Once again, Jesus is talking in parables. Today, we have five parables grouped together as kingdom parables. The first two parables – the mustard seed and the leaven or yeast– were told to a large group of people, including the Pharisees who were seeking to trap Jesus. The last three were told only to Jesus’s followers. In doing this, Jesus is making a sharp distinction between earnest, sincere followers and those who would seek to destroy him and his ministry.

The message he gives to the latter is that they can’t destroy the growth of the kingdom of heaven no matter how hard they try. The message he gives to those of us who earnestly seek him is that we will find him and being with him is so precious that, if necessary, we will give up everything else to be with him and to be a part of his kingdom.

Some years ago, a man was walking his dog on a riverside path in Bedfordshire, England when he spotted a gold coin. When he stopped to pick it up, he realized immediately that it was different – as it bore on it the image of an Anglo-Saxon king who ruled between 796 and 821 AD. He took it to a coin expert who said "It is quite simply the most important single coin find for a century.” Later the coin sold at auction for $409,000 and was split evenly between the dog-walking man and the owner of the land upon which it was found. This man had found something very precious. Was the man lucky? No. Actually, he was an amateur metals expert and took a metal detector along with him whenever he walked his dog. He was a seeker and he found something of enormous value.

If we seek God we will find him. If we habitually make time for encounters with God, our lives will be enriched. God and knowledge of him is the most precious gift we have been given – there for the taking – if we seek him. God is the treasure hidden in the field, the pearl of great price. Jesus’s message to his band of friends was that earnest seekers of this treasure – those who make finding it the most important thing in their lives -- will find it and keep it. When we find and claim this treasure we become members of the Kingdom of God – citizens of the beautiful city, we speak of in Godspell.

This kingdom of God – this city – is eternal. This city will continue to grow until it encompasses all of the earth. That was Jesus’s message to those who sought to destroy him and his kingdom. That was and is the message of the parable of the mustard seed and the yeast.

Yeast is an interesting substance. It’s only a single-celled fungus, yet when it is worked into the bread and activated through a little warmth, it is magical. It causes the bread to rise. It also helps give the bread flavor. The kingdom of God is like this yeast – it’s a process by which Jesus begins to govern the world. It began when Jesus was born as an infant, then was worked into the world as he called a small network of friends who allowed Jesus to take a place in their hearts. The crucifixion, rather than ending the growth of the kingdom of heaven as the Pharisees hoped, actually supplied the heat that activated it. Jesus’s resurrection and ascension brought the Holy Spirit to the world and that Holy Spirit provided yet another catalyst for the Kingdom of God to rise up and grow.

As more disciples love God and sought to live as Christ taught them, the Kingdom of God grew – or to use the beautiful city metaphor in Godspell – new land and buildings are being added to the city. So despite the best opposition the Pharisees could offer, God’s love and influence worked its way into the world. The message for us today is that despite whatever opposition we face in the world we can be confident that God’s kingdom will prevail – that love will win every time. Nothing can separate us from Jesus and his kingdom. Once we find the treasure, it is ours forever.

Unlike kingdoms and cities made by humans, this city of God is forever. It just keeps growing. Opposition forces can try what they will, but ultimately this kingdom stands.

Amen