

Short Stories by Jesus: The Leaven Hiders & Party Throwers Ken Wilson, 1/6/19

Jesus loved parties and stories...called Parables but short stories is better. Some really short...would've done well on social media.

Three of the four gospels Mt-Mk-Lk indicate story telling was his favorite mode of God-talking.

Jesus in a long line of Jewish story tellers. In series, see how important that is to understand his stories (Amy Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*)

As part of a long tradition, every parable filled with the echoes of earlier stories. *A Star is Born* 4th version of same story. Aging male star gives new female talent big break—she rises as he falls. Each new telling has a **new twist**; first version old male star meets new female talent in a bar, punches a patron...in 2018 Lady Gaga does punching. In next version, a female star will give male talent break

Jesus was **master of unexpected twist** in his stories—the twist is where the connection happens. The *twist* in the story often has the power to *shift* our perceptions...what best stories do

Start a really short one. At end of Mt 13 ...one parable after another, leading up to Matthew saying: ***“Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without parables he told them nothing.”***

Last teeny-tiny story at end? ***“He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”***

Some work to do so stick with me. ***“The kingdom of heaven”*** doesn't refer to up-in-sky in Harpland.” It's Jewish way of referring to **God's good realm**—understood to penetrate, intermingle and hover close by the realm in which we live... A realm of **future possibility** and **present potential** for those with eyes to see.

Second, woman didn't "mix" leaven in; that translation obscures what is a key twist. Word in Greek, *hid: is like yeast* [zume] **that a woman took and hid with three measures of flour"**

When NT writers refer to things hidden, always meant "to be revealed (not remain hidden)." Jesus said "What is hidden will come out, what is whispered in secret will be shouted from roof"

Other thing: "three measures of flour" We think, three cups of flour? Wrong? Between **40 and 60 pounds of flour** [Demo]

Picture a woman in a small village in the Galilee where Jesus is teaching...not much happens in private, and she's "hiding" leaven (not a tidy packet of yeast, but a lump of starter sour dough in 50 pounds of flour...this is a striking scene!

Any woman in any village doing something ordinary—baking bread—but with this twist, *hiding* the leaven..., but in 50 pounds of flour! This woman has big aspirations—maybe a big party!—toward which she is acting in a way that is now hidden...

God's good realm—nearby realm, realm of future possibility and present potential, if we have eyes to see—is like this woman involved in this strange combination of hiddenness and grandiosity.

Before we ask, how does this speak to who we are, who God is, and what we might be doing in partnership with God today...

Story had original audience—year 20 of Common Era?—in Jewish setting, soaked in a common trove of stories everyone knew. Told at bedtime, around table, at parties...written down by scribes, studied by rabbis who offered varied interpretations ... Stories people under foreign domination treasured to save identity, which Romans were trying to erase and homogenize into global Empire.

Unexpected bit about 3 measures (50 pounds) would have triggered communal memories of another woman Sarah, wife of Abraham. Sitting in heat of

day...exhausted...comes after rescue of nephew Lot, kidnapped by local warlords,...and rivalry between Sarai and her servant Hagar given to Abram as a surrogate, her child Ishmael born, but still no heir....

Just then, 3 strangers, travelers, appear—later thought to be God and 2 assistants. Abraham senses mysterious presence of divine, scrambles to his feet and calls to Sarah, **“Visitors!”** Then turning to visitors, **“Let me bring a little bread for you”** [a little]...Then calls to Sarah, **“Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes!”** [three measures—50 pounds!]

Throughout encounter, according to custom, Abraham hosted, while Sarah hid in tent, preparing food, listening. During meal, they tell Abram that his wife in her old age will bear a son...from the tent where she’s listening in, she laughs...they rebuke her.

Jesus is saying to his Jewish hearers—something like this is happening now, the good realm of God is showing up like this...

Now, it’s up to us to ponder how the story reminds us of things we see around us...How is God’s good realm is like this woman, who took leaven, hid it in 50 pounds of flour The sort of thing that could happen in any village, any woman could be this woman. Through ordinary circumstances with extraordinary consequences...even now hidden things happening that will later come to light.

I heard a story on This American Life that sounded a lot like this.

How American Psychiatric Association took homosexuality of the list of pathological disorders in 1973. Just a few years earlier, estimated that 98% saw homosexuality as a pathology—a disease that affected the whole person. Big part of stigma on gay people—in fact, if you were found to be gay could be disbarred from practicing Psychiatry, couldn’t be a teacher, etc.

It happened when different individuals and groups—who didn’t know the others existed—did things that were first hidden from view, but later came to light. As these hidden individuals and groups started to take tentative, brave, risky, bold steps, they

discovered they weren't as alone as they thought –and these steps spread like leaven through a lump of bread dough rising.

Story of gay activists meeting in SF, plotting to disrupt the next APA conference there—since they had no other access

Story of a group of Psychiatrist called gay-PA (gay psychiatrists in hiding who met with each other at these conferences)

Story of a brave gay psychiatrist who gave a talk at APA meeting—in disguise, costume-mask, voice altering device, about what it's like to be a gay psychiatrist operating under this stigma

A group called “the young turks”—up and coming Psychiatrists meeting to change the culture of the APA, move into power

A psychologist in California who realized the “study” defining homosexuality as a pathology was based on a serious sample error—she conducted a study comparing gay men with straight men on a series of psychological test measures, found gay men were as psychologically well-adjusted as straight men—only pathology common to gay men was male pattern maleness.

All these things happening behind scenes, unconnected to each other. Each group pessimistic about change, but started to work for it in small ways anyway...

Eventually thing picked up steam...and in 1972

A gay activist Ronald Gold met with a Psychiatrist who was on committee that approves what appears as a mental illness... Asked to be invited to committee that approves what shows up as a mental illness in the APA bible (DSM)

By this time, some Psychiatrist openly questioning old guard approach (had heard research that said gay men as well adjusted as straight men)

1973 A forum at APA—old guard met activists and some Psychiatrists who challenged the APA orthodoxy (some booed the Psychiatrists challenging orthodoxy, some clapped)

Later that night, in a bar near hotel where gay-PA (gay Psychiatrist in hiding)...Ron Gold, activist invited. Ron Gold invites the head of Robert Spitzer head of nomenclature committee who is straight (not an ally yet)...Spitzer comes in with Ron Gold and sees all these prominent Psychiatrists there who were gay...the head of the gayPA wanted to get rid of the straight prominent Psychiatrist...when a young man in Army uniform comes into the bar

Army psychiatrist so moved by Ronald Gold's speech that day that he said, "I have to go to a gay bar, just to see what it's like." He walks into see the man who gave the speech and all the gay Psychiatrists, still in hiding, and the head of the committee that decides what is considered a mental illness...all together and he bursts into loud tears, he's just overcome In that powerful emotional atmosphere Robert Spitzer decides to become an ally—let's change the Diagnostic Code Manual