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The Kingdom of Heaven – comparative articles and resources.

Source: [Topical Bible: Understanding the Kingdom of Heaven](#)

The concept of the "Kingdom of Heaven" is a central theme in the teachings of Jesus Christ and is predominantly found in the Gospel of Matthew. It is synonymous with the "Kingdom of God," a term used in the other Synoptic Gospels—Mark and Luke. The Kingdom of Heaven represents both a present reality and a future hope, encompassing the reign of God over the hearts of believers and the ultimate establishment of His rule over all creation.

Biblical Foundation

The Kingdom of Heaven is introduced by John the Baptist, who proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 3:2). Jesus Himself begins His ministry with the same message, emphasizing the immediacy and accessibility of the Kingdom (Matthew 4:17).

Throughout His teachings, Jesus uses parables to illustrate the nature and value of the Kingdom, such as the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32) and the Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44).

Characteristics of the Kingdom

1. **Spiritual Nature:** The Kingdom of Heaven is not a political or earthly dominion but a spiritual realm where God's will is fulfilled. Jesus states, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), highlighting its transcendent nature.
2. **Present and Future Reality:** The Kingdom is both "already" and "not yet." It is present in the lives of believers who submit to God's authority, as seen in Jesus' declaration, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). However, it also points to a future fulfilment when Christ returns to establish His eternal reign (Revelation 11:15).
3. **Righteousness and Justice:** The Kingdom is characterized by righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). It demands a radical transformation of life, as seen in the Beatitudes, where Jesus describes the attitudes and behaviours of those who belong to the Kingdom (Matthew 5:3-12).
4. **Inclusivity and Exclusivity:** While the Kingdom is open to all who repent and believe, it also requires a commitment to follow Christ. Jesus warns that not everyone who calls Him "Lord" will enter the Kingdom, but only those who do the will of the Father (Matthew 7:21).

Parables and Teachings

Jesus frequently used parables to convey the mysteries of the Kingdom.

These accounts reveal the Kingdom's hidden yet powerful influence, as in the Parable of the Leaven (Matthew 13:33), and its incomparable worth, as in the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:45-46). The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:3-9) illustrates the varied responses to the message of the Kingdom, emphasizing the importance of a receptive heart.

Entry into the Kingdom

Entry into the Kingdom of Heaven requires repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus emphasizes the necessity of being "born again" to see the Kingdom (John 3:3). The call to discipleship involves a willingness to forsake all for the sake of the Kingdom (Matthew 19:29).

The Kingdom's Ethical Demands

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) outlines the ethical demands of the Kingdom, calling believers to a higher standard of righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees. This includes loving one's enemies, practicing forgiveness, and seeking first the Kingdom and God's righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

The Kingdom's Ultimate Fulfilment

The Kingdom of Heaven will reach its ultimate fulfilment at the end of the age when Christ returns in glory. The Book of Revelation describes the final victory of God's Kingdom, where He will dwell with His people, and there will be no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (Revelation 21:3-4).

This eschatological hope motivates believers to live in anticipation of the coming Kingdom, striving to align their lives with its values and priorities.

The kingdom of God is referenced often in the gospels (e.g., Mark 1:15; 10:15; 15:43; Luke 17:20) and other places in the New Testament (e.g., Acts 28:31; Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 15:50). The kingdom of God is synonymous with the kingdom of heaven. The concept of the kingdom of God takes on various shades of meaning in different passages of Scripture.

Source: [What is the kingdom of God? | GotQuestions.org](https://www.gotquestions.org/What-is-the-kingdom-of-God.html)

Broadly speaking, the kingdom of God is the rule of an eternal, sovereign God over all the universe. Several passages of Scripture show that God is the undeniable Monarch of all creation: “The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all” (Psalm 103:19). And, as King Nebuchadnezzar declared, “His kingdom is an eternal kingdom” (Daniel 4:3). Every authority that exists has been established by God (Romans 13:1). So, in one sense, the kingdom of God incorporates everything that is.

More narrowly, the kingdom of God is a spiritual rule over the hearts and lives of those who willingly submit to God’s authority. Those who defy God’s authority and refuse to submit to Him are not part of the kingdom of God; in contrast, those who acknowledge the lordship of Christ and gladly surrender to God’s rule in their hearts are part of the kingdom of God. In this sense, the kingdom of God is spiritual—Jesus said His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), and He preached that repentance is necessary to be a part of the kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17).

That the kingdom of God can be equated with the sphere of salvation is evident in John 3:5–7, where Jesus says the kingdom of God must be entered into by being born again. See also 1 Corinthians 6:9.

There is another sense in which the kingdom of God is used in Scripture: the literal rule of Christ on the earth during the millennium.

Daniel said that “the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44; cf. 7:13–14), and many of the other prophets predicted the same thing (e.g., Obadiah 1:21; Habakkuk 2:14; Micah 4:2; Zechariah 14:9).

Some theologians refer to the future, open manifestation of the kingdom of God as the “kingdom of glory” and the present, hidden manifestation of the kingdom of God as the “kingdom of grace.” But both manifestations are connected; Christ has set up His spiritual reign in the church on earth, and He will one day set up His physical reign in Jerusalem.

The kingdom of God has several aspects. The Lord is the Sovereign of the universe, and so in that sense His kingdom is universal (1 Timothy 6:15).

