

SOUTHWELL MINSTER VIRTUAL JUNIOR CHURCH

Sunday 26 July 2020

SMALL BEGINNINGS, BIG RESULTS

Welcome! (Angela speaking)

Hello everyone. Let's start as before by thinking about each other, and sending our best wishes to Isabel, Bridget, Phoebe, James, Isaac, Lucas, younger James, and all other young friends who may be joining us.



And as we do this let's pray for each other, and for our families and friends, and for everyone who is affected by the coronavirus.

Just have a moment of quiet looking at the candle and remembering that Jesus is the Light of the world, and he is with us.

[N.B. It will help to have a ruler with millimetres on it today.]

As we've seen in the last few weeks, Jesus loved telling stories or 'parables', often taken from everyday life and nature.

Q. Why do you think he did this, rather than just give us lists of what we should do and believe?

There are lots of possible answers to this.

See what you think first, and then you can read some of the ideas I have;

- Stories are more interesting and fun to listen to.
- Jesus uses parables and picture-language to make us think things out for ourselves.

So that's what we're going to try and do now.

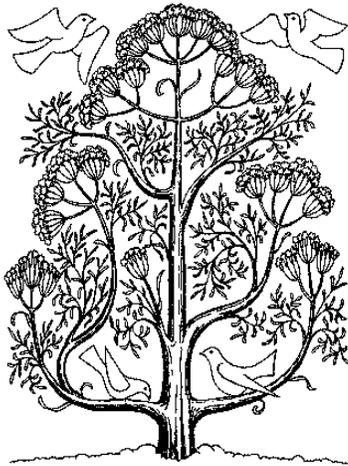
In the Chapter, Matthew 13, which includes today's Gospel reading, Jesus seems to be letting his imagination run wild, as he uses examples from no less than SIX aspects of people's lives! Put a ring round the themes you think he uses from the list below - and check in your Bible if you like. (Answers at the end of the text).

Farming Tree-planting Writing Cooking Shopping Singing

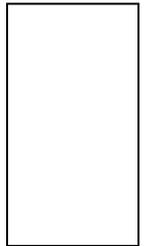
Digging a field Buying pearls Hair-cutting Fishing

Today we only have time to look at two of these, both connected with something SMALL: **seeds** and **'leaven' (or yeast)**. Here's the first passage (Matthew 13: 31-33):

Jesus told them another parable: 'The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A man takes a mustard seed and sows it in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it grows up, it is the biggest of all plants. It becomes a tree, so that birds come and make their nests in its branches.' (Matthew 13: 31-32)



The seeds from the mustard trees that grew in Jesus' time were not so very small - they were about two millimetres across. With the help of a ruler draw a 2mm line at the top of this box, and then draw some of the kinds of mustard seeds Jesus had in mind.



BUT compared with the size of the seeds, mustard trees in Palestine were very big. While some were only about 1.5 metres (4 feet) high, others grew to a height of 3.5 to 4.5 metres (= 12 to 15 feet). And that's more than twice the height of the tallest grown-up you know!

Q. So what do you think Jesus is trying to tell us here?
(If you need a clue, look at the title of this week's session!)

Q. Can you think of other ways in which small beginnings can lead to big results?

I have seen one example of this on BBC Television - maybe you've seen it too. It's a short advert encouraging everyone to be more kind and less mean in the way we use our phones, send texts and post messages on the Internet. Here's how it goes - you might like to read it aloud, taking it in turns to read the different bits if there are more than one of you:

1. This is Liv. Liv chose not to text something mean about her best friend Ava's new haircut.
2. Which meant that Ava posted a nice comment about her hairdresser Kat.
3. This made Kat so happy that she messaged her boyfriend Dan to say he could buy some new 'wheels' for his skateboard.
4. So, as a result, Mittens the cat was no longer running away from the frightening noise of Dan's old squeaky wheels in the garden.
5. So this meant that Doris (the cat's owner) was reunited with her cat who now came home.

6. So Ollie (Doris' grandson) no longer had to be out in the garden trying to catch the cat, and was now free to do some necessary jobs in the kitchen!

So in his Parable of the Mustard Seed, Jesus is reminding us that lots of good things can come from small beginnings. We sometimes call it a 'knock-on' effect, as one thing leads to another, just as the fully-grown mustard tree provides shade for people and places for birds to nest too.

How about doing little acts of kindness for people this week. Remembering that all sorts of good things may result from that small beginning, that small seed you have sown.

