

I don't believe in anything. What do you believe in? Oh, I'm a Christian. Well, I thought Christians are this. We've heard that statement before.

Right? I thought Christians only do that. Or what gets really, what hits home a lot is, I thought Christians were against X, Y, Z.

But what's more powerful than the negative is the positive. And what I mean by that is what we are for. the invitation to believe in Jesus Christ, the call to be transformed and to be molded by God.

That is something that is far more powerful. And it's very sad when we think of things that people divide over, things that people, the hills that they die on that are unnecessary.

[30 : 59] Let us focus on the things that we stand for, the things that bring us together. Not the things that divide us. Are you kidding me? This isn't Thanksgiving dinner.

It's not about, oh, you know, what policy or what politics or what, how do you view the end times? How do you view revelation? How do you view baptism? It's us coming together and being united in Christ.

For me, it always pains me when I hear people say, oh, don't Christians, aren't they against this? I hate it. Absolutely hate it.

Yeah, let's talk about what Christianity is for. And let's talk about for a minute what Jesus stands for. Not only salvation being available for all, but transformation that happens in our lives and certainly in yours.

And hopefully, you believe in Jesus Christ. if you don't, by all means, let this be a call for you. Think of those that need encouragement, those that you need to speak to, an invitation, or even someone that you can pray for.

[32 : 15] Who haven't you prayed for in a while? Is it your uncle? Right? Is it a family member? Is it a friend you've given up on? Maybe you should pray for them and continue to pray for them.

And then finally, it's commit to expanding the kingdom beyond the church. We're not just called to just sit idly. It's going beyond just coming to church.

It's living it out. Live out what you believe in. I know, even when I read this, I get very convicted because I'm the kind of person that loves reading a lot of books and filling my head up with knowledge.

And I think for a moment, well, I've got to execute on that knowledge, right? We can think about that in education period. When you fill your mind up with things, how do you live it out?

It's no different than when we think of Scripture. Just like that famous song, they will know we are Christians by our love. Or we can even think they will know we are Christians by who we are.

[33 : 22] what kind of people we are. How do we share in the love of Christ with other people? We are called to build the kingdom.

We are called to be the witness to others. And so, ask yourself that question. How can you commit to being the leaven and expanding the kingdom of God through those that you know?

let transformation happen. Be that light unto the world. Be salt and light for others. This parable tied in with the mustard seed and even, this is not in your notes, but what's really amazing, for those of you who really study Scripture, Daniel chapter 2, verse 35, which mentions the stone that hits the statue and crushes, you guys know what I'm talking about?

Some of you may know. In Daniel's dream, there's a statue, a stone gets thrown at it. That is also a parallel with the mustard seed and the leaven.

Because the stone hits the statue, it shatters, and then the stone grows into a mountain, which is really weird language. It's the same thing. That which is small expands much like the kingdom.

[34 : 45] It's important for us to see these kind of connections within Scripture. And so, the kingdom of God is expanding.

Are you a part of it? Only you can answer that question. The leaven will spread until the dough is transformed, and for us as believers, we are a part of something that's much greater and much bigger than ourselves.

that's something that is amazing. It's incredible to know. To know the Lord, and to know that we are a part of something much bigger than ourselves.

The expanding and the unstoppable kingdom of God. And so, are you willing to be a bridge builder for this year, 2025?

I hope that in your heart you respond by saying yes. First, say yes to the Lord. Commit to growth, but in that be a bridge builder.

[35 : 53] Let's pray together. And Father, we thank you for this time and this opportunity to not only go over the parable of the leaven, but also this theme for this year about bridge building.

I pray, Father, that people will understand this very unique parable, talking about that which is small and expanding. We know that in Scripture, the mystery that is hidden is Christ being revealed for all and the fulfillment that Christ had, making salvation available to all who believe.

And in the same way, that seed or that leaven that is in our hearts, it expands. We pray that we may be filled with Christ's leaven and that we too may continue in this process of transformation, not by, not by our own merit, but what you have done.

I pray, Father, that in all of this, this may encourage us to know you, to grow in you, and to be moved to act upon our faith.

We're grateful for everyone who's here today and everyone who may be listening or watching online. May they all know that they are loved by you and that you call them for something much greater than what the world has to offer.

[37 : 28] You are an amazing God. We love you, we praise you, we glorify you, and we honor you. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that we pray and we all say together, Amen?

Amen. Thank you for listening for this week's message from Ontario Community Church. I pray that you are encouraged and strengthened in your walk with Christ.

For more sermons and resources, visit OntarioCommunityChurch.org. May God bless you as you live out His grace and truth every single day.