

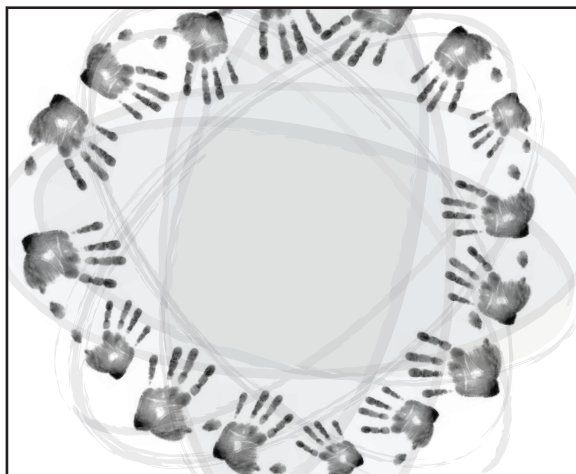
At the beginning of the Gospel according to Mark (1: 15), Jesus proclaims, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news.' The good news of the Kingdom is central to who Jesus is and what he does.

### **Jesus and the Kingdom of God**

Many of those who heard Jesus preach about the Kingdom understood it in political terms. For years the Jewish people had suffered under foreign occupation, and for many the coming of the Chosen One, the Messiah, meant the liberation of the people and the land from foreign oppressors. Quite rightly they thought the reign of God would include freedom and justice.

Jesus' disciples understood him to be the Messiah, the Christ. Right up until his arrest they, too, thought that he would be the one who would set the Jewish people free, who would redeem Israel (Luke 24: 21). And it was the accusation that he wanted to challenge Roman rule which led to Jesus' crucifixion. Yet, when Jesus appeared before Pilate on a charge of claiming that he was the Son of God and a king of the Jews, he said, 'My Kingdom is not from this world' (John 18: 26). So what did Jesus mean by the Kingdom of God, and how might we who believe that Jesus is our Saviour understand it two thousand years later?

'It means that the worth of a human life is not in what we have been, but in what we shall be...'



### **The Kingdom of heaven is like . . .**

When Jesus tried to tell people about the Kingdom, he never described it directly or concretely. Instead he used stories and images which gave a sense of what the Kingdom is and how we enter into it. These *parables* all show that the values of the Kingdom are different from the ones which normally rule human lives. It is a place of reversals: where to enter we must become like little children; where the King rewards each person beyond their merit; and where to obtain the treasure we must be prepared to risk that which is most dear to us.

### **We are citizens of the Kingdom**

The Kingdom takes us beyond the limits of human vision and yet is the answer to our deepest human longing for relationships which are based not on competition or status or number of possessions, but on the wealth we possess inside. It is the place where the Spirit of God, rather than our self-centred egos, rules our hearts.

We are citizens of the Kingdom when we live according to Jesus' values, when we know his presence in our hearts and see him both in our neighbours and in those this world despises. Those who will fully enter the Kingdom are those who feed the hungry, give water to those who thirst, and visit those who are imprisoned, for in doing so we serve Christ himself, whether we recognize his presence or not (Matthew 25: 31). The Kingdom may not be of this world, but our citizenship of it profoundly affects the way we live in the here and now, and challenges us to change the world, like yeast in bread dough.

Christians believe that the Kingdom is the purpose of human life, and the goal of all creation. It means that the worth of any human life is not in what we have been but in what we shall be: people whose lives are marked by humility, self-sacrifice, forgiveness, vision, and, above all, by love. And although we have yet to enter the Kingdom fully, for those who believe, our life in it begins now.



## **FURTHER READING**

Matthew chapters 13; 18; 20: 1-16

**Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done,  
On earth as it is in  
heaven.**

Matthew 6: 10, RSV

**... the kingdom  
of heaven is like a  
merchant in search  
of fine pearls; on  
finding one pearl  
of great value, he  
went and sold all  
that he had and  
bought it.**

Matthew 13: 45, NRSV

# **The Kingdom of God - The Good News**

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