Q. Do you have any other ideas of what you might do? During the week you could ask Jesus to show you and give you some good ideas.

Here's the second parable of Jesus that we'll think about today; this is about 'Leaven' or Yeast in the Bread-Dough, in Matthew 13: 33:

Jesus told them still another parable: 'The Kingdom of heaven is like this. A woman takes some yeast and mixes it with three measures of flour until the whole batch of dough rises.'

Vincent my husband makes the bread in our house, using a bread machine. I love the smell of baking bread!

Q. Have you or any of your family or friends ever made your own bread?
Is that with a bread-machine? Or working with the bread dough by hand?

Some versions of the Bible use the more old-fashioned word for yeast, which is 'leaven'. In both cases the word means the substance that makes the dough rise.

In the Old Testament, when the people of Israel escaped from slavery in Egypt, they left in a hurry, so they ate 'unleavened' bread, which was flat and hard.

Q. Where do you think people in Jesus' time got their leaven from?
Any ideas?!

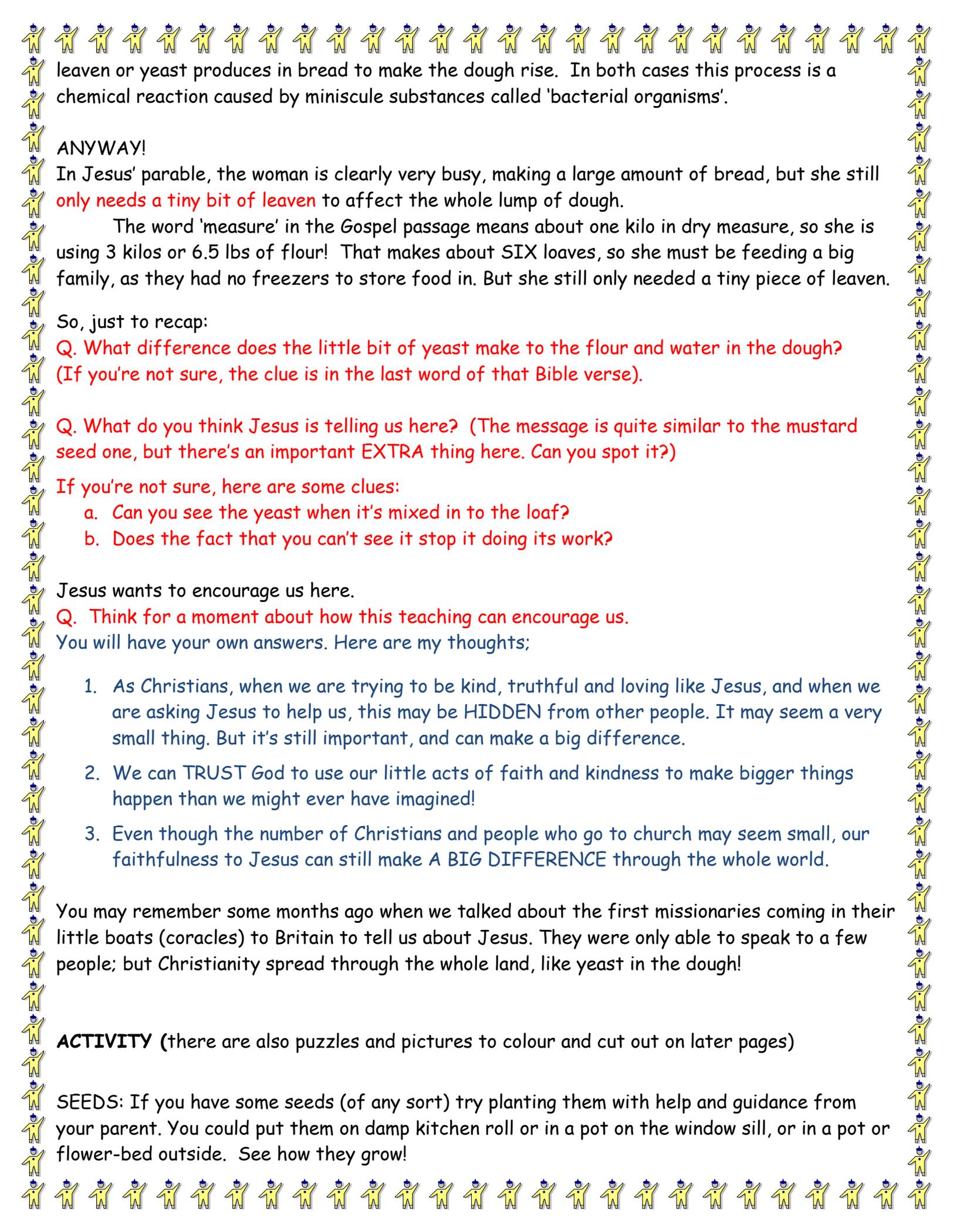
Not in a packet from The Co-Op, like this picture here!

