

1.

The new year has dawned. 2022 has passed and 2023 is presented before us like a blank sheet of paper. How should we fill the new year? How should we live to say we lived a good life? At one time, the phrase "Be rich!" was a popular New Year's greeting in Korea. It was because they thought that a good life was one full of material wealth. However, while Korea prospered and became rich, Korean society became sick. It has become the country with the most people in the world who commit suicide or want to commit suicide. There are too many people with mental illness. We realize that having a lot of things doesn't mean being happy. Then, how should we live to say we lived a good life? I would like to ask our children. How can I live a good life?

As I often say, living a worthwhile and meaningful life is a good life. When do people's lives become worthwhile and meaningful? I mentioned this previously: When we connect with others and help others our lives become worthwhile and meaningful. When December 2023 arrives, I hope we can all say, "I lived a really good year." To do that, we have to live worthwhile and meaningful lives. That is why Jesus said, "Live like little yeast" through today's message.

Today's message is a parable that can be read in the same way as the parable of the mustard seed I spoke about last month. Similar to the mustard seed parable, the key message of these two parables is how fruitful they become from a tiny beginning. That is the nature of God's kingdom. The kingdom of God starts small, but the speed of growth is fast and the results are enormous. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough." (Matthew 13:33)

Because the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to yeast, it's hard for us to relate and understand, isn't it? Have you ever seen yeast? *Nuruk* is yeast (traditional Korean fermentation starter, term used in the Korean translation). *Nuruk* also indicates fermentation. Adding yeast to flour makes the bread rise and become chewy. Simply put, yeast is a type of fungus. Fungi love high temperature and humidity environments. It reproduces rapidly in places with moisture and high temperatures. Some of you may have had this experience living in Korea. In winter, the draft is so bad that we put vinyl on the windows to block the wind. However, if there is no ventilation, mold forms on the walls. Those who have athlete's foot, known as one of the three intractable diseases of mankind, know how powerful fungi are. Yeast is also a fungus, so it has very strong power.

There are good fungi, and the most representative one is yeast. Yeast combines with sugar to cause fermentation. As it ferments, it produces carbon dioxide and ethanol. The dough rises because of the carbon dioxide produced during fermentation. The ethanol produced during fermentation gives off the smell of alcohol. It is because of yeast that the bread smells like alcohol.

Jesus said that the woman put yeast in the flour, but we can safely assume this woman put yeast in the flour to make bread. Sixty pounds of flour are about 36 liters. Sixty pounds of flour was enough to make bread for 100 people during the time of Jesus.

Sixty pounds of flour was an enormous amount of flour to make at home. Why did Jesus tell us sixty pounds of flour? It is to emphasize a much larger quantity than is commonly thought. Even though it is a small amount of yeast, it attaches to an enormous amount of flour to ferment and swell into bread. It is to emphasize that the propagation speed and ripple effect are massive for a small amount of yeast. The kingdom of God has these characteristics. The kingdom of God begins with a small amount, but has a mighty power.

2.

Everyone, Christianity, or in other words, the gospel, is just like this. Christianity was treated like fungi under Roman rule. Although they were treated as useless fungi, the gospel spread powerfully in Rome. The gospel is not far from the world. The gospel clings to the world and changes it anew. Just as yeast attaches itself to flour and ferments to create new carbon dioxide and ethanol, the gospel clings to the world and renews it. This is the amazing power of the gospel.

One Heart Church is a small community. But the Lord wants the world to change through us. Even though the world is as big as sixty pounds of flour, if you have a little yeast that has been fermented well, you can transform all the flour. Today's text clearly tells us. He said that a little yeast put into sixty pounds of flour could make it all rise.

Have you ever experienced bread that doesn't rise because you used strange yeast when making bread? At my house we have yeast from Trader Joe's that I bought. When I tried adding it to make bread my bread didn't rise. At that time, I discovered two cases where flour does not rise. When will the dough fail to rise? First, if it is not proper yeast, it will not rise. Second, the yeast is not incorporated into the flour, it will not rise.

First, if it's not proper yeast, your bread will not rise. Yeast sticks to the flour and needs to be fermented, but if it is not proper yeast, it is useless. It looks like yeast, but if the flour is rotten, it won't have the effect of yeast. Rotten flour causes other flour to become rotten as well.

Everyone, rotting and fermentation are similar, but the results are very different. When fermented, antibiotic substances that are good for the body come out and make it more delicious. But when it rots, it becomes useless. This fermentation and rotting doesn't look much different from the outside, but the results are completely different. There are more fermented foods in our national cuisine than in any other country. Kimchi and doenjang (soybean paste) are representative fermented foods. These foods are fermented without spoiling and stimulate our taste buds. Look at salted fish. Salted fish is really amazing. It is obviously the carcass of a fish, but it is not rotten. It is fermented, giving it a unique taste and smell. We too through our faith in Jesus become new people who can bring beautiful change to this world.

Second, if yeast is not incorporated into the flour, the flour has no choice but to remain unchanged. If we do not enter the world, we can never change the world. Although we may be just small yeasts, changes happen when we live our different lifestyle in the world with others. But sometimes we are afraid in front of the world. It's tempting to just live a quiet, unobtrusive life like everyone else does. We worry that we won't be able to handle people's disdain like Jesus. We wonder if we could just live like flour, like other people in the world.

Do not be afraid to crucify yourself with Christ and live a new born again life. It is called baptism to show that we died on the cross with Christ and were resurrected with Christ in front of many people. Baptized church members are those who have decided to live a life of yeast, not a life of flour. Those who acknowledge that a life transformed into a person of Jesus Christ is a tasty life have no choice but to live as yeast in the world. Because they are so happy that they have changed, they want others to change like them.

The purpose of our being born on this earth is to display the glory of God in this world. We are the yeast of this world. We all must create God's kingdom in the world with God's yeast. Under Roman rule, the Early Church saints suffered tremendous persecution and oppression. They did not deny God even though they were eaten by lions in the Colosseum and were torn to pieces. They did not give up being yeast. At some point, the influence of this yeast worked, and 300 years later, Rome was transformed into a Christian country.

We cannot change this world and expand the kingdom of God by becoming flour. We must be yeast. We cannot have any influence on the people of the world by being the same flour as them. These changes occur among us when we live a life of giving ours for others like Jesus did. Jesus even described it as a life of bearing the cross. It is not as flour in the world, but with the identity of yeast and living with different thoughts and values. It's good to hear others tell you off and ask, "Why are you different?" You have to tell them clearly, "It's because we live a life that follows Jesus." It's good even if you're timid. Even just your work office is fine. Even just next door to you is fine. Live as yeast among them. Have meaning and reward by helping them. Try to ferment among them. Try contacting your neighbors. Talk to them and say hello. Surprisingly, your neighbors may have been waiting for you to come too.

Children try to live differently from other friends in the class of school. I hope you become children who help their friends who are having a hard time and who are being bullied like God's children. It is good to greet your friends with a smile. I hope you become children who always look out for those who need your help and help those around you. I hope all of you will become yeast during the upcoming year and create a world worth living in. I hope it will be a year that tells our neighbors who have lost the taste to live that life is full of meaning to live. May the grace and blessings of the Lord be filled in your year.