



VISION 2018

# KINGDOM SEEDS

## WELCOME

Belonging to a LifeGroup is one way of ensuring our life's journey is not done in isolation. I'm encouraged you are part of a LifeGroup and very thankful for the time and energy our leaders put into this important ministry.

*What is contained in these pages?*

This 7-week series will seek to bring ongoing clarity to our 2020 Vision as we explore what it means to have a growing confidence that Jesus will build His church. As we head into 2019, our focus for the coming year will be on *Kingdom Seeds*. It has become increasingly important we accept our part in God's plan and plant seeds for future generations. For the Kingdom of God to grow in the Illawarra and beyond, seeds need to be sown and planted now. In doing this we will discover whether we believe that the Kingdom of heaven is truly our treasure.

While we do not have all the answers and while resources may be lacking, we will accept the challenge to ask God for the impossible. Our Big Hairy Audacious Prayers listed in the 2020 Vision book and on the wall in the entry foyer, encourage us to turn our attention away from ourselves to what it means to do all things for His glory.

*Personal Note:* I continue to be thankful to God for all He has done in and through our ministry, for the team He has brought together and for the many people who make us the family of God. I give thanks to Peter Clark for spending time once again to write this study for us.

Blessings,



Ian Barnett  
Senior Minister



# SEEDS OF CHANGE

## MATTHEW 11:1-19

As God's prophet preparing the way for the Messiah, John the Baptist knew Jesus was 'the One.' Yet, languishing in prison awaiting execution, John did not connect with his own expectations of the change and judgement that even he thought the arrival of the Messiah would bring.

Jesus was bringing the Kingdom in, in a different way than everyone thought.

Rather than overthrowing evil, it was to be the planting of seeds in person after person - the blind, the outcast, the sick and the captive. They would all experience the transforming power of the good news.

Note: Jesus was "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (v19). As such, the Kingdom of Heaven offers us all a new future and a present hope.

1. Share your thoughts on doubt and any circumstances when you found yourself doubting eg difficult situations, unmet expectations, limited understanding ... Is it OK to doubt God and Christ? Have you? Is/was it continual or spasmodic?

2. Knowing where our doubts come from is helpful, but getting help when we doubt is imperative. How does Jesus answer John in this passage? Where do these words come from? How can the Scriptures help us? How does "trusting Jesus" (v6) help us in our times of doubt?

3. Why did Jesus think John the Baptist was so great? What could John the Baptist announce that other earlier prophets could not? (See Isaiah 40:3)

4. In the last part of v11, why is Jesus' statement true? "... yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." What is Jesus telling us?

5. Because (as Christians) we are in this privileged position, does it mean we should not expect difficult situations, including persecution? What does Jesus expect of us in the midst of persecution?

Key words for closing in prayer:

Expectations; doubts; confidence in a personal relationship with Christ...



# SEEDS OF DESTRUCTION

## MATTHEW 11:20-30

Prepare to be challenged by this passage today. We see that Jesus is not shy. He has turned up the heat, denouncing by name the towns that had rejected His message. Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum were the villages where most of His miracles had been performed. These people had experienced the greatest opportunity to

hear the message and to see it validated by miracles. Yet this still did not lead them to repentance. Their judgment would be greater. This should make us question if we fully grasp the privileges of living in our times, and the favourable position we are placed in to hear and receive the Gospel.

1. Jesus' message is clear. What will happen to unrepentant people? (vs21-24)
2. "Capernaum" think they will be exalted to heaven (v23), but what in fact will happen to them? How easy is it for us to be self-deluded? Is it easy to recognise self-delusion in yourself? What can we do about being self-deluded?

3. In vs25-27 we get a glimpse into the inner workings of the Trinity. What two things do we learn about the relationship of the Father and Son from v27?

