

**Luke 13: 18-21**

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Within us, among us, before us,  
**CHRIST IS COME TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW**

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be clear and strong enough  
to make an emperor fall full length,  
suppliant, at the door.

Rumi

The kingdom of heaven is not, for the Jewish Jesus of Nazareth, a piece of real estate for the single saved soul; it is a communal vision of what could be and what should be. It is a vision of a time when all debts are forgiven, when we stop judging others, when we not only wear our traditions on our sleeve, but also hold them in our hearts and minds and enact them with all our strength. It is the good news that the Torah can be discussed and debated, when the Sabbath is truly honored and kept holy, when love of enemies replaces the tendency toward striking back. The vision is Jewish, and it is worth keeping as frontlets before our eyes and teaching to our children.

Amy Jill Levine

The approach I want to take here in this series on some of the BIG WORDS of our faith is to explore/suggest some possible ways we can talk about these big words in polite company.

You might say, these big words hardly ever come up in polite company. And why is that? Because religion/spirituality is a pretty raw topic in our culture. Lots of hard edges show up in these conversations. So sometimes polite company becomes impolite company when religious language is introduced. Often, these hard edges are people parroting what they have been told by people who experience themselves as more certain about spiritual truth than they have a right to. Trust me, all that parroted hard edged stuff will fall away. That never has been or will it ever be language that supports what God is doing in your soul and mine, and in the world.

We have a more evocative, humble approach to these matters to offer those around us in polite company. That's our intention anyway.

Christ will do what Christ will do right? We learned that last week. The Spirit comes and goes like the wind. Language that honors and allows us to be participants in the mystery of God's activity in the soul and in the world will never be the language of arrogant certainty, but always the language of humble subtlety, story, metaphor, and wonder. We don't pin down Divine Truth. It pins us down.

So I want to come at these big words from that place and perhaps help you to claim some language of your own, rooted in your authentic self, (your "throat song") so that you can be ready to speak of these big words from a place of humility and wonder that is true to you. I'd like to think that as you become more interiorly grounded with these words, and the larger vocabulary of faith, God WILL provide opportunities for you to speak of these things to others, children, grandchildren, family, friends, in ways that will be life giving.

So----let's explore our first big word----in this case a term----KINGDOM OF GOD

It's THE central core of Jesus teaching. It appears over 100 times in the New Testament and is defined almost always by a parable or metaphor. Parables and metaphors are subject to interpretation right? They invite interpretation, reflection, engagement. These are mind and soul expanding activities. Jesus, the master of the parable, is a master teacher of the soul.

The Greek word for Kingdom when Jesus uses the term as well as the Aramaic and Hebrew words related to this term as Jesus used it has to do with a "sphere of influence." It's not a territorial concept. "It's not here, it's not there." As Jesus says. There are several ways to render the term in English----domain and estate are used in the handout. Commonwealth has been used. Reign has been used-----

What I want to offer you though is this idea of a "sphere of influence." It's the best thing I've come across in the scholarship. God's sphere of influence. It begins in the human soul--Jesus says the kingdom of God is within you, and manifests in a world permeated with the influence of God, a world of shalom, of grace and mercy and peace as we bring ourselves under God's sphere of influence.

Kingdom implies hierarchy right? This is why Kingdom might not be an effective English rendering of what Jesus is talking about. Jesus was much more of an egalitarian. He actually placed himself kneeling at his disciples' feet. He said the servant is the greatest in the kingdom. So we are not talking about what we normally think about when we talk about a kingdom here. We are not talking about what we normally think of as worldly power/political power, which is power OVER. It's a power from the depths. God says to Paul- "my power is made perfect in weakness."

This is why sphere of influence works for me and might be helpful to you. It's active, dynamic. It's intentional but UNORGANIZED AND UNPREDICTABLE.

So let's first imagine being a bird making its home in the mustard tree---safety, comfort, home, peace, provision. Home especially. A home for the soul. To come into God's sphere of influence is to experience the peace of being at home in the best sense of that term, of being utterly safe.

God's sphere of influence can be very small at first. Given time, it's capable of unlimited expansion. Oh to find our way into God's ever expanding sphere of influence!

But wait. The next line in our text is a zinger. In our cultural context, the way the yeast causes dough to expand makes perfect sense. In Jesus' context, leaven was associated with uncleanness... even with evil. (we will be talking about evil next week)

The scholarship is intrigued by this. Jesus is messing with us in this line about the leaven. The kingdom, God's sphere of influence might be experienced by us as unwelcome, as something that does not belong, as something we don't want. It is likely to challenge our ideas of what is good and what is bad, what is clean and unclean, what holiness is. People who thought they knew what holiness is called Jesus a blasphemer. Little did they know they were being held, beautifully, sublimely, perfectly in God's sphere of influence.

And so we pray---thy kingdom come.

# SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD-GRACED AT CHRIST'S TABLE

NORTH OAK CHRISTIAN CHURCH-DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

January 6, 2019

In Jesus' Name, Greetings!

