

Checking In

1. Take a few minutes to check in with everyone, see how they are doing, and open with prayer.
2. Church Life: Ministry Partners needed for Children, Student, Music and Media Tech. Baptisms are on April 29th between services. Prayer Retreat April 29th for Small Groups

Learning

Knowing God

Key Doctrines

- *God* – God’s graciousness is seen through the universal proclamation of his kingdom to mankind, regardless of spiritual condition.
- *Christ* – Jesus is the “word of the kingdom,” the kingdom of God is present in Jesus, so whenever and wherever Jesus is proclaimed the kingdom is also proclaimed.
- *Man* – Our spiritual condition shapes our response to the “word of the kingdom.”

Key Observations

- What was anything that stood out to you about this week’s sermon, or what did you take away?
- *Read:* Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23; 24:14; Luke 6:27-36; John 3:16-21

- What do all of these passages indicate about God’s disposition toward the world? *These passages all show that God’s disposition is one of love toward the world, he loves those whose hearts are hard, rocky, thorny, or good and ensures that each has his kingdom proclaimed to them. God’s love is not a narrow love, but extends even to his enemies, to the evil and ungrateful, to whom he is “kind.”*
- What is our connection to God’s commitment to the universal proclamation of his kingdom? *The wonder of wonders is that God invites us to be a part of his gracious proclamation to the whole world and to people with all kinds of spiritual conditions. God’s ordinary means of grace to the world is through his church whom he enlists in this global commission to proclaim and bear witness to Romans 5:10, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”*
- *Read:* Read John 1:1, 14, 18; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Hebrews 4:11-13; 1 Peter 1:22-25;
 - What is the relationship of the “word of the kingdom” or the “word of God” to Jesus in these passages? *Each of these passages teach that the “word” and Jesus are synonymous. Jesus is the “word” proclaimed, he is the embodiment of the kingdom, in him we see what the kingdom is like. Thus Hebrews says the “word is sharper than any double edged sword” then goes on to say “no creature is hidden from his sight.” Jesus, in short, is the “word” of God. The church has nothing to say outside of “Christ and him crucified.”*

- If Jesus is the “word of the kingdom” then how might that inform what “kingdom” work is? *Often Christians talk about “kingdom work” as something like ‘social justice’ or ‘good works’ as somehow distinct from the preaching of the gospel. What these passages teach us is that at the very center of “kingdom work” is “preaching the gospel” of making known the word of Christ and his kingdom.*
- *Read: Matthew 13:13-15; Luke 18:18-24; 19:1-10; John 4:1-42*
 - What is the reason given for why some people don’t “understand” the word of the kingdom? *It doesn’t seem to be, at least according to Jesus, because they lack intelligence. It seems rather this lack of understanding has more to do with a problem with their will, they don’t want to “turn” and be healed. Jesus seems to indicate that some of his listeners simply don’t want to hear what he is saying, or like the rich young ruler they want something more or other than the kingdom and the good seed gets choked out.*
 - What do Zacchaeus and the woman of Samaria have in common? *They don’t seem likely candidates for being considered “good soil” but they are the ones that receive the word and bear fruit (Zacchaeus gives away much of his wealth to help the poor, and the Woman sees much of her village come to Christ). What Jesus parables and ministry teach us is to be indiscriminate in our proclamation of the word, because some who look like “rocky” or “thorny” or “hard” soil are in fact the very ones who are “good” and ready to receive the word!*

Listening

Responding to God

- In light of hearing this week’s sermon, our study together, and listening to God’s Word, how might God be inviting you to take a step of obedience?

Loving

Obeying God

- What is happening in my own life right now that I need to share and for which I need prayer?
- This week I am committed to praying for _____ about:

Checking Out

- What was most meaningful about this group session for you (*Give each person 1-2 sentences to share*)?
- Close in Prayer and Read John 15:5.