

# Home Group Discussion Questions

Sunday 22nd April 2018

## 'Stories of the Kingdom'

**Read:** Matthew 13:1-23

This whole long chapter is Matthew's collection of parables about the Kingdom of Heaven. Parables are more than 'short stories that illustrate a point'. They are more like riddles, deliberately enigmatic, stories which do not carry their meaning on the surface. They need to be engaged with and wrestled over. The parables of this chapter are all about the Kingdom of Heaven. The two main themes seem to be (a) that the Kingdom does not come 'all at once'; the Age to Come has broken into the Present Age but has not yet come in completion (hence it is now like a mustard seed); and (b) though God's coming rule is entirely his initiative, human response is still vitally important.

1. As you look over the whole chapter (though we haven't read it all), what strikes you about the different stories Jesus tells?
2. In v.11-15, Jesus gives to the disciples an explanation as to why he uses parables. What does he say is their purpose? Look back to Matthew 11:25-28. How do you think v.11-12 fits in to this thinking?
3. Focussing specifically on the Parable of the Sower (v.1-9), and reflecting on the very mixed response to Jesus' message (compare Matt 13:53-58) how do you think this parable would *encourage* the first disciples?
4. The detailed interpretation of this parable in v.18-24 shows that there will always be a variety of responses to the proclamation of the Kingdom. What does Jesus say is key to a fruitful life?
5. As followers of Christ we constantly need to reflect on whether our hearts are hard, our faith is shallow or our lives are over-cluttered (the first three soils). Where do you feel most challenged?
6. There is not only a variety of negative responses (different soils) but a variety of fruitfulness (v.8, v.23). What do you think we can learn from the latter?
7. Read the parables of the hidden treasure and pearl (Matt 13:44-46). How do they challenge you?
8. What for you, at the moment, is helping you *most* to grow in your faith?