At the same time, the kingdom of God involves repentance and the new birth, as God rules in the hearts of His children in this world in preparation for the next.

The work begun on earth will find its consummation in heaven (see Philippians 1:6).

Matthew 18:3

and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 19:23

And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Mark 4:26-29

And He was saying, “The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows—how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head.

Matthew 13:44-46

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Matthew 13:31-43

He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

Matthew 13:47-52

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous.

Matthew 25:14-30

"For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.

Matthew 25:1-13

"Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them.

Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.

Matthew 13:24-30

Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also.

Matthew 20:1-16

"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. When he had agreed with the labourers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place.

Matthew 18:21-35

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus *said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.’

Luke 8:10

And He said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

Matthew 19:14

But Jesus said, “Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.”

Mark 10:14

But when Jesus saw this, He was indignant and said to them, “Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Matthew 19:23-24

And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

Mark 10:23

And Jesus, looking around, *said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”

Luke 18:29-30

And He said to them, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Mark 4:30-34

And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that the birds of the air can nest under its shade.”read more.

Source: All Parables About the Kingdom of God & Heaven by Biblewise

The Kingdom of God and Heaven in the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. These parables include all the stories Jesus told to reveal what the Kingdom of Heaven is like and to show the contrast between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this World.

This guide is divided into two sections:

The first part includes an overview of all parables about the Kingdom of God and Heaven with the Scripture location(s) in the Bible.

The second part lists each parable in order with their Bible verses so you can read what Jesus said directly on this page.

Note: The “Kingdom of God” and “Kingdom of Heaven” can be used interchangeably. The Kingdom of Heaven is the Semitic form used primarily in the Book of Matthew which was intended for a Jewish audience, while the Kingdom of God is the Greek form of the same phrase used mostly in the Book of Mark and Book of Luke for the Gentiles.

Parables About the Kingdom of God & Heaven Overview List

Kingdom Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke
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The Sower	Matthew 13:3–23	Mark 4:3–20	Luke 8:5–15
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The Weeds	Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43		
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The Growing Seed		Mark 4:26–29	
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The Mustard Seed	Matthew 13:31–32	Mark 4:30–32	Luke 13:18–19
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The Yeast	Matthew 13:33		Luke 13:20–21
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The Hidden Treasure	Matthew 13:44		
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The Pearl	Matthew 13:45–46		
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The Net	Matthew 13:47–50		
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The Householder	Matthew 13:52		
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The Unforgiving Servant	Matthew 18:23–31		
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The Workers In the Vineyard	Matthew 20:1–16		
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The Two Sons	Matthew 21:28–32		
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The Wedding Banquet	Matthew 22:1–14		
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The Ten Virgins	Matthew 25:1–13		
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Read the Parables of the Kingdom God & Heaven

The Parable of the Sower

Passage: Matthew 13:3–23, Mark 4:3–20, Luke 8:5–15

He spoke to them many things in parables, saying, “Behold, a farmer went out to sow. As he sowed, some seeds fell by the roadside, and the birds came and devoured them. Others fell on rocky ground, where they didn’t have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of earth. When the sun had risen, they were scorched. Because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell amongst thorns. The thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on good soil and yielded fruit: some one hundred times as much, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

The disciples came, and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?”

He answered them, “To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but it is not given to them. For whoever has, to him will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever doesn’t have, from him will be taken away even that which he has. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they don’t see, and hearing, they don’t hear, neither do they understand. In them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says,

‘By hearing you will hear,
and will in no way understand;
Seeing you will see,
and will in no way perceive;
for this people’s heart has grown callous,
their ears are dull of hearing,

and they have closed their eyes;
or else perhaps they might perceive with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their heart,
and would turn again,
and I would heal them.'

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For most certainly I tell you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which you see, and didn't see them; and to hear the things which you hear, and didn't hear them.

"Hear, then, the parable of the farmer. When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom and doesn't understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away that which has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown by the roadside. What was sown on the rocky places, this is he who hears the word and immediately with joy receives it; yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while.

When oppression or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. What was sown amongst the thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. What was sown on the good ground, this is he who hears the word and understands it, who most certainly bears fruit and produces, some one hundred times as much, some sixty, and some thirty."

The Parable of the Weeds

Passage: Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43

He set another parable before them, saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while people slept, his enemy came and sowed darnel weeds also amongst the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up and produced grain, then the darnel weeds appeared also. The servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where did these darnel weeds come from?'

"He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and gather them up?'

"But he said, 'No, lest perhaps while you gather up the darnel weeds, you root up the wheat with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the harvest time I will tell the reapers, "First, gather up the darnel weeds, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." "'

Then Jesus sent the multitudes away, and went into the house. His disciples came to him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the darnel weeds of the field."

He answered them, "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, the field is the world, the good seeds are the children of the Kingdom, and the darnel weeds are the children of the evil one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels.

As therefore the darnel weeds are gathered up and burnt with fire; so will it be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will gather out of his Kingdom all things that cause stumbling and those who do iniquity, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

The Parable of the Growing Seed

Passage: Mark 4:26–29

He said, “God’s Kingdom is as if a man should cast seed on the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, though he doesn’t know how. For the earth bears fruit by itself: first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.”

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Passage: Matthew 13:31–32, Mark 4:30–32, Luke 13:18–19

He set another parable before them, saying, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took, and sowed in his field, which indeed is smaller than all seeds. But when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches.”