Music for Gathering

What led these mysterious figures, even as kings, to obey?

**YOU LED THEM, EACH STEP, EACH ERROR, EACH TURN, YOU LED THEM**

Christ, our child, our star, our dream

**LEAD US, AND WE SHALL FOLLOW**

Lighting of the Candles

“When God comes into our midst, it is to upset the status quo.” Kathleen Norris

**284 Gather Us In vs 1, 2, 4**

Sharing Christ's Peace

**173 As With Gladness**

The Morning Prayer and Musical Response

Silence

“Most of us don't realize how united we are with God.” Gerald May

Children's Circle

All children thru 5<sup>th</sup> grade are welcome to come forward. A small outreach offering will be collected for our money jar. Following this time of sharing and prayer, children may attend their very own

“Worship and Wonder” time together in our classroom annex. Child care is offered for infants and toddlers but they are also welcome in the sanctuary.

Prayer for Illumination

Healing, Sovereign God, overmatch our resistant ears with your transforming speech

**TOUCH OUR YEARNINGS BY YOUR WORDS, WE ARE READY TO LISTEN. AMEN.**

THE GOSPEL LUKE 13: 18-21

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost**

**As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, amen amen.**

The Meditation “Sphere of Influence” Rev. Rob Carr

**Call us by name, Gracious One, so that we know. Call us to you, so that we live.**

**Call us into the world, so that we care. Call us to risk, so that we trust beyond ourselves.**

**You speak, we listen, and comes life abundant. Amen.**

Silent and spoken personal prayers of thanksgiving confession, intercession

Vocal Solo Andrew Rembecki

The Offering

**Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below**

**Praise God above ye heavenly host, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost**

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.  
As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.

**452 Here I Am Lord vss 1 and 3**

Welcome to the Table

Holy God we offer into your loving care  
**OUR HEARTS, OUR MINDS, OUR WHOLE LIVES**

We yield, in faith and trust  
**TO THE GRACE OF YOUR SPIRIT IN THE DEPTHS OF OUR BEING**

Ever Living God  
**YOU SEARCH US AND KNOW US**  
Wash away our fears, flood our hearts with Your Spirit  
**FILL US WITH THE CHRIST LIGHT NO DARKNESS CAN EXTINGUISH**

The Words of Institution

The Communion Prayer

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen.**

Following the Lord's Prayer, please come forward by rows to receive the loaf and the cup.

The cup is non-alcoholic by choice of the congregation

Gluten free crackers are available on the table for those who prefer this option

Children also celebrate communion weekly as part of "Worship and Wonder"

**167 Go Tell It On The Mountain vss 1 and 3**

Grant us your light O Lord

**THAT THE DARKNESS IN OUR HEARTS, BEING WHOLLY PASSED AWAY,  
WE MAY COME AT LAST TO THE LIGHT WHICH IS CHRIST, AMEN.**

**TO OUR GUESTS----WELCOME!**

**SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD AND GRACED AT CHRIST'S TABLE**

**WE WALK HUMBLY, LOVE DEEPLY, LIVE SIMPLY, AND SERVE JOYFULLY**

We are delighted to include you today. Your presence and participation is a gift to us all. We hope you experience among us the warm spirit of our family of faith and the gracious touch of Christ upon your life. Refreshments and welcoming conversation are available before and after worship in the Community Room just down the hall. More information about NOCC and the Disciples of Christ is available via Facebook and these websites

[www.nocckc.org](http://www.nocckc.org) [www.kcdisciples.org](http://www.kcdisciples.org) [www.disciples.org](http://www.disciples.org)

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## OUR LIFE TOGETHER

### THIS WEEK

Today 530PM NOCC Youth  
Monday 6PM Troop 900  
Tuesday 945AM Men's Bible Group  
Tuesday 6PM Pack 900  
Wednesday 1PM Vital Conversations at Antioch Library  
Wednesday 7PM Music Ministry  
Saturday 10AM-2PM Scout Pinewood Derby  
Saturday 2PM Teresa Hord Owens at Merriam Christian Church  
Sunday 330PM Teresa Hord Owens at Community Christian Church

### UPCOMING

SOUPER BOWL SOUP FEST  
SUNDAY FEBRUARY 3 FOLLOWING WORSHIP

INTRODUCTION TO CENTERING PRAYER—LED BY KEVIN KELLEY  
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 9 9AM TO NOON

SPRING RETREAT AT MARILLAC CENTER IN LEAVENWORTH  
FRIDAY-SUNDAY APRIL 26-28

Keep these items in mind as you consider the remarkable ministry  
of our friends at CHERITH BROOK.  
Blankets Blankets Blankets! Tennis Shoes, Cold Meds, Band-aids, Bike Locks,  
Gloves, Hats, Chapstick  
Cherith Brook Local Honey for Sale! Contact Eric 816-241-8047