4. Read v25 again. How then (if things are hidden) is it that we have come to "know" the Father and Jesus?

5. How is our response to Jesus to be different from the responses of the cities mentioned in vs21-23?

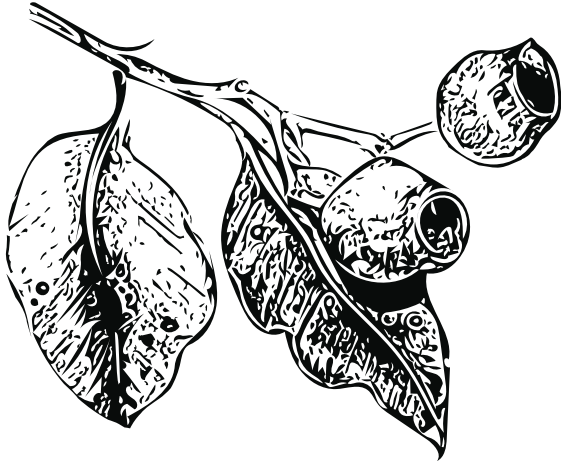
6. In v28 we have the Christian faith in a nutshell. Have you experienced this in your own life? When did you "come to Jesus"? What does "coming to Jesus" involve? What does it NOT involve?

7. In v29 the word "learn" is similar to the word translated "to make disciples" (See Matthew 28:19) What then is Jesus telling us in v29?

Key words for closing in prayer:

Privilege of studying God's word; repentance; forgiveness; salvation in Christ...

## STUDY THREE



# SEEDS OF HOPE

## MATTHEW 12:1-21

To a Pharisee, "What is unlawful" could have referred either to an (OT) Scriptural command or to a Rabbi's interpretation of that command. The disciples could have been cited for violating any number of rabbinic laws, however Jesus' OT examples made the Pharisees' accusations a non-issue. As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus had the right to interpret the intent of the Sabbath Law. Jesus brings "rest" to God's people through His easy yoke and light burden of discipleship (Matthew 11:28-30).

However, this does not make the call to

be disciples something easy, or allow for an irresponsible failure to do good. We are to abstain from doing evil and actively seek to do good. Our example is Jesus who we see in the midst of mounting opposition, as the Servant, balancing strength with gentleness, conviction and compassion. Jesus shows a commitment to do what is right with a refusal to beat others down. This passage shouts to us, that if our witness is to be compelling, then those who hurt us must see Jesus in us. (See 2 Corinthians 3:18)

1. Explain what in these first 14 verses, necessitated the plotting of the murder of Jesus by the Pharisees. What was going on in their minds?

2. How would you describe what a "legalist" is? What would you have to do to be legalistic?
3. How does Jesus' reply to the Pharisees help explain His actions?
4. How had the Pharisees neglected the meaning of "I desire mercy, not sacrifice"? (See Hosea 6:6)
5. What is Jesus implying by His claim in v 8? How do the Pharisees react? How is their question in v10 a trap?
6. What does the healing of the man with a shrivelled hand tell us about Jesus? How did this change the Pharisees' lives? What real impact does it have on your life?
7. Is there a time when you became aware you were focusing on "sacrifice" (doing the prescribed thing) rather than doing the "merciful" (loving) thing?

Key words for closing in prayer:

Deception; the evil one; hypocritical in our relationships; Jesus' glorified...



# SEEDS OF REMEMBRANCE

## MATTHEW 12:22-45

Unlike Ancient exorcists who used a variety of incarnations and spells to manipulate the spirit world, Jesus commanded demons from His own authority... and they immediately submitted. Of course, the Pharisees were quick to attribute Jesus' power to Satan. This charge if proven was punishable by stoning.

Jesus defends His ministry with two short parables (v25 & v29) then

follows it up with two scathing attacks on the Pharisees (vs30-32 & 33-37). By accusing Jesus, the Pharisees dishonoured God and rejected the offer of forgiveness. Sadly their hearts had become so hard, they had reached the point of no return. From here, they demanded a spectacular display from Jesus to show that His power was from God. If only they had been open to God's message, they would have already accepted Jesus as Messiah.

