KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material

Matthew 13:44-52

Week of 19thth to 25th of November

The Value of the Kingdom

Leader Preparation

This is the last study in the book of Matthew for this year. This week's passage focuses on what we value most in life. It asks us to consider what we would be willing to give up for the treasure of God's Kingdom. This is a great opportunity to challenge those who have not made a decision to follow Jesus to do so. It is also good to remind those who are on the road to finish the course.

Don't forget as the leader to spend some time reading the passage and searching your own heart. It is only out of the treasure that you have received that you can pass on to others!

May God bless you over this next period, whether your group is continuing to meet, or having a bit of a sabbatical.

Group Time:

Spend some time letting people explore what they really value most. Choose one of the games below.

1. You could play a game of "Would you rather. . ." with questions like this:
   - Would you rather be an athlete or an artist?
   - Would you rather spend time with your family or with your friends?
   - Would you rather do something with others or work on something alone?
   - Would you rather have the hiccups forever or always feel as though you're about to sneeze?
   - Would you rather be seated on an airplane between a couple that's arguing or next to a crying baby?
   - Would you rather be the smartest person in a world full of stupid people or the stupidest person in a world full of smart people?
   - Would you rather be on stage or in the audience?
   - Would you rather solve world hunger or cure cancer?
   - Would you rather give up social media or be an influencer?

Would you rather live in a world without music or one without colours?

Would you rather be able to forget your worst memory, or remember your best memory better?

Would you rather be the boss of a failing company or an entry-level employee at a successful one?

Would you rather have every meal you eat for the rest of your life be too spicy, or too sweet?

Would you rather never get lost again or never lose your balance again?

Would you rather a "ding" sound every time you wink, or a "pow-pow" sound every time you make a finger gun?

Would you rather always feel hungry or always feel tired?

Would you rather have the ability to be invisible or to read people's minds?

Would you rather have a knife when you need a spoon or a spoon when you need a knife?

2. Ask everyone to write down / note on their phones:
   - Three favourite activities
   - Five important people in their lives
   - Three goals they have for the future
   - Three favourite possessions

Now read them the story below. At a few points, they will need to choose to discard "treasures" from their lists. At the end, get them to share what they feel about the things that are left behind.

Once upon a time

1. While surfing during the Christmas holidays, you are attacked by a shark. The doctor doesn't know if you're going to make it. Give up one of your favourite activities.
2. You end up being hospitalized for a bit to recover. Lose one of your goals.
3. Because you take time off work you are short of cash. Give up one of your possessions.
4. You need a prosthetic leg. This is expensive – give up another possession.
5. Some people feel uncomfortable around you now. Discard two important people.
6. It's hard getting around and you feel exhausted all the time. Lose one of your goals and give up an activity.
7. You are readmitted to hospital due to a rare contamination of your blood from sea algae. You are allowed only one visitor. Discard two important people.
8. You are starting your life over again with only these "treasures" remaining.
   - What do you have left?
   - What would you miss the most?

Exploring the Passage

READ Matthew 13:44-52

The Value of the Kingdom

The Parable of the Treasure and the Pearl

- What is a goal that you have really valued and worked towards in the past? What sacrifices did you have to make to try to reach your goal? Was it worth it?
- Have you ever made a life choice that required you to give something up and regretted it afterwards? Did you lose out on something potentially more valuable through your choice? What would you do differently next time?
- Thinking about the treasure in the field and the pearl, did these transactions make sense?
- How did you come to hear about Jesus – were you actively looking for something meaningful, or were you surprised to find him?
- What parts of your life that you value would you find difficult to sacrifice as you follow Jesus?
- At the moment, do you live your life as if Jesus is a treasure / pearl to you?

The Variety of the Kingdom

The Parable of the Net and the Fish

- This was a parable told not to the crowds, but directly to the disciples. What groups of people do you recognize in the fish that are being sorted?
- How can we strengthen our faith to withstand the challenge of future suffering and judgment? (perhaps think of some of the things that helped or hindered the seeds of the sower)
- How can we be sure of our salvation today and continue to persevere to the end?

The Vocabulary of the Kingdom

The Parable of the Scribe and his Treasures

- A lot of the descriptions of the teachers of the law in Matthew are negative. What do you think about the reference to those who “become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven”?
- What benefit would the Jewish believers experience from their “old” faith enriching the “new” belief in Jesus?
- Do you value learning more in depth about God’s plan in the old and new testaments? – are these “pearls” that you seek out?
- Have you ever considered that you might be holding the treasures that others seek? How can we share the treasures of God’s kingdom with others?

Application

Jesus calls us to follow him whole-heartedly. His path leads us directly towards joy – although at the time we may feel it is a huge sacrifice.

- Have you committed to following Jesus before?
- Choosing Jesus over earthly treasures is a constant process in our Christian walk. Ask God to reveal to you anything that has started to become more important to you than him.
- Read Philippians 3:7-8. How does Paul view the cost of his sacrifice?

Prayer

Spend time praying for each person in your group. Choosing to give up the things we otherwise value for Christ can be hard, even when we know that there is joy in the end. Pray for strength to continue the course even when we are struggling.