

GiFT

The Lord's Prayer

3: Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven (i)

Welcome and Opening Prayer

This week, and in the next session, we are reflecting on the line in the prayer which has a massive scope and range – that God's Kingdom, God's will, God's ways, would be made manifest and made real on earth as they are in heaven. Wow! It doesn't come much bigger than this!

Some opening conversation: Sharing in twos:

- We often moan that things in our society, or in our world, get worse – “things aren't what they used to be” – but can you think of things that, during your lifetime, have got better?
Can you now share your thoughts with the whole group?
- Again, sharing in twos: What are the qualities, or characteristics, of a healthy and life affirming community and can you give any examples of when you have experienced this?
Once again, can you share your thoughts with the whole group?
- Again, sharing in twos: What are the things that help, or might help, you to flourish? *(Please don't feel you need to share beyond what is comfortable).*
Once again, if you feel able to, can you share your thoughts with the whole group?

Can you now discuss together:

- When you hear the phrase “the Kingdom of God” or “the kingdom of heaven,” what comes to mind? What do you think of? Is it a helpful phrase or is it bewildering?
- Do you have an image, or a feeling, or a picture, or an idea of what the Kingdom of God might be like?

For the rest of our session, we’re going to look at some parables of Jesus where he speaks about the Kingdom. When Jesus taught, he often used stories and images which invite a range of interpretations and ideas. It seemed to infuriate his disciples who often wanted Jesus simply to tell them what to think. But Jesus seems to have used parables in order to invite a range of responses and to stimulate people’s imagination.

As we read through these parables it would be good to allow our different responses to be shared and voiced – by doing this we might find some quite rich ideas emerging. Please tackle each parable separately and don’t worry if you don’t get them all done. Please ask someone to read each parable before discussing it.

For each of the parables these questions might help you?

- What is your reaction to the parable?
- What puzzles or excites you about the parable?
- What does the parable mean (or suggest) **for you**?
- What might the parable be challenging **you to do or think**?

Mark 4. 30 – 32

He also said, ‘With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.’

Matthew 13:44

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Matthew 13:45-46

'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Matthew 20:1-16

'For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the market-place; and he said to them, "You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, "Why are you standing here idle all day?" They said to him, "Because no one has hired us." He said to them, "You also go into the vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, "Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first." When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, "These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." But he replied to one of them, "Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?" So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'

Matthew 13:33

He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.

Mark 4:26-29

He also said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.'

Closing Prayers