

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Psalms 93

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship)

Ready through Psalm 93 as a group.

Icebreaker

Tell a story about meeting a famous person.

Text for Discussion: Mark 11:3, 14-15; Luke 4:43, Matthew 4:23, 18:1-4, Acts 1:3

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

It's easy to misread the four gospels – to lose focus of the central message of Jesus. In doing so, we risk misrepresenting Him to the world. By failing to grasp the arc of the story God reveals in the Bible, we will misconstrue the mission and purpose of living as His disciples today. What is it that we so often miss about the gospels? What is it that they're saying about Jesus? What was His primary concern?

The Good News of The Kingdom. Life in the Kingdom is the first thing Jesus speaks of in Mark, and it's His final message to the disciples in Acts. It's the theme of the Sermon on the Mount and His parables. From beginning to end, the gospels are telling how Israel's God has become King through Jesus.

To sever the story of Jesus from the story of Israel is to miss the heart of why He is the Good News for the whole world. Jesus was Jewish as were His first followers. Their lens for viewing the world was formed by the stories and promises of what we call the Old Testament. It's clear the gospel writers saw the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in reference to them. The entirety of Israel's scriptures had been pointing toward and leading to Jesus becoming their long-awaited king. In Him is the culmination and climax of Israel's story.

Many centuries before, God had promised to send a Messiah, a son of David, a king and deliverer (2 Sam 7:12-14), who would restore their kingdom and put an end to Israel's suffering. The intent of the gospel writers was to show that – as the prophets had foretold – in Jesus, both judgment and salvation were coming upon God's people. He was the suffering servant in Isaiah's vision whose arrival would mark a time of purifying judgment (Malachi 3:1) and announce a new exodus and the end of their exile (Ex 23:20).

The gospels show how Jesus is directly connected to the stories of Adam, Abraham and David. The royal imagery of Jesus as king is clear throughout their accounts but most explicit in the passion narrative. Jesus is the King and Son of God, which He demonstrates by enduring the cross. His death redefines what power, greatness and kingship look like. A new kingdom has been inaugurated on the cross, and being raised from the dead is His vindication. As the risen Jesus says, "All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Me."

Jesus has announced a whole new way of being human. As disciples, we are learning from Him how to live in the Kingdom of God today. He died to set us free from sin but also to set us free for living this new life. The Kingdom and the cross are thoroughly integrated: not only has our debt been paid on the cross; the King has come.

If new life came to Jesus through humility, through dependence on His Father's voice, through forgiveness, through loving His enemies, through suffering and death for the sake of serving others... then why should we expect God's Kingdom will come into our lives in any other way? Like a child reaching for a parent's hand, we must be like children in our openness to God, seeking first His Kingdom and letting Jesus be the controlling desire of our hearts.

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

Discuss why we can't sever the story of Christ from the story of Israel. How do they fit together and why is this good news for the whole world?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- We have heard a lot about the cross of Jesus, what the cross has achieved, but we have heard little about the kingdom of God and life in the Kingdom. What influences have shaped your understanding of Jesus primary message, the gospel of the kingdom?
 - Name some ways we may have diminished the whole message of the Cross and the Kingdom.
- What were the disciples preaching when Jesus sent them out and why were people attracted to their message?
 - In Mark 1:3 we read, "prepare the way of the Lord." How are we called to prepare the way of the Lord in the world today?
 - If someone asked you to summarize the Kingdom of God, what would your summary be?
- Discuss why we can't sever the story of Christ from the story of Israel.
 - How do they fit together and why is this good news for the whole world?
- What did Jesus mean when He said we must be as children to enter the kingdom? See message translation of Matthew 18:1-4.
- Discuss what it means that a "disciple is one who by grace and by choice is learning from Jesus how to live."
 - What is one small act you could do this week that would declare and enact the life of Christ and the kingdom of God?

Prayer

"Thy Kingdom Come, Thy will be done." Use this statement from our Lord's Prayer to pray over your prayer requests this week.

Experiment of the Month

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Experiment of the Month:

Spiritual Formation Experiment - Read through the Gospel of Mark. Note the verses that tell us that Jesus' story is written as the culmination and climax of Israel's story and hope.

Missional Experiment - What you would include if you were to tell a brief, concise, yet complete version of God's story to an unbelieving friend or neighbor if asked? Write the story and practice sharing it with your community group for feedback. Feedback questions to ask - Did this story make sense to you? What sticks out to you? What did you learn about God? What do you wonder about? Ask a friend if you can practice telling the story to them as you learn to share it from memory. Have the community group pray that God would give you the opportunity to share it with an unbelieving friend, neighbor, or loved one.