



# “We, the Kingdom”

## Discipleship Groups Stimulus Resource

Semester 2, 2022

## “We, the Kingdom...”

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like...” If you’ve been part of a church community all your life, like I have, you will have heard so many bible studies, sermon series, kids’ talks, and Sunday school lessons on the parables of the kingdom, that when you saw the title of this stimulus resource, you may well have rolled your eyes and thought, “Oh great, here we go again...”

Years ago I attended a preaching seminar with Alan Meyer (Careforce Lifekeys) and Craig Blomberg (Denver Seminary), where a rather bold suggestion was offered...

*“If you haven’t been offended by a parable,  
you haven’t understood it yet.”*

When Jesus explained His use of parables in Matthew 13, he pointed out that those who were outside his kingdom would recognize them as no more than stories.

But for those who are part of His kingdom – “We, His Kingdom” – we would...

*SEE with eyes that see  
HEAR with ears that HEAR  
UNDERSTAND the secrets of the Kingdom  
Be CONVICTED and TURN towards Him  
and be HEALED...*

For our Discipleship Groups this semester, I’m going to suggest that as we read and reflect on the stories of the Kingdom, with a fresh anticipation that WE ARE THE KINGDOM, it may well elicit one or more of the following responses in us as we reflect on our past, our experience, our context of ministry...

### JOY?

*Yes! I see this! I know this! I experience this! Praise Him!*

### YEARNING?

*Acknowledge the distance between what you hope for, and what you actually see.*

### PAIN?

*Admit where you don’t see the kingdom story well-reflected in your faith community.*

### CONVICTION?

*Having seen, heard, understood, and become convicted of what the Lord sees,  
make a commitment...*

In this discipleship-group-season, I encourage you to give yourself space to see and hear these parables afresh, to recognize the hand of God in forming you amidst the strengths and frailties of your ministry context and your studies, and be refreshed by the magnificent grace of our Lord Jesus at work in your life.

God bless you,  
Matthew Holt – Campus Chaplain

# 1. We, the Kingdom: We Sow

– Matthew 13:3-9, 18-23

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. <sup>9</sup> Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

*Who is the sower?  
What's the main point?  
What does this parable free us to?  
What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>18</sup> “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. <sup>20</sup> The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. <sup>21</sup> But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>22</sup> The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

*What's your response?  
Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 2. We, the Kingdom: We Sow GOOD

– Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

### The Parable of the Weeds

<sup>24</sup> Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. <sup>25</sup> But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. <sup>26</sup> When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

<sup>27</sup> “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

<sup>28</sup> “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

<sup>29</sup> “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. <sup>30</sup> Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

*Where have you witnessed ‘good’ being ‘spoiled’?*

*What’s the main point?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

### The Parable of the Weeds Explained

<sup>36</sup> Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

<sup>37</sup> He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. <sup>38</sup> The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, <sup>39</sup> and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

<sup>40</sup> “As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. <sup>42</sup> They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

*What’s your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

### 3. We, the Kingdom: We make community

– Matthew 13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32

#### The Parable of the Mustard Seed

<sup>31</sup> He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. <sup>32</sup> Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

*Who is the sower?*

*What’s the main point of this parable?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>30</sup> Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. <sup>32</sup> 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.”

*What’s your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 4. We, the Kingdom: We work on it

– Matthew 13:33; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

### The Parable of the Yeast

<sup>33</sup> He told them still another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds<sup>[b]</sup> of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

*Yeast is often used as an analogy of sin (see below)...*

*what is it an analogy for here?*

*What’s the main point of this parable?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>6</sup>Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? <sup>7</sup>Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

*What’s your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 5. We, the Kingdom: We've got something really special

– Matthew 13:44, 45-46

### The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

<sup>44</sup> “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.

*Have you ever won a trophy, and had to make room for it to fit on the shelf?*

*How do you make room for Jesus, if he costs all you have?*

*What's the main point of this parable?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>45</sup> “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

*What's your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 6. We, the Kingdom: We trust our Saviour

– Matthew 13:47-52

### The Parable of the Net

<sup>47</sup> “Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. <sup>48</sup> When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.

