



## OPENING PRAYER

Dear God, we thank you for this gathering of our small group and the ways in which you are working through us. As we settle into our time together this week, we ask you to guide our conversations, our thoughts, and relationships. We offer up to you everything that feels weighty or distracting. We ask that you pour out on us your deep peace, which you offer freely. Multiply our time together and help us to pursue you daily. Amen.

## COMMUNITY

### **Time to build relationships: mix + mingle!**

- + Did something specific resonate with you from the sermon or worship service?
  
- + If you couldn't attend, ask others in your group what stood out to them.  
(Note: Links to both video and audio versions of previous sermons can be found at [www.standrewmethodist.org/podcasts](http://www.standrewmethodist.org/podcasts).)
  
- + Where did you see God's presence in your past weekend?



## SITUATION (Both Scriptures)

Before Jesus himself ever preaches this message of the “kingdom of God”, we find in the gospel that someone else first preaches it: the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist, brings news of this ‘kingdom of heaven’ as an itinerant preacher preparing the way for the Christ. If it feels overwhelming to comprehend now (which it does), just imagine how it felt for those original hearers!

One of the most important themes in the gospel narratives of Jesus’ preaching and teaching is that of the “kingdom of God”. What exactly does this mean? Put simply, the “kingdom of God” is the reigning authority of God in which the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and promises are now set in motion! In Jesus, something new is happening not just for the followers of YHWH (God), but in fact for the whole world. Our faithful, loyal, omniscient God has ignited a new part of the grand rescue mission, which means that he has sent the Son (Jesus – who is both fully God and fully man) to earth in order to reconcile all of humanity back to God. There is an important part of theology that is intricately connected to this topic – that is what we call “eschatology”, meaning the study of last things. In order to describe where we are in this story, the “present age”, we must know where we came from and where we are going. In the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, a new age arrived. Jesus launched the reign of God’s kingdom on earth, which set in motion the “already” of the Kingdom of God, which is now present for us, because of Jesus. Yet, we know there is still more coming. We can see and feel there is still strife, struggle, and brokenness very present in this world and we await the day in which all of that will be restored completely. The present age and the age to come overlap and this is where we live... expecting and awaiting the return of Jesus (parousia) at his second coming. For now, the kingdom of God is already, and not yet.

## BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

- + The roaming preacher in the wilderness, who fulfilled part of Isaiah’s prophecy, was Jesus’ cousin, John the Baptist. How did John know that the kingdom of heaven was at hand?
  
- + Jesus uses a simile when he says that in the day of the Son of Man it will be “like lightning”. What attributes of lightning is Jesus trying to help his disciples connect to his own day of glory?
  
- + What does Jesus mean when he preaches that the kingdom of God is already in their midst?
  
- + It was poignant for the Jewish believers that Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man. Why?
  
- + How is the promised second coming of Jesus connected to the phrase “kingdom of God”?

## PRACTICAL LIFE QUESTIONS

- + Jesus tells his followers that the kingdom of God is already in their midst. Where do you notice this today?
- + In the Luke 17 passage, Jesus alludes to false prophets and warns his disciples not to go running after them. What are modern versions of “false prophets” in our culture today?
- + Where do you see God doing something new in your life? Where have you seen God doing something new in someone else’s life?
- + In the Luke 17 passage Jesus uses multiple words that revolve around sight. Can you “see” the “kingdom of God?”
- + What does the “already/not yet” paradigm mean for our everyday lives?

## GROWTH

### ***Journal Prompt***

Jesus, I want to bear fruit this week so that your light within me can be evident in a world that so desperately needs your Spirit. Help me to be aware of the fruitfulness of this next week. You are the True Vine and I commit to remaining rooted in you, Jesus.

### ***Calling Prompt***

God is inviting you to participate in his ministry by answering the unique call on your life. How can you actively respond to scripture and God’s presence this week?

### ***Closing Prayer***

**Let’s prepare for the week ahead, shaped by our time together today.**

Gracious God, we trust that you go with us in the week ahead. We are changed each time we gather to learn more about you and your Word. Please give us boldness to proclaim your good news in the coming week and bring us back safely together again in this community. Amen.