This is how they produced their leaven: They kept back a small piece from an earlier loaf, and (hold your nose!) let it go 'off' and a bit smelly!



This process is called 'fermenting', and is the same sort of process that makes fruits or grains into alcoholic drinks like wine or beer.

(For older children) I once made a big fresh fruit salad, and it lasted for ages; by the end the fruit in the sugar-syrup had become a bit fizzy! That was the fruit beginning to ferment and produce the same sort of 'fizz' that



leaven or yeast produces in bread to make the dough rise. In both cases this process is a chemical reaction caused by miniscule substances called 'bacterial organisms'.

ANYWAY!

In Jesus' parable, the woman is clearly very busy, making a large amount of bread, but she still **only needs a tiny bit of leaven** to affect the whole lump of dough.

The word 'measure' in the Gospel passage means about one kilo in dry measure, so she is using 3 kilos or 6.5 lbs of flour! That makes about SIX loaves, so she must be feeding a big family, as they had no freezers to store food in. But she still only needed a tiny piece of leaven.

So, just to recap:

Q. What difference does the little bit of yeast make to the flour and water in the dough? (If you're not sure, the clue is in the last word of that Bible verse).

Q. What do you think Jesus is telling us here? (The message is quite similar to the mustard seed one, but there's an important EXTRA thing here. Can you spot it?)

If you're not sure, here are some clues:

- a. Can you see the yeast when it's mixed in to the loaf?
- b. Does the fact that you can't see it stop it doing its work?

Jesus wants to encourage us here.

Q. Think for a moment about how this teaching can encourage us.

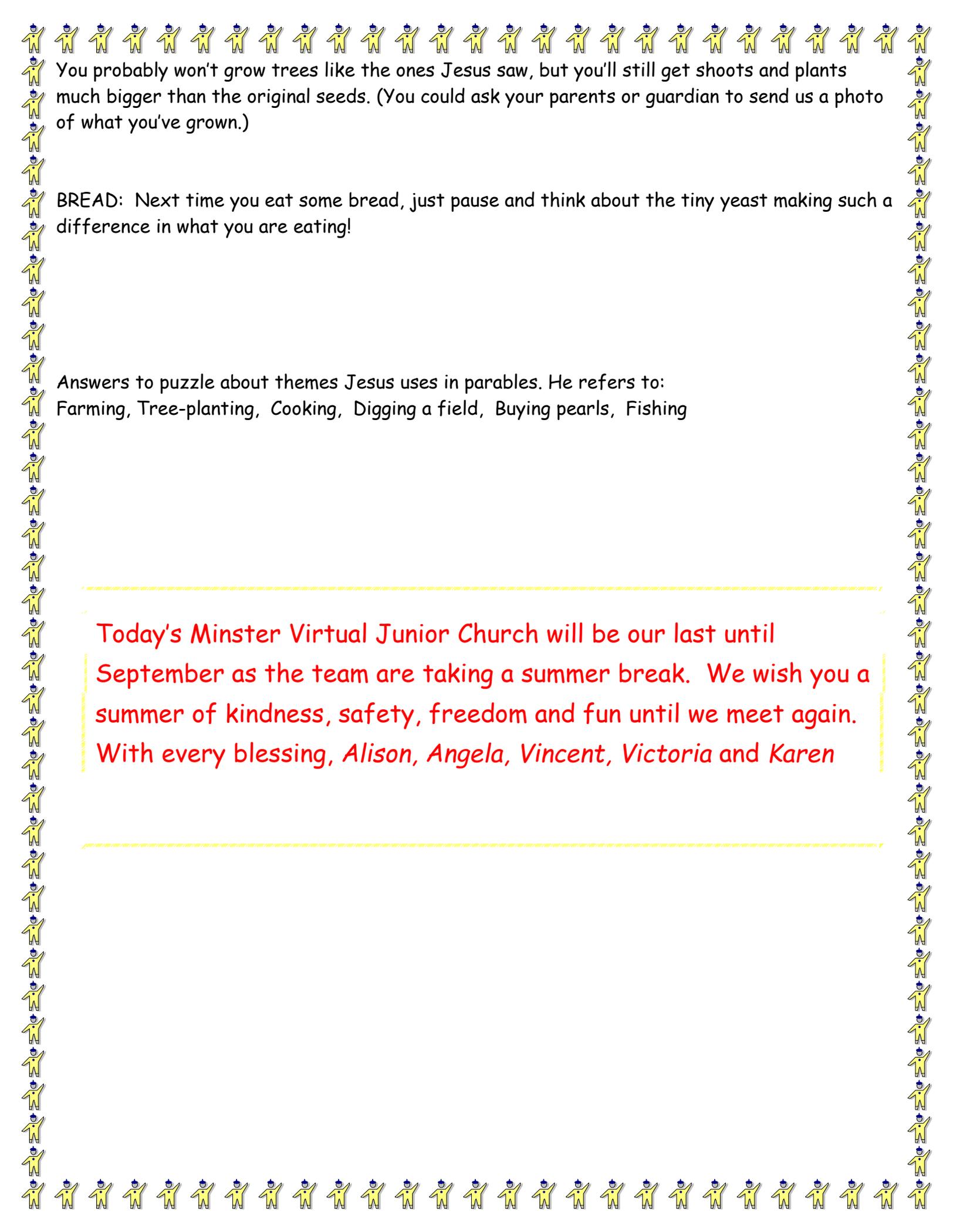
You will have your own answers. Here are my thoughts:

