

“The Greatest Stories Ever Told” – Jesus’ parables and how to live as Kingdom people.

Jesus’ teaching was often delivered through parables: stories about everyday things from which we can draw a parallel to a spiritual truth about how to live and what God is like. We have to work a bit harder today to understand scenarios which would have been completely familiar to Jesus’ listeners, but which are far removed from suburban British 21st century life. Often Jesus’ stories caught his listeners by surprise as the ending or the moral was not what they expected to hear. Jesus’ parables are stories that challenge us too, often turning our own values or those of our society upside down. Rather than trying to explain what each part of a parable is meant to represent, since even scholars contest them hotly, perhaps in the end a better question to ask is, “What do I learn about God here? What do I learn about myself and the culture I live in?”

Jesus often introduced these very practical stories with the phrase, “The Kingdom of God is like...” Want to know what it would look like in your home, your street, your workplace, your school, your heart and mind, if God was fully in charge? If his ways were fully lived out; if his plans were fully carried out? Jesus’ parables point the way.

July 4 Kingdom arithmetic- Mark 4: 30 – 32 The Mustard seed and Matthew 13:33 Yeast in the dough

What can God do with small things? Where can we see tiny signs of God at work?

July 11 Kingdom construction: Matthew 7:24-27 and Luke 6:46-49 Building plots

Where do we choose to lay the foundations of our lives?

July 18 Kingdom invitation Luke 14:15-24 and Matt 22:1-14 – Invitation to the banquet

Who does God invite? How do they respond? And how have **you** responded? Matthew’s account has a sting in the tail...

July 25 Kingdom timing –Matthew 25:1-13 The ten young women and the wedding

Who is ready to respond to the offer of life in the Kingdom? What is the “oil” we should be stocking up on?

Aug 1 Kingdom economy Part 1: Mark 10:24b-25 and Luke 12:13-21 Camels, Needles and Barns

Uncomfortable pictures of how wealth can trap us

Aug 8 Kingdom economy Part 2: Matthew 13:44 and Luke 11:5-8 Treasure and the annoying neighbour

What is worth your everything? And what would you sacrifice to get it?

Aug 15 Kingdom consequences: Luke 19:11-27 Three slaves and their master’s property

What are we doing in the time we have and with what we’ve been given?

Aug 22 Kingdom blind spots: Matthew 7:1-5 Specks and planks

How far do we pass judgement on our fellow men and women?

Aug 29 Kingdom compassion: Matthew 18:21-35 The compassionate king and the unmerciful slave

What have you received, and how far does that inform your behaviour?