The Parable of the Yeast

Passage: Matthew 13:33, Luke 13:20–21

He spoke another parable to them. “The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until it was all leavened.”

The Parable of the Hidden Treasure

Passage: Matthew 13:44

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid. In his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”

The Parable of the Pearl

Passage: Matthew 13:45–46

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who is a merchant seeking fine pearls, who having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

The Parable of the Net

Passage: Matthew 13:47–50

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some fish of every kind, which, when it was filled, fishermen drew up on the beach. They sat down and gathered the good into containers, but the bad they threw away.

So it will be in the end of the world. The angels will come and separate the wicked from amongst the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

The Parable of the Householder

Passage: Matthew 13:52

He said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been made a disciple in the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who is a householder, who brings out of his treasure new and old things.”

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

Passage: Matthew 18:23–35

“Therefore the Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. When he had begun to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But because he couldn’t pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, with his wife, his children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will repay you all!’ The lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him and forgave him the debt.

“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him one hundred denarii, and he grabbed him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

“So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will repay you!’ He would not, but went and cast him into prison until he should pay back that which was due.

So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were exceedingly sorry, and came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him in and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, even as I had mercy on you?' His lord was angry, and delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due to him. So my heavenly Father will also do to you, if you don't each forgive your brother from your hearts for his misdeeds."

The Parable of the Workers In the Vineyard

Passage: Matthew 20:1–16

"For the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who was the master of a household, who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. When he had agreed with the labourers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. He went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace. He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' So they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. About the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle. He said to them, 'Why do you stand here all day idle?'

"They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.'

"He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and you will receive whatever is right.'

“When evening had come, the lord of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the labourers and pay them their wages, beginning from the last to the first.’

“When those who were hired at about the eleventh hour came, they each received a denarius. When the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise each received a denarius. When they received it, they murmured against the master of the household, saying, ‘These last have spent one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat!’

“But he answered one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Didn’t you agree with me for a denarius? Take that which is yours, and go your way. It is my desire to give to this last just as much as to you. Isn’t it lawful for me to do what I want to with what I own? Or is your eye evil, because I am good?’ So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen.”

The Parable of the Two Sons

Passage: Matthew 21:28–32

“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first, and said, ‘Son, go work today in my vineyard.’ He answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind, and went. He came to the second, and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I’m going, sir,’ but he didn’t go. Which of the two did the will of his father?”

They said to him, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, “Most certainly I tell you that the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering into God’s Kingdom before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you didn’t believe him; but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. When you saw it, you didn’t even repent afterward, that you might believe him.”

The Parable of the Wedding Banquet

Passage: Matthew 22:1–14

Jesus answered and spoke to them again in parables, saying, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king, who made a wedding feast for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent out other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “Behold, I have prepared my dinner. My cattle and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding feast!” ’ But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his merchandise; and the rest grabbed his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. When the king heard that, he was angry, and sent his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city.

“Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding is ready, but those who were invited weren’t worthy. Go therefore to the intersections of the highways, and as many as you may find, invite to the wedding feast.’ Those servants went out into the highways and gathered together as many as they found, both bad and good. The wedding was filled with guests.

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man who didn’t have on wedding clothing, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here not wearing wedding clothing?’ He was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and throw him into the outer darkness. That is where the weeping and grinding of teeth will be.’ For many are called, but few chosen.”

The Parable of the Ten Virgins

Passage: Matthew 25:1–13

“Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. Those who were foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. Now while the bridegroom delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Behold! The bridegroom is coming! Come out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. The foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘What if there isn’t enough for us and you? You go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ While they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins also came, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us.’ But he answered, ‘Most certainly I tell you, I don’t know you.’ Watch therefore, for you don’t know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”

Summary for the Parables of About God's Kingdom In Heaven

As you discovered, Jesus told many parables of God's Kingdom that are recorded in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) as a way to teach His listeners about the mysteries of what the Kingdom of Heaven is like under the Lord's reign.

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Comment: +Ian

There is the basic teaching. So what do you make of it?

A better question regarding the Kingdom of Heaven might be 'when is it?'

There are three immediate answers as it depends whether you are talking about personally or communally or eschatologically.

Personally, Jesus makes clear that the Kingdom is right now, it is already happening and each of us is prompted to accept or reject it (at your peril). See Mark (9:40), which states, "*For whoever is not against us is for us.*"

Communally, The Kingdom of Heaven is yet to be effected and fully realised.

So how come the two states can co-exist?

The answer basically is because when it comes to the fulfilling of the Kingdom in the community, it has yet to be effected.

It will only happen when all the individuals are on side and making it happen. The fact it hasn't happened yet is because we have not made it so.

Then there is a third answer which is an eschatological one relating to end times, and Jesus told us two things about that that matter immediately, one it will happen when least expected and two, we shouldn't get hung up about it – a case of if we are loved by God then we will be taken care of.

So once we have accepted the Kingdom of God personally, how can we bring into effect the Kingdom of God in the community and make it real?

The clues are in the teaching of Jesus around the two great commandments, 'love God', 'love your neighbour' in short.

In order to do that we need to undertake a 24/7 approach to putting those two requirements into action. It does not require big miracles or great shows of faith or massive revivals. Just an on-going response to the needs of daily life met in the needs of others whoever they are or their religion. It is more often the small kindnesses than the 'big important and showy things' that make all the difference.