1. As Christians, when we are trying to be kind, truthful and loving like Jesus, and when we are asking Jesus to help us, this may be HIDDEN from other people. It may seem a very small thing. But it's still important, and can make a big difference.
2. We can TRUST God to use our little acts of faith and kindness to make bigger things happen than we might ever have imagined!
3. Even though the number of Christians and people who go to church may seem small, our faithfulness to Jesus can still make A BIG DIFFERENCE through the whole world.

You may remember some months ago when we talked about the first missionaries coming in their little boats (coracles) to Britain to tell us about Jesus. They were only able to speak to a few people; but Christianity spread through the whole land, like yeast in the dough!

ACTIVITY (there are also puzzles and pictures to colour and cut out on later pages)

SEEDS: If you have some seeds (of any sort) try planting them with help and guidance from your parent. You could put them on damp kitchen roll or in a pot on the window sill, or in a pot or flower-bed outside. See how they grow!



You probably won't grow trees like the ones Jesus saw, but you'll still get shoots and plants much bigger than the original seeds. (You could ask your parents or guardian to send us a photo of what you've grown.)

BREAD: Next time you eat some bread, just pause and think about the tiny yeast making such a difference in what you are eating!

Answers to puzzle about themes Jesus uses in parables. He refers to:
Farming, Tree-planting, Cooking, Digging a field, Buying pearls, Fishing

Today's Minster Virtual Junior Church will be our last until September as the team are taking a summer break. We wish you a summer of kindness, safety, freedom and fun until we meet again.
With every blessing, Alison, Angela, Vincent, Victoria and Karen

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade." Mark 4:30-32 (NIV)

Each number represents a letter of the alphabet. Substitute the correct letter for the numbers to reveal the coded words.



T	E	G	B	W	J	C	D	M	F	A	R	L	Q	Y	O	H	X	Z	U	S	V	P	K	I	N
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

1. 23-11-12-11-4-13-2 _____
2. 24-25-26-3-8-16-9 _____
3. 9-20-21-1-11-12-8 _____
4. 21-2-2-8 _____
5. 23-13-11-26-1-2-8 _____
6. 21-9-11-13-13-2-21-1 _____
7. 13-11-12-3-2-21-1 _____
8. 23-13-11-26-1-21 _____
9. 4-25-12-8-21 _____
10. 26-2-21-1 _____

ANSWERS ON THE NEXT PAGE

PLANTED
SMALLEST

MUSTARD
PARABLE

KINGDOM
BIRDS

NEST
LARGEST

PLANTS
SEED

You could colour parts of these pictures first before cutting them out.

Which picture do you like best?

BibleWise
Leaven Bread Parable
Cut out the pictures and put them in the correct order of how to make bread.

roll into dough

Copyright © 2011, BibleWise. All Rights Reserved. Drawing by JJ Johnston.