1. How does Jesus consider the accusations of the Pharisees unreasonable? Why? (v 25 & v 26b)

2. What three conclusions do these accusations lead to? (vs28-30)

3. What are the implications of v 30 for you personally?

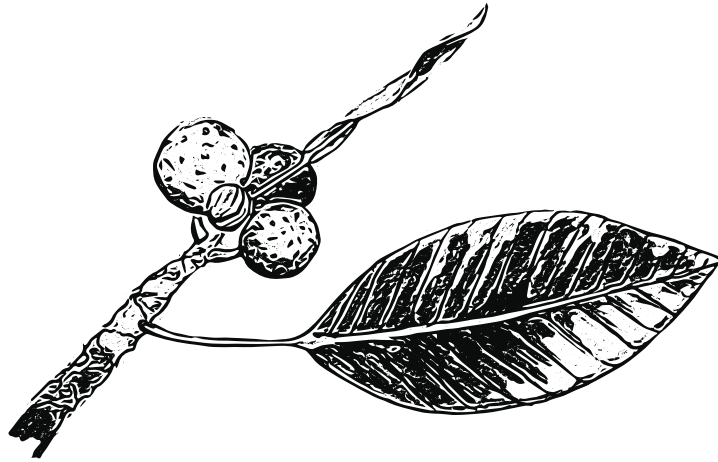
4. What is "blasphemy against Jesus?" Why can it be forgiven? What is "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?" Why can it NOT be forgiven? (vs 31-32)

5. What is Jesus' response to the Pharisees asking for a sign? What are the parallels between Jonah and Jesus? What about the responses of those listening to Jonah and those listening to Jesus?

6. Think about the context of v 44. As legalists, how have the Pharisees tried to sweep evil out of their lives and put things in order in their own strength? What state has their religious devotion left their hearts in? What lesson is there in that for us?

Key words for closing in prayer:

Saved by grace; new start / new life in Christ; avoiding legalism...



## SEEDS OF LIFE

### MATTHEW 13:1-23

“That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.” (13:1) We should never underestimate what the days of our Lord looked like. The crowds when gathered were a mixed group. Some leaned toward discipleship while others toward opposition, while still others sat on the fence. Yes, nothing much has changed!

However, Jesus’ parables force us to a point of decision. Here we see a living example of a harvest where seeds

must be sown. Yes, God is sovereign and draws people to Himself, yet at the same time, people are still responsible for making a choice. It is through His parables Jesus revealed to His disciples the secrets of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is an undercover operation, not an overpowering political and militaristic display of God’s rule many expected. The challenge for us is to understand what it means for us to live as Kingdom subjects and then actually live that way.

1. What is a parable?

2. How do we understand parables and why do we have parables?

3. What is the “Kingdom of Heaven”?

4. How do Jesus’ parables both reveal AND conceal truth?

5. How would you sum up the Parable of the Sower in one or two sentences?

6. In your experience, what are some of the ways we might “hear” the Word of God, but not benefit from it?

7. There is only one evidence of hearing the Word of God. What is that evidence? How does it show itself? (See John 15:16)

8. What are some of the signs that the cares and riches of the world are choking out saving faith?

Key words for closing in prayer: God revealed - in the world around and in Christ; seeing we might see & hearing we might hear; obedient to God’s Word...



## SEEDS OF POWER

### MATTHEW 13:24-43

There is great encouragement for us in this study. In the passage are three small parables. We need to keep in mind that we will not see the uprooting or elimination of evil until the end of this age. Instead, there will exist a mixed nature in the world. Evil derives from the evil one and we are to expect spiritual warfare as we live in a world affected by evil.

However, there still exists hope for Jesus' disciples, and judgment for those who have sided with Satan. The parables of

Jesus never call us out of this world, but they do draw us into the reality of the Father's protection while we live in it. (See John 17:15-19).

The Kingdom of Heaven enters our lives in small unassuming ways. God is not pre-occupied with power or prestige, yet once the Kingdom seed is planted, it grows to transform everything as yeast transforms dough. Remember, we are salt and light (see Matthew 5:13-16) as we seek to bring people into a loving community within the Church.

1. What does the Parable of the Weeds teach us about the coming judgment?

2. Why is it sometimes difficult to work out who is and who is not part of the kingdom? Should we be doing that anyway? (See Matthew 7:15-20) What is our responsibility as a church community?