Remember the old adage, 'small bricks make great buildings'.

All our actions require a level of instinctive discernment because there are many people in the world who will abuse and reject our kindness. The recent sense of entitlement that people feel or are encouraged to feel, that of 'being owed by society', has to be balanced against real need.

Whist we are not called to be soft touches with ever open and unquestioning wallets, but we need to have open and welcoming hearts if we want to see the Kingdom enacted and established in society.

And that includes setting boundaries and expectations and living by them, and a great deal of re-education.

Christian or Godly love is not soft and woolly or allows anything to be acceptable, and it will say 'no' to unacceptable behaviours and morals, and reject what is inappropriate.

It used to be that 'the church' has a handle on maintaining Christian/biblical standards but that is no longer the case. Instead of a more or less uniform set of agreed behaviours and expectations, 'the church' has fragmented into disagreement and disarray, and instead of focussing on the first of the great Commandments, 'love God', it has become absorbed in savings itself, fund raising, and trying to rescue what it can of its historic position and authority. It has enjoyed great political and financial power historically, but that like the mess of potage, has been squandered and lost in the many internal battles for personal power and control, leadership mismanagement, and a failure to maintain biblical teaching and authority.

So it comes down to individuals to bring about the Kingdom, but that has always been the case if you consider Jesus' own teaching on the Kingdom and its imminence. Paraphrased 'it is now, make it so.'

It is not 'the church' that is being called but individuals like yourselves.

In this 'the church' has no authority over any individual and it cannot determine who shall minister, or in what way, or how, or when. That individual is under the direct authority of God according to the two great commandments, and their responsibility is directed to their neighbour, not to 'the church' or religious association they subscribe allegiance to.

'The church' as it often exists or can be found these days has its place, but it not God or a replacement for Him or His Word. In many cases it is little more than a historic religious institution that is self-absorbed and has forgotten its purpose and reason for existing. It speaks for a God it has lost touch with and then recreated in its own image, and even disowned its scriptural heritage and truths, speaking untruths instead and leading people astray. It no longer knows how to truly 'love God' or 'love your neighbour', or even comprehends what real Christian or Godly love is. It simply exists for itself and own benefit.

These institutions have fulfilled the prophecy of 'white washed sepulchres'.

They are emptying whilst non-traditional churches are often thriving. Their success is often a matter of criticism and bitterness. In the end, the Kingdom of God is evidenced by its existence or its absence, not by historically formulated canon, rules and regulations, traditions and religious practices, liturgies or slick theologically reasoned argument or even 'Songs of Praise'. It is measured by love of God and His people, and the minutia of daily and ordinary expressions of selfless love in action.

There is the Kingdom in all of its glory, in the present moment.

In terms of community, the Kingdom of God is yet to be achieved. Whilst the Kingdom may have become established at a personal level, it needs to grow and become community. Think of the parables to do with harvest and growing. The harvest cannot happen without the its sowers and harvesters.

It is only then that we will have a sense of the communal Kingdom of God having been established, and each generation needs to learn and accept its role and responsibilities in the Kingdom in turn. In one sense it remains a work that is on-going and yet to be fulfilled. Nevertheless we are instructed in the Lord's Prayer to pray for it to come to fulfilment and to do whatever we can to bring it about. It is not someone else's job but ours and ours alone.

Nothing earthly lasts for ever and the final great harvest will be at the Apocalypse.

This is for many what they believe is what the coming of the Kingdom is really about. The end times, at least in earthly terms.

In focussing on this aspect alone I believe they are missing much of the point and purpose of the Kingdom of God.

The future will take care of itself and God will take care of those who truly love Him. It is the 'now', the present, we have to deal with.

What is more important than the two great commandments?

If they are fulfilled then we can change the future. If they are not fulfilled then the future remains fixed and bleak for all of us and we will have failed in our ministries and calling. It should be a straight forward ask but it seems not.

The two great commandments are simultaneously so simple and so complex.

Certainly the interpretation of them is an issue although there is a clear outcome expected, and some rules and/or guidelines may be helpful in this.

But the reality is that you cannot be expected to legislate for every circumstance you are presented with in daily life. The rules and guidelines would quickly become unwieldy and impractical and useless simply because of the sheer number and weight of them.

This was one of the things Jesus railed at regarding the actions of the Pharisees and their love of the law, making them so cumbersome and overbearing they were incomprehensible to the people they were meant to help. Take tithing for example or keeping the Sabbath. The rules in their application took on a life of their own over time and came to matter more than the reason for their existence. Instead they and similar rules and interpretations became a means to oppress, subjugate, dominate and create an elite group of religious legal experts with power over the masses. (Sounds familiar!)

There are some things that matter more than rules, and some things that just stop working when rules are created and then applied. And sometimes, trying to explain the rules makes them even more difficult to understand and apply.

Jesus, on the other hand, when he taught using parables, the content of the teaching was both clear and concise in its description and had an outcome or principle or application in mind. The problem was this was often open ended.

It was often 'this is where you are now, this is where you need to be, this is why but how you do it is up to you. Take responsibility and sort it.' It's the difference between being told what to do and knowing what to do, when to do it, why and when to apply it. It was the difference between being a disciple and an apostle. Jesus hoped all his disciples would graduate and be apostles.

Parables may be 'bare bones' teaching because of their concise and economic delivery but I would say that 'there is always enough meat in the content to make a spiritually nourishing stew'. Parables are not to be underestimated.

