

## JOINING JESUS ON HIS MISSION

### SESSION 4: Chapters 7-10

#### **Warm Up: What is the most spontaneous thing you have ever done?**

Dear Friends,

Last session we considered how following Jesus on his mission is actually not as difficult as we may have thought. It simply means following his example of taking the time to enjoy people, especially those that aren't experiencing Christ's grace. This week we will look at what it means to seek what is already happening in people's lives through the lenses of God's Kingdom and Mission. Once again let's begin by considering a few Bible passages:

JESUS ALREADY AT WORK:

#### **Paul at the Areopagus:**

<sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. (Acts 17.22-23 ESV)

#### **Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch:**

<sup>34</sup> The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" <sup>35</sup> Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup> As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?" <sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. (Acts 8.34-38)

#### **The Kingdom Parables: The Hidden Treasure, The Pearl, The Net:**

<sup>44</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. <sup>45</sup> "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. <sup>47</sup> "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. <sup>48</sup> When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. <sup>49</sup> This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous <sup>50</sup> and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13.44-50 ESV)

#### **Jesus on His Kingdom:**

<sup>7</sup> "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 7:7-8;6:33)

#### **Discussion Guide: Seeking What's Already Happening**

Definitions:

**The Kingdom of God:** God's redemptive presence and activity in human lives; this is already in process in the world around us.

**The Mission of God:** The redeeming and restoring of human lives to the Kingdom of God.

**The People of God:** The tangible evidence of God's redemptive presence and activity among us.

Considering these definitions, Bible passages and chapters 7-10 from the book discuss the following:

1) How do the texts in Acts suggest that the Resurrected Christ was moving and shaping things so that the Gospel could find receptive hearts? How is this different from the disciples creating their own success in proclaiming Jesus?

2) Distinction of the term “God’s Kingdom”: The Kingdom of God (or heaven) is the gracious rule in the heart of Christ the King. Generally we speak of 3 Kingdoms: 1) **Kingdom of Power**-in this Kingdom God rules all creation with his almighty power. 2) **Kingdom of Grace**-this being the church on earth, consisting of each one who believes in Christ ruling the human heart. 3) **Kingdom of Glory**-God’s heaven where all the dead in Christ await the final day (note: this is not our final resting place, the New Creation is our final resting place).

What are common themes you see in the Kingdom parables? As Finke writes about “God’s Kingdom”-to which of these definitions is he referring? How best do you recognize God’s Kingdom in our midst?

3) Think about Jesus who taught his disciples: “**Lift up your heads ... behold, the fields are white and already for harvest. Pray that the Lord of the Harvest send more workers into his harvest field.**”

- What is the field? What is the crop to be harvested?
- How did the fields become ready for harvest?
- What does the phrase-“Lift up your heads” mean to you?

4) As time allows read through the example of “bringing the Kingdom” that Finke provides on pages 84-85. As you read these stories consider the evidence that the Kingdom was near. Do you see some of these things in your own dealings with people?

5) The Kingdom of God comes to people-but God works out the mission of bringing his Kingdom through means namely His Word, Sacraments and forgiveness of sins. He also chooses to bring others into His Kingdom through people like you and me! How does this reality change the value of loving, serving and spending “unhurried” time with people around you?

6) Read and discuss the following quote from page 92 in the book, what do you think it means to be agents of God’s new creation?

*We’re called, here and now, to be instruments of God’s new creation which has already launched in Jesus and of which Jesus’ followers are supposed to be not simply beneficiaries but also agents.” (N.T. Wright)*

7) Based on the book and particularly chapter 10: What is the work of Jesus and what is our work in the mission of God?