3. How might an overzealous judgment of the world and its evils hinder our ministry?

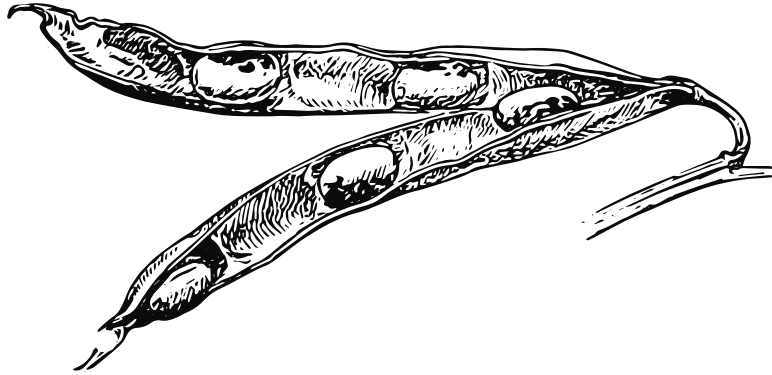
4. Why do you think the disciples were puzzled by this parable? (v36)

5. What about your place in that coming judgment? Are you among the wheat or the weeds?

6. What have you learned about the Kingdom of Heaven from the three parables in today's study?

Key words for closing in prayer:

Transformed by God's Word; live out our faith; true reflection of Christ...



# SEEDS OF THE FUTURE

## MATTHEW 13:44-58

We now come to the end of this series on Kingdom Seeds. Today, we see why the Kingdom is worth so much. It was common in days gone by to hide what was valuable in fields. Jesus' point is simply that pursuing the Kingdom was of more value than anything else. Its value is without comparison. (13:45-46).

Sadly, in today's world we may have forgotten how valuable the Kingdom really is. Jesus continues to use

metaphors to describe the judgment that is to come at the end of the age. (vs7-52) He was concerned that his disciples didn't fully appreciate what he was saying, and so he asked them. Their answer was swift...YES! We must always remember that we too can hear Jesus' parables and walk away scratching our heads. However, by the power of the Holy Spirit we too can understand the parable's impact on our lives.

1. Think about the parables in vs 44-46. What is Jesus teaching about the value of the Kingdom? That being true, what does it mean for us? What level of energy and emotion is involved in pursuing the Kingdom like that?

2. Look closely at v 45. Who or what is the Kingdom of Heaven in this parable? Jesus is making another point in this parable. What is it? What does this have to say about our redemption?
3. What does it mean for you if you were to "sell everything" (v 45) for the Kingdom? Does God really ever call people to do something really "radical" for Him? Is He calling you to something radical?
4. What do the parables of the "Weeds" (vs 37-43) and the "Net" (vs 47-50) teach us about the final judgment?
5. The last parable we look at today is in v.52 (The parable of the homeowner). What is this "new treasure" that the teacher of the law has now brought out of the storeroom? What point is Jesus making?
6. There are probably (at least) two applications that Matthew 13 would lead us to. Firstly, to humbly & joyfully receive the message of the Kingdom & secondly, to urgently spread the message of the Kingdom. To conclude this series, share your experience of how & when you received the message of the Kingdom, & what steps you are taking regarding spreading the message of the Kingdom?

Key words for closing in prayer: Challenged by God's Word; importance and intent of the parables in our own lives; a witness and blessing to others...



# KEY DATES

**SUNDAY**  
4 NOVEMBER

## MINISTRY CELEBRATION EXHIBIT

A day to celebrate and create a greater awareness of FAC ministries through exhibits, and to provide an opportunity to get involved.

**SUNDAY**  
11 NOVEMBER

## 9:30AM COMBINED SERVICE

One service to come together as a single community, to celebrate what it means to belong to the church family here at FAC.

**SUNDAY**  
25 NOVEMBER

## COMMITMENT DAY

Commitment Day is when we are asked to make a pledge decision of how we will give financially over the coming year; regular giving which enables FAC ministries to both continue and expand.



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