The way the intended outcome was to be achieved or put into practice was often open ended and left up to the listener. This is why there can be different but equally valid interpretations. People's needs are different as are their circumstances and understanding, and they will take what they need from the teaching and understanding they receive. However we should realise that this teaching is just the beginning of a journey, not its culmination.

One of the principles of good counselling and/or teaching is to get people to understand what the problem is first and then often they will know what the solution is without further intervention or prompting. (Interesting to note though that even the disciples sometimes had to ask Jesus to explain some of the parables and other teachings as they didn't always catch on – the parable of the sower is just one good example.)

And sometimes, like in the two great commandments, you get a simple principle or two that covers everything that is required without being over prescriptive. Even a child can understand even if not fully and apply it.

This enables the listener to take ownership of the rule and its expression and make it their own. And that matters. No longer the bond servant. Remember the words of Jesus, 'I came to set you free.'

(In my view the two great commandments are the most important and central part of our faith and summarise it effectively in just two simple and short statements. In them are contained everything of any importance that you need to know and put into action.)

The 'why' is made obvious because of the formulation, the 'when' is simply at the point of need, the 'how' is as how it can best be achieved or delivered according to experience, circumstance, closeness of relationship, etc.

Yes, there will be social and moral constraints to behaviour, and in modern parlance, various legal protections to apply or consider.

Some things are obvious. You should never put yourself or the person you are assisting unnecessarily 'at risk', intend to take advantage of them or the situation, abuse them or let yourself be abused, or do things that don't feel right, etc. But these things should never become an obstacle in responding to someone in need and caring for them with Godly love. The secular understanding of love is much misunderstood, diminished and distorted when it comes to comparing it with a biblical understanding of love.

Those are things summed up in the second of the two great commandments: 'love your neighbour as you yourself would (hope to) be loved'.

Treating someone with respect, consideration, tenderness, compassion, understanding, kindness and care, are basics of Christian and Godly love. That doesn't mean though that you have to agree with that person's views, morals, religion, politics, etc., or condone their behaviour/sin, but neither should those things become reasons not to help them in their moment of need.

Regardless of who we pretend to be, say we are, are perceived or judged by others or ourselves, we all remain Children and Creations of God our Father, even if we do not personally believe this to be so or even deny God. God sees what we do not, and I would rather trust His judgement than my own.

As we are loved by God, so should we love others and let them love us.

And God, our Father, comes first.

And if we attend to these things with open and full hearts, the Kingdom of God is here and now and lives amongst us and in us. But we have to want it.

The teachings and parables taught by Jesus remain good and useful indicators as to what the Kingdom of God is and help us understand different aspects of what it is and its implications, but even taken as a whole, it still leaves an incomplete picture. We only see and understand in part. We are called more properly to live it, and in living it grow in spiritual stature, effectiveness and wisdom, and advance the Kingdom of Heaven for the sake of all people.

Prayer:

*Thy Kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth
as it is in Heaven.....
For real! No pretence.
Truly, Amen.*

Death is not the End.

+David

The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.” (From Luke 7:11-17). I can only imagine. I can only imagine what it was like for this mother and, believe me, I have. Thousands of times. I picture it in my mind. I feel the shock, the joy, each hug and kiss. I see tears of sorrow that now flow with happiness. I hear the silence of grief shattered by words of thanksgiving and celebration.

I'm glad for the widow and her son. I'm glad they got their lives back and I do mean "they" because I know that in some way she also died. It wasn't just the young man. It was his mother too. With his death her future was forever changed, lost, dead. I know how that feels and I know many of you do too. Anyone whose loved one has died knows what that's like. So I am really happy they got their lives back but I have to be honest about a few things.

I also feel a bit sad, and confused. Mostly, and naturally I just wish Jesus would come and give all those loved one's back to their families too. I wish Jesus would come and give us back our lives. I want to hear him say, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" Surely, you know what I am talking about. Surely, you understand how I feel. Surely, you too have imagined and pictured what I have. Hooray for the widow and her son, but what about me? What about you and the deaths of those you love? What about all the other widows, parents, children, siblings, and friends throughout history whose loved ones have died and were not given back? What about our own? What about those who look at their life through the eyes of death and see no future?

Today's gospel answers none of these questions, at least not in the way we most often want. We cannot rationalise or explain death. We cannot gloss over it, deny, or ignore it. It is real and, regardless of when or how it comes, it is always painful. No logic can satisfy. We can never make sense of the loss that comes with death.

That has been and continues to be my struggle with this week's gospel. It hits too close to home. It's personal in a way that hurts. It raises questions I would rather avoid and not talk about. It challenges me to examine what I really believe about death and resurrection. I don't think I am the first, the only, or the last one to feel this way or ask these questions.

Some of you I have sat with encountering the same feelings, asking the same questions. I know others who have kept silent and kept to themselves but the feelings and questions are no less real and no less present. We all weep and struggle with the mystery of death.

Beneath our questions and feelings lies a great fear. It is a fear that in many ways dominates and drives not only our lives but our entire society and culture. Despite what we know about the Christian faith and tradition, despite what we say we believe, despite what we want to believe, we fear and believe death to be final, the end, the ultimate reality. We have been deceived and convinced that death leaves us no future.

