KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material
Matthew 16:1-12
Week of 10th of March
A Warning

WARMUP

This week's passage focuses on signs and what they mean. Living in Johannesburg, we have an excess of signs flashing around us. We have to learn to interpret them, and know how to respond. In the following examples, what could each item be indicating is coming in the future? How should you respond if you see this sign?

◊Brown leaves start falling from the trees
◊A pregnant woman starts to have strong stomach pains
◊Sitting in church, a video of a countdown starts playing
◊At school, a bell rings
◊In your home, you wake up to the smells of coffee and fresh bread
◊In the traffic, a light changes from green to red – or a man in a high vis vest holds his flat hand towards you
◊Your dog sees you putting on your walking shoes
◊A man or woman in your workplace starts wearing a shiny ring on their finger
◊Shops start hanging tinsel and baubles as decorations

Leader preparation:

Prepare to lead the group by reading through Matthew 16:1-12, and the notes on pages 16 and 17.

This week's message speaks about the signs that should lead us to faith in Jesus, and warns us of the ways that we can be deceived or led astray. Rather than just critiqueing the Pharisees and Sadducees, we would like our group members to identify current voices that might lead believers astray, and strengthen their understanding of Jesus' call to follow him.

You might like to share communion together this evening, so prepare the elements in advance.



Read Matthew 16:1-12

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Conflict Crescendo

Did the Pharisees and Sadducees not recognize Jesus? Were they just doing their due diligence? We all experience doubts in our daily lives. Sometimes we do need to confirm what God is saying.

Read Isaiah 35:5,6; 61:1,2

What qualities of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God are mentioned in these passages?

Read Mattthew 11:2-6

What signs made John ask his question?

What response did Jesus give?

What conclusion did Jesus want John to reach?

Was Jesus offended by John's question?

How do you address doubts when you experience them in your daily life? Do you speak to God about them? Do find someone to discuss your questions with?

Read Isaiah 8:12-15 and Deuteronomy 13:1-5

Are there reasons for us to be cautious in the way we interpret signs when we see them?

How does God tell us to approach them?

What ideas do we encounter that we need to test to know whether they are from God?

Matthew 12:24

How did the enemies of Jesus interpret his miracles?

How could their comments root themselves in the people around them and change their response to Jesus?

How does Jesus view the attitude of these unbelievers? (See Matthew 12:39-42)

What do you think the difference was between the attitude of John the Baptist and the attitude of the Pharisees?

What do yeast / leaven symbolize

Matthew 16:11-12

◊God freeing the Israelites from Egypt: they baked unleavened bread before they left. Eating unleavened bread symbolized God freeing them from their sins.

◊Some sacrifices instituted in the temple were not allowed to contain yeast. This demonstrated purification from sins and consecration to God. It reminded the Israelites of their rescue from Egypt, removing yeast (sin) from their lives, and depending solely on God to save them.

◊Jesus describes the teaching of the Pharisees as yeast. This specifically relates to their belief in being saved by their works. (see also Luke 12:1)

◊Paul speaks about yeast as sin, and emphasizes how a little bit can taint the whole batch of dough: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

◊Matthew 13:33 is speaking about the Kingdom of God when it talks about yeast, but it again demonstrates how a little bit of yeast can permeate a whole batch of dough.

IRL

If Jesus were speaking to us today, what kinds of yeast do you think he would warn us about?

- ◊ are there particular sins that taint us as a church body?
- ◊ are there people who may cause us to stumble in our faith?
- ◊ are there temptations that lead us astray?
- ◊ are there ways we view the world that contradict his teaching?

How might Jesus tell us to deal with these issues?

Like the Israelites commemorating Passover with unleavened bread, what are some ways we can remind ourselves of the core of our faith? How can we ground ourselves solidly in the “sign of Jonah”

This could be a great evening to plan to share communion together as a group. Prepare some juice and bread beforehand. You might like to hand out the separate communion service page to your group members, or whatsapp it to them so that they can participate. Take time before communion to lay your sins before him. Take time afterwards to bring to him any needs in the group.