*What is our role in dealing with sin in our faith community?*

*What’s the main point of this parable?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>49</sup> This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous <sup>50</sup> and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

<sup>51</sup> “Have you understood all these things?” Jesus asked.

“Yes,” they replied.

<sup>52</sup> He said to them, “Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

*What’s your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 7. We, the Kingdom: We don't turn a blind eye

– Matthew 18:10-14, incl. 15-20

### The Parable of the Wandering Sheep

<sup>10</sup> “See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. <sup>[11]</sup> <sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>12</sup> “What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? <sup>13</sup> And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. <sup>14</sup> In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.

*How is 'dealing with sin' handled in your faith community?*

*How might rebuke actually be an act of love?*

*What's the main point of this parable?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

### Dealing With Sin in the Church

<sup>15</sup> “If your brother or sister <sup>[b]</sup> sins, <sup>[c]</sup> go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. <sup>16</sup> But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' <sup>[d]</sup> <sup>17</sup> If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

<sup>18</sup> “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be <sup>[e]</sup> bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be <sup>[f]</sup> loosed in heaven.

<sup>19</sup> “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”

*What's your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 8. We, the Kingdom: We show mercy

– Matthew 18:21-35

### The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.<sup>[a]</sup>”

<sup>23</sup> “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold<sup>[b]</sup> was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

<sup>26</sup> “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ <sup>27</sup> The servant’s master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.

*Where have you seen/experienced mercy making a difference?*

*What’s the main point of this parable?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>28</sup> “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.<sup>[c]</sup> He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

<sup>29</sup> “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

<sup>30</sup> “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

<sup>32</sup> “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ <sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

<sup>35</sup> “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

*What’s your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 9. We, the Kingdom: We are generous in grace

– Matthew 20:1-16

### The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup> He agreed to pay them a denarius<sup>[a]</sup> for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

<sup>3</sup> “About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. <sup>4</sup> He told them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ <sup>5</sup> So they went.

“He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. <sup>6</sup> About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, ‘Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?’

<sup>7</sup> “‘Because no one has hired us,’ they answered.

“He said to them, ‘You also go and work in my vineyard.’

<sup>8</sup> “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.’

*What’s your normal response when someone offers you a generous gift?*

*What’s the main point of this parable?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>9</sup> “The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. <sup>10</sup> So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. <sup>11</sup> When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. <sup>12</sup> ‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

<sup>13</sup> “But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius? <sup>14</sup> Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. <sup>15</sup> Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

<sup>16</sup> “So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

*What’s your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 10. We, the Kingdom: We are ready

– Matthew 25:1-13

### The Parable of the Ten Virgins

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. <sup>4</sup> The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

*What makes us ‘ready’ for the coming of the Kingdom?*

*What’s the main point of this parable?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>6</sup> “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’

<sup>7</sup> “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’

<sup>9</sup> “‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’

<sup>10</sup> “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

<sup>11</sup> “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’

<sup>12</sup> “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’

<sup>13</sup> “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

*What’s your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 11. We, the Kingdom: We don't hide our gift

– Matthew 25:14-30

### The Parable of the Bags of Gold

<sup>14</sup> “Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. <sup>15</sup> To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,<sup>[a]</sup> each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. <sup>17</sup> So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. <sup>18</sup> But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

*What are your spiritual gifts? What is your role in developing them?*

*What's the main point of this parable?*

*What does this parable free us to?*

*What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>19</sup> “After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup> The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

<sup>21</sup> “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’

<sup>22</sup> “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

<sup>23</sup> “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’

<sup>24</sup> “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

<sup>26</sup> “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? <sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.’

<sup>28</sup> ““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. <sup>29</sup> For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. <sup>30</sup> And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

*What's your response?*

*Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*

## 12. We, the Kingdom: We serve our King

– Matthew 25:31-46

### The Sheep and the Goats

<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

<sup>40</sup> “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

*Who are the ‘least of these’?  
What’s the main point of this parable?  
What does this parable free us to?  
What does this parable free us from?*

<sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

<sup>44</sup> “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

<sup>45</sup> “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

<sup>46</sup> “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

*What’s your response?  
Joy? Yearning? Pain? Conviction?*



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All bible references are taken from  
New International Version, 2011,  
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