That's why we so rarely talk about death openly and honestly. That's why when we do talk about it we don't know what to say. What do you say to or about one who has no future? That's why we put a curtain around the grave and fake grass over the dirt that will fill that grave. Then we walk away before the body is lowered into the grave.

It's too much to see, too much to bear, when you believe that's all there is and it is the end. It is one reason why, for much of history, children were so important. They carried on the family name and presence in this world.

It is, at least in part, perhaps unconsciously, why we work to make a name for ourselves, to achieve, accomplish, and leave a legacy. We fear that with death our time has run out. We will be forgotten, no one will remember, and we will be no more. It is why a man once told me we could not ask the saints to pray for us.

"Because they are dead!" he exclaimed. It is why I, and perhaps you too, hear today's gospel and feel compassion for the widow. We see her as the exception to the rule. Hidden within all these examples is the belief that death is the end.

Despite all my imaginings about the widow, she says nothing in today's gospel. She does nothing. St. Luke tells us nothing about her response to her son's sitting up and talking. That's not because she has no response but because St. Luke wants us to see and focus on something else. In some ways the real miracle and the amazing thing about this story is the response of the crowds, not only what they say but what they do not say.

Everyone stopped walking when Jesus touched the bier. The crowd of mourners heard Jesus say, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" They saw the dead man sit up and heard him begin to speak. They saw Jesus give the young man to his mother. Never once did they say to Jesus, "Do that for us." Not one of them asked, "What about me? What about those I love who have died?" That was no longer in question. Something changed for the crowds. They were changed.

The rising of the young man was also their rising, our rising, everyone's rising. They are not jealous and they do not seek more time for themselves or their loved ones who have died. Instead, "They glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen among us!'" They knew, believed, and experienced this event to be as true and real for them as it was for the widow and her son. It was for all of them. In the raising of the widow's son they recognised God's favour and visitation upon themselves and those they loved, upon all God's people.

The crowds are our witnesses that Jesus has already given us everything he gave the widow and her son.

Death is not the end, the final or ultimate reality. Life is eternal and love is immortal. Life is not bound or determined by time, but by God.

As long as we see death as the running out of time, the end, the grand finale, we will always be jealous of the widow. We will always be looking for just a little more time, an encore. That's why it's so easy and tempting to identify with and focus on the widow and her son in today's gospel. Their story is not, however, unique or particular to them. It is also our story, a shared story, and it has nothing to do with time.

This gospel is not about getting more time but about being given greater life. Isn't that what our burial liturgy says? "Life is changed, not ended." Isn't that why "even at the grave we make our song: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia?" Isn't that why Jesus can stand before this widow, feel in his gut her pain and loss, and still say, "Do not weep?"

Isn't that why every week we stand and say, "We look for the resurrection of the dead?" Isn't that why we can join "our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven" to proclaim the glory of God's name?

I wonder if we sometimes treat these words as pious superstitions to make us feel better rather than the truth of God revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We ought to be looking and listening. We ought to look for the resurrection of the dead and see our loved ones standing next to and surrounding us. We ought to join our voices with all the company of heaven and listen for the familiar voices we have missed and longed to hear again. Why would we settle for feeling better when we and those we love are alive?

I know this is not easy. I know how difficult this is. My struggle with this week's gospel, with another's death, with the deaths of all those I love and miss has yielded no answers. I have no answers for you or myself. This struggle has, however, given me better questions.

The question isn't whether this story is true for all my family, friends, and me, but what keeps me from believing the truth of this story. The question isn't how can I get what the widow got, but what prevents me from seeing I already have it. The question isn't whether death is the end, but why do I persist in believing that lie?

They are questions for everyone who struggles with death, questions reminding us that a great prophet has risen among us and we have been visited and looked upon favourably by God.

-oOo-

Death is but a temporary interruption in our journey where our unnecessary and unwanted baggage is miraculously lost forever. It is delightful we do not miss it or can remember what it was. I just wonder who has to deal with it all.

Recommended. Worth a read. Make up your own mind.

+Ian

THE JESUS MYSTERY

P L Bacchioni, published on Academia.Edu.

A Biblical, Historical and Christological Study of Jesus by P L Bacchioni in fulfilment of the degree of Master of Theology in the subject of Systematic Theology. Supervisor: Professor E. Van Niekerk

Synopsis: The Jesus of history and the Christ of faith are two different figures.

Two centuries of search for the historical Jesus has led to greater awareness and better use of New Testament criticism, had salutary effects on proper historical biblical research and the desire to look beyond the paucity of material about Jesus in the canonical gospels.

Despite proven difficulties the historical Jesus is an endless enterprise eliciting an equally endless fascination. The solution to the Jesus mystery appears better linked to Paul who has never been subjected to the same degree of historical research as Jesus.

The figure, character, preaching, and teaching of Jesus was fashioned by the gospel authors not just to fit in with the primitive church but to provide a natural linkage with Pauline Christianity. Christian faith is only loosely intertwined with Jesus of Nazareth and has everything to do with the Christ devised by Paul.

Full download: [The Jesus mystery : a biblical, historical and Christological study of Jesus](#)

MICHAELMAS - 29th September.

Too many of us are forgetting, in the busy-ness of our working world to recall and commemorate the ancient days of the church or personal observation and faith loyalty. I nearly missed Michaelmas, did you?

The name Michaelmas comes from a shortening of "Michael's Mass", in the same style as Christmas (Christ's Mass) and Candlemas (Candle Mass, the Mass where traditionally the candles to be used throughout the year would be blessed).

