

SUNDAY HANDOUT FOR DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION - July 5

The Hidden Work of God (Matthew 13:24-43)

Jesus' parables about the Kingdom of Heaven answer some of the deepest questions of the human heart. Ones like: "Why is the world so broken? Why does evil seem to be winning? God, do you care? Are you going to do anything about this mess?" And "Why do your purposes seem to move so slowly? How will you accomplish your will through what seems weak, hidden and insignificant?"

In Matthew 13:24-43 when Jesus communicates three more parables, he isn't interested in simply giving you information – he is fiercely interested in your spiritual formation. The Kingdom of Heaven is a reality he wants you to enter and go on to embody. A reality that brings comfort in the face of evil, patience when all we want are immediate results and trust in the hidden, but totally pervasive, work of God.

1. Comfort in the face of evil (Matthew 13:24-29; 36-43)

2. Patience when all we want are immediate results (Matthew 13:31-32)

3. Trust in the hidden, but totally pervasive, work of God (Matthew 13:33-35)

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Looking at the parables of the weeds, the mustard seed, and the leaven together, what similarities or repeated themes do you notice? What do they reveal about the nature of God's Kingdom?
2. In the parable of the weeds (vv. 24–30; 36–43), why are the servants eager to pull up the weeds? Why does the farmer refuse? What does this teach us about God's wisdom, justice, and timing?
3. Jesus' first hearers expected God's Kingdom to arrive with immediate power, judgment, and victory. How do these three parables challenge those expectations? In what ways do they challenge our expectations today?
4. The sermon suggested that Jesus tells these parables not simply to give information but to shape us. How is Jesus forming His disciples through these stories? What kind of people is He inviting us to become?
5. Which of these three Kingdom realities do you most need to embrace right now?
 - Comfort in the face of evil
 - Patience when you want immediate results
 - Trust in the hidden work of God

Why?

6. Is there an area of your life where you are tempted to think, "God, why aren't You doing something?" How do these parables encourage you to trust His timing and remain faithful in the small, unseen places of your life?
7. The sermon described parables as realities we are invited to "enter." If you were to look at your current circumstances through the "window" of one of these parables, what would change? How would your perspective, attitude, or response be different?
8. The cross of Jesus looked like weakness and defeat before it became the greatest victory in history. How does Jesus' death and resurrection give you hope and confidence as you wait for God to make all things right?