

1 Kings 3:5-12

Matthew 13:31-33,44-52

Romans 8:26-39

“The unfolding of your words gives light;  
my eyes shed streams of tears  
because your law is not kept.” AMEN!

(Sing) Turned away from it all like a blind man

Sat on a fence, but it don't work

Keep coming up with love, but it's so slashed and torn

Why, why, why?

Love, love, love, love

Insanity laughs under pressure we're breaking

Can't we give ourselves one more chance?

Why can't we give love that one more chance?

Why can't we give love, give love, give love,  
give love, give love, give love, give love, give love?

'Cause love's such an old fashioned word

And love dares you to care for the people on the  
edge of the night

And love dares you to change your way of caring

about ourselves

This is our last dance

This is our last dance

This is ourselves

Under pressure Under pressure Pressure

The band Queen, with Freddie Mercury, and  
David Bowie were true prophets in the days  
when discrimination and homophobia  
were running rampant in our society.

When the song was released in 1981,  
people with AIDS were denied medical care,  
shunned by family and friends,  
fired from jobs, evicted from housing,  
and treated as if they were morally dirty and dangerous.

Under more pressure than I can imagine.

The reason was ignorance and prejudice.

False leaders led many to believe that AIDS was  
a “gay disease” and many a church wrongly  
professed that it was a judgment sent from  
God.

Yet, amidst this persecution the  
Metropolitan Community Church in San Francisco

not only taught but lived the truth written and read  
today from the Letter to the Romans.

A community of LGBTQ Christians,  
together with allies, gathered around

the conviction that God's love is unconditional and  
meant for everyone without exception. (Pause)

One Sunday, a young man came into the sanctuary of  
the MCC church carrying years of rejection  
on his back.

He had been told by family, faith leaders, and friends  
that his life was too broken for God's love.

He'd heard about the MCC church, but even still  
he came expecting the same judgment.

Instead, he heard a message that spoke to his soul.

"Nothing can separate us from the love of God."

The love of God is not earned by identity,  
performance, or priestly approval, but is in fact  
a healing and transforming gift that cannot  
be taken away.

As the service went on, he began to weep -  
not because every problem was solved, but  
because for the first time he felt seen  
without being shamed.

People around him welcomed him, prayed with him,  
and reminded him that nothing, not death,

nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present,  
nor things to come, nor powers, nor height,  
nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation,  
will be able to separate us from  
the love of God in Christ Jesus.

By the end of the day, he hadn't become fearless,  
but a whisper of hope was planted.

He left believing that the church was not to be  
a place where love had to be proven, but  
a home where God's love was already at work,

building and holding people together  
when life had tried to tear them apart. (Pause)

We must know that these pebbles of love  
thrown back then were the ripples that reached  
this congregation years later and helped  
to form it into a special place of welcome.

We must know that though the world, in some cases,  
has gone backwards we continue to be

resilient and forthright,  
rooted in God's radically inclusive love.

And knowing the little things we do  
have enormous impact.

The pebbles of love, seeds of grace, the  
pinches of leaven - deny the teachings which  
say little things don't matter.

They do. (Pause)

As recognized in the Jesus' barrage of parables  
this morning we find the way Jesus reached  
so many in his crowd...

farmers with seeds, bakers with flour and yeast,  
merchants and landowners, then finally the ones  
who fish with nets.

Each parable teaching, sparking conversations,  
and defying easy interpretations.

Things so small doing so much.

Something so valuable that one would sell  
everything to gain it.

Nets that not only catch all kinds of fish,  
but *everything* in the lake.

These parables reveal the kinds of power  
that reside in what some would judge as  
minor or small things. (Pause)

The parable that touches me the most today is  
the one with the woman and the yeast, or leaven.

In chapter 16 of Matthew, Jesus will warn his disciples  
to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,”  
noting that their teachings poison God’s love.

Often, in the Old Testament,  
“leaven was a symbol of corruption, so  
when Jesus says the ‘Kingdom of heaven is  
like leaven that a woman hides in flour,’

he is offering a provocative image,”  
commentator Zena Jacque writes.

“The kingdom of God works the way fermentation works -  
quietly, invisibly, and by a process that,  
from the outside, looks a lot like  
something going wrong  
before it goes right.”

How delicious to not overlook that  
the presence of a woman,  
center stage in Jesus’ parable, is  
the one whom enacts the kingdom’s  
power with her hands in the dough,

hiding the ingredient which will make  
the bread of life burst to an enormous size.

Small acts of kindness and love burst forth  
enormous results. (Pause)

Anna stood in line at the grocery behind  
an elderly man whose hands shook while  
he counted out the coins.

He was short a few dollars, and his face flushed  
with embarrassment while people behind him  
sighed impatiently.

Anna quietly handed the cashier the missing amount.

Stunned the man turned and asked,  
“Why would you do that for me?”

Anna replied, “Because someone once did it for me.”

The man left with his groceries but  
the story didn’t end there.

He returned the next week and saw Anna there.

He handed her a folded note and told her that  
her act of kindness reached him at the exact  
moment when he needed to know  
people still cared.

She opened the note and it said simply,  
    “Today, I remembered that I am not forgotten.”  
(Pause)

The kingdom of heaven is here.

It's hidden.

It's growing.

It's worth everything we have.

It's a net that catches everything.

AMEN!