During the Middle Ages, Michaelmas was celebrated as a Holy Day of Obligation, but this tradition was abolished in the 18th century. In medieval England, Michaelmas marked the ending and beginning of the husbandman's year, at which time harvest was over, and the bailiff or reeve of the manor would be making out the accounts for the year."

Because it falls near the equinox, this holy day is associated in the Northern Hemisphere with the beginning of autumn and the shortening of days. It was also one of the English, Welsh, and Irish quarter days, when accounts had to be settled. On manors, it was the day when a reeve was elected from the peasants. Michaelmas hiring fairs were held at the end of September or beginning of October. The day was also considered a 'gale day' in Ireland when rent would be due, as well as a day for the issuing or settling of contracts or other legal transactions.

On the Isle of Skye, Scotland, a procession was held. One of the few flowers

left around at this time of year is the Michaelmas daisy [also known as asters]. Hence the rhyme: "The Michaelmas daisies, among dead weeds, Bloom for St Michael's valorous deeds ..."

In Ireland, (Irish: Fómhar na nGéanna), pilgrimages to holy wells associated with St Michael took place, with pilgrims taking a drink from the holy water from the well. The greeting "May Michaelmas féinín on you" was traditional. Boys born on this day were often christened Michael or Micheál. In Tramore, County Waterford, a procession with an effigy of St Michael, called the Micilín, was brought through the town to the shore to mark the end of the fishing season. In Irish folklore, clear weather on Michaelmas was a portent of a long winter, 'Michaelmas Day be bright and clear there will be two 'Winters' in the year'.

In the Roman Catholic Church on 29 September three Archangels are celebrated: Saint Michael, Saint Gabriel, and Saint Raphael. Their feasts were unified in one common day during the second half of the 20C. Previously their feasts were: 29 September (only St Michael), 24 March for St Gabriel, and 24 October for St Raphael.

In the Lutheran, as well as in the Anglican/Episcopalian traditions, there are three to four archangels in their calendars for the 29 September feast for St. Michael and All Angels: namely Michael (Jude 1:9) and Gabriel (Daniel 9:21), Raphael (Tobit 12:15) and sometimes Uriel (2 Esdras 4:1 and 2 Esdras 5:20)

Fr Ed

To Love or not to Love.....

Rev David Startup, OSJ

I remember very, very clearly, the last few minutes of my pre Christian life. I was sat in the dining room at home looking out of the window, with a Minister and his assistant patiently sat alongside me. We had been talking for at least an hour about God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit and my state of mind. In tears, I insisted that I was just not good enough to give my life to the Lord Jesus as I was too much of a sinner – and with that fell right into the Minister's hands with what I had said. He replied very gently of course - "David, that is exactly why you should give yourself to God". After much patience and encouragement from these two people, who had only recently entered my life, I plucked up courage and asked Jesus to come into my life as my personal Lord and Saviour. I felt relief. However, bells did not ring for me. I saw no bright flashing lights, angels or cherubs. I just felt relief and knew instinctively that someone who could help me had entered my life. With hand on heart, I cannot say that I was a bad and nasty person before- I cannot say I was an out and out liar, thief or anything else. To the best of my knowledge I had not deprived anyone of anything that was in my power to give. I knew however that compared to God ,I was an out and out sinner and I wanted to get better. I had just gone from being downcast , downtrodden, and lacking in something which I could not identify...to immediate relief and feeling an overwhelming sense of love and belonging. From this moment on in my life I am sure that I tried to love and like, in all the right and proper ways, as many people as I could. I had begun a personal relationship, through Jesus, with God who loved me very much.

However, at that time I am not too sure that I either loved or even liked myself.

Anyway, Less of "Me" and more of "We".

Today's Gospel reading from Matthew, as we all know, forms the basis for a Jesus' like life. As long as we obey those commandments we shall undoubtedly grow more and more like Jesus. Just think what the world would be like now if everyone had obeyed God.

Lets look closer at the text:

It's interesting to see that the NIV and New King James' version says

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest *commandment*. And the second is like it. 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

Whereas the Good News Bible expands on that in saying

'The second most important commandment is like it.

Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'

And then from the Life Application Bible, the interpretation is:

Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself. (Brotherly Love.)

Let's not lose sight of the fact that the words of Jesus here were not suggestions, advice or just food for thought – they were commandments. No option here, we were and are expected to put His words into practice.

How do we react when we read this passage

"Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself"

Do we as individuals love ourselves?

How many of us here today have asked the question?

“Do I love myself?”and if we do love ourselves, why?

We have to be careful that we and others do not get the wrong slant on this question, particularly where the non-believer is concerned. Anyone on the outside looking in would not waste time labelling us perhaps as totally caught up in one's self, perhaps too self-righteous to help to others or being too heavenly to be any “earthly good”. “How these Christians love one another” is a comment used by those “not in the know”. This imagery is unhealthy and is not what is meant by love for oneself. Many an outsider has the wrong impression of what “loving oneself as a Christian, really means”.

We have some educating to do, in God's strength and for His glory.

The Christian's love of oneself means that **more than anything else, save for loving God**, we are anxious and passionate for our personal salvation and to grow more like Jesus every day. To love our neighbour as ourselves means to do and wish him or her, in as much as we possibly can, those good things we wish for ourselves and the avoidance of any evil or wrongdoing. Apart from that God first loved us and we therefore should love ourselves.

