

FIRST things FIRST Daily Devotionals

Devotional Guide for July 29-August 4, 2024

These devotions are prepared for you each week by Pastor Kevin to use for your own personal devotions with the Lord, and are designed to prepare you for the message next weekend.

Monday, July 29TH “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees”

Scripture: Mark 8:14-21 NIV

In this passage, Jesus compares yeast with the Pharisees, warning His disciples that they were at risk from the same defiling attitudes that had led the Pharisees and Herod astray. Jewish people had been commanded to refrain from yeast when preparing the bread for their Passover celebration, just before their exodus from Egypt. In some Jewish traditions, the removal of yeast came to symbolize the future purification of God’s redeemed people (see I Corinthians 5:1–8). The metaphor is appropriate because Jesus’ death on Passover belongs to His inauguration of Israel’s new exodus—in which all of the impure attitudes of Herod and the Pharisees have, like yeast, no place. If Jesus’ disciples are to participate in this new redemption, they must rid themselves of pride and self-deceit—that which comes from the heart is what defiles—that led the Pharisees and Herod to oppose the upcoming Kingdom of God. Tragically, confronted by the prospect of a suffering Messiah, Jesus’ followers consistently show themselves in jeopardy of the yeast of Herod and the Pharisees.

Question: Why did the disciples have a difficult time grasping this idea?

Tuesday, July 30TH “Be on your guard against the yeast...”

Scripture: Luke 12:1-3 NIV

Jesus again uses the metaphor of yeast... how just as a little yeast can permeate a large amount of dough, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees can infect many people. Thousands of people gathered around Jesus here, yet He spoke to His disciples... letting the crowd overhear. After His denunciation of the Pharisees (in Luke 11:37–54), Jesus warns His disciples to be constantly vigilant about the hypocrisy which is characteristic of the Pharisees.

Question: How do you avoid the yeast of this corrupt world?

Wednesday, July 31ST “Get rid of the old yeast”

Scripture: I Corinthians 5:1-8 NIV

The apostle Paul had to address blatant and rebellious sin, in the church at Corinth, many times. The Corinthians were actually proud

Here, Paul uses the metaphor of yeast (leaven), showing how the fermentation process affects a new batch of dough. The analogy of yeast is used positively in our main Scripture verse for this week, found in Matthew 13:33... but here, it is seen negatively. Tolerating a church member’s sinful behavior is dangerous; the sin, if tolerated, can spread to other church members and affect the entire church.

Question: How have you seen sin affect people in your church?

Thursday, August 1ST “There will be terrible times in the last days”

Scripture: II Timothy 3:1-5 NIV

Here, Paul lists some 19 qualities of the evildoers whose presence bears out that “terrible times” (v.1) are at hand. The English language cannot fully convey the colorful, artful, and finally harrowing word picture Paul paints here. Paul describes those who are yeast-like to be “lovers of pleasure” (v.4). Where God calls people to love Him and have ‘no other gods before Him’ (see Exodus 20:3), these evildoers enthrone their own warped self-gratification. So, their “form of godliness” (v.5) is in reality a sham. In the case of those whose behavior remains mired in the pattern described in 3:2–4, action is necessary, for the sake of the integrity of the church’s witness, and for the protection of its members and message.

Question: How do you see these “last days” descriptions in our time?

Friday, August 2ND “The Kingdom of heaven is like yeast”

Scripture: Matthew 13:33 NIV

Closely paired with the parable of the mustard seed (vs.31–32), the second parable (v.33) makes much the same point as the first. Just as small amounts of yeast, or leaven, make dough rise to produce large amounts of bread, so too the tiny, inauspicious kingdom will one day have a surprisingly great impact. We, at times, fear the smallness of Jesus’ impact. Our fear might keep us from sowing the seed of His hope and love. Can the Sunday school account of Jesus hold its own in the Ivy League? Do terms like sin, salvation, and redemption stand a chance in this sophisticated day of humanism and relativism? Well, apparently they do! Where are the Romans who crucified Christ? The Epicureans who demeaned and debated Paul? The Gnostics who mocked the early church? And the great temples of Corinth? They dwarfed the infant church. Do worshipers still sacrifice to Zeus? No, but they still sing to Jesus! God does uncommon works through common deeds.

Question: How can we use the yeast of God’s love to change our world?

Sunday, August 4, 2024

8:30 and 10:45 am (Livestream @10:45 am)

II Timothy 3:1-5 and Matthew 13:33 NIV

Pastor’s message: **“Small and Mighty, Part II—
The Parable of the Yeast”**

Worship theme: “Powerful Parables!”