1 Corinthians 13.4 says:

Love is patient, Love is kind, Are we patient with - and kind to ourselves?

If we seem to be patient and kind with others and not with ourselves – is our patience and kindness genuine? Or done out of the expectation of others?

Love does not boast it is not proud. Do we as individuals do things for the recognition of our peers, or for the glory of God?

Love is not rude, it is not self seeking, is not easily angered, it keeps no record

of wrongs.

Do we as individuals get upset quick and bear grudges? Or do we like to be in the spot light all the time?

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Sin is evil, we are all sinners, but do we **always** strive not to be? Do we **confess** and move on? Do we like to hear the truth about ourselves? How do we deal with it when we do?

Love always protects. How do we protect ourselves, say from temptation that is in our faces every day. The type of temptation does not need to be voiced , we all have our own challenges in this respect. Do we trust ourselves? Can we trust ourselves? Do we always demonstrate hope within ourselves.

These attitudes and behaviours are some of the Fruits of the Spirit, that if used properly are part of Love and the building bricks of the Kingdom of God.

Yes, it is said by many that we cannot love others unless we first love ourselves. However, I cannot find anywhere in the Bible that says this, but clearly we must love ourselves so that we know how to love others.

For those of us that do not love ourselves – where do we begin?

For those of us that already love ourselves, is it the right love?

For those of us who have that “right love”, do we pass that love on?

Love is something that cannot be switched on or off at will.

Perhaps self-love has to be learnt?

Perhaps someone has to be given the opportunity to teach us?

We must at this stage clear up some misunderstandings that might stop us from wanting to learn.

Self- love is not the same as **selfishness**.

Self-worth must not be mistaken for **self worship**.

Self- Affirmation is different from **self conceit**.

Having an **awareness** of ourselves is not being completely **absorbed** in ourselves.

Humility is not the same as **Humiliation**

Being **unworthy** is not the same as being **worthless**.

If we have to love ourselves before we love others, those that wish to, could find reasons not to love themselves, so that they need not love others. Jesus knows that and yet still loves us dearly.

Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love God and love your neighbour. **The emphasis in this commandment is on others**. He does not say go away and learn to love yourself first!

The Prophet Isaiah, in Ch 6 1-7, after seeing God says “I am a man of unclean lips”

John the Baptist, Luke 3: 15-16 says to the people “I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals” referring of course to Jesus.

Paul in Timothy 1:15 calls himself “Chief of Sinners” and

Peter in Luke 5: 1-10 seeing God's generosity, grace and mercy says

"Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man."

Three very significant people from the New Testament all saying that they are unworthy in the presence of Jesus. They realised that it is God's Grace alone that made them worthy.

Look how effectively these self confessed sinners helped to spread Christianity to others, for the Glory of God – not for self adulation.

We, here and now, in the presence of Jesus, are all sinners and it is God's Grace and only God's grace through Jesus, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that makes us worthy of His Love.

It is when, and only when we ask the Holy Spirit to help us be more like Jesus; and to be more like Jesus with others in our everyday life, that we become closer to God.

It comes down to deeds, words, behaviour and attitude. Doing things with, to and for others, as Jesus would do them. It is through this and only this that we gradually find ourselves developing a true and healthy sense of self worth and self love. Then we can pass it on to others.

On those occasions when we are prompted by the Holy Spirit to rebuke or correct our thinking or actions, we must make sure that we are accurate and honest, with ourselves, that we acknowledge the real facts and not just what we want to know - and then be firm yet gentle with ourselves.

We must then affirm all that we now see is good and move on, thinking things that reflect the message of Jesus, not our own thoughts. All the help we need to help and better ourselves can be found in the Bible and in particular 2 Corinthians helps us in correcting our own actions and behaviour. We have said before that the only book we need to live a good and right life is the Holy Bible – the Word of God. It still is – and always will be.

Doing “Jesus like things” for others comes **before** loving oneself, not after. It is because we **do for others as Jesus would do** that we learn and come to love ourselves. There is no excuse to do nothing under the guise of not being good enough or not loving oneself as much as we think we should.

To help us, **Romans 8:1** clearly states that “there is no condemnation now for those who are in Christ Jesus.” When we fight with how we think God views us, let’s just think of that.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says

“For it is by **grace** that you have been saved, through **faith** – and this is **not from yourselves**, it is the **gift of God** – **not by works**, so that no one can boast.”

So, perhaps one could say to oneself “ Well that’s alright then , I’m there, I’m saved I’ve arrived – need n’t do much.”

What is perhaps not so often heard and acted upon is the very next verse, verse 10:

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to **do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Speaking for myself I think it’s amazing how that verse has not been treated with the same importance and significance.

In closing it must be said with conviction that:

Our **self- worth** or **love of oneself** comes **directly** from the **totally unconditional love of God** who **gave Jesus, His only Son**, for us **in order that we might live for Him, by living for others**. If this situation is looked at in any other way it diminishes the riches of God's Grace and grieves the Holy Spirit. We do not need to spend an inordinately long time trying to love ourselves first and getting our self image right, before we do anything for Jesus.

It is by doing acts of love, helping others and doing what is right, that we gain and improve in the love that God wants us to have for ourselves. God teaches us, as long as we are willing, as part of our salvation. He teaches us how to love ourselves.

Amen.