

loving, compassionate, advocating and acting on their behalf the more they would influence their lives and their community.

While Jesus is telling the parable, he is facing rejection by his family, he will be driven out of his own home town and hunted by authorities. The parables indicate his deep faith in God's presence with him throughout danger.

Kingdom of God: We never get a precise definition. It is intended to be a present reality, one experienced in the here and now, not in an other-worldly location at some other time. You yourselves are in it. 'It's in you and among you',

The 'doing' of the kingdom, its manifestation here on earth, requires our active participation. It's about release and recovery, liberty from oppression and energy to change realities of diminishment and disaster to places of flourishing. Love is at the heart of the kingdom of God – responsible and caring relationships. It's having faith in ourselves, trusting that divine life is not separate from our own. And the parables are Jesus' way of assuring us that the kingdom is an ever-present, lasting reality. The reign of God is already here, but it is only a seed sown in the world. Despite all the resistance and failures God will bring to fruition the disappearance of evil, injustice and death.

(These notes on the kingdom are put together from Judy Cannato's 'Field of Compassion' and 'A Historical Approximation of Jesus' by Jose Pagola.)

7. Closing Prayer

Here,
among the pot and pans.
Now,
Kneaded and rolled into apple pie,
fragrant and warm and spicy.
Here,
around the kitchen table,
Now,
present to all the hurts and injustices.
Here,
in the dance,
weaving patterns of conviviality and resistance.
Now, open house, open hearts.
Here,
listening, respect encouragement.
Now,
right relationship is not postponed.
Here and now. Only this.
It is enough.

Kathy Galloway



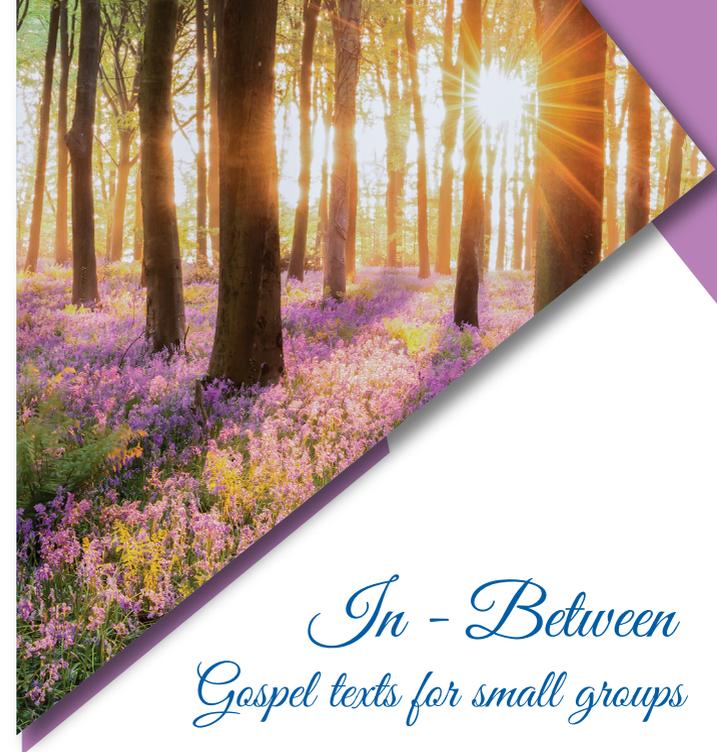
Partners in Faith

25 Cork Street, Dublin 8.

Tel: 087 2077 458

Email: info@partnersinfaith.ie

Website: www.partnersinfaith.ie



In - Between *Gospel texts for small groups*

Third Gospel Text



Partners in Faith

25 Cork Street, Dublin 8.

T: 087 2077 458

E: info@partnersinfaith.ie

W: www.partnersinfaith.ie

1. Welcome and Opening Prayer

Creator God, we thank you for this given day ;
for your glory shining forth in sky and sea.
In the changing light on the hills
in the flight of birds,
in the flowers in meadows and garden.
We thank you for your love
experienced in our own lives
for new friends and old
for caring and conversation,
for community and solitude,
for work and play, for words and silence.

We thank you for this gift of time:
May your Spirit help us to use it creatively
in the name of Jesus whose joy is to be with us.

**This is the Day,
Month 2, Day 6**

2. Gospel text: Mark 4:26-34

He also said, “This is what the Kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain – first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

Again he said, “What shall we say the Kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using parables. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

3. Quiet Moment

People can read over the story again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society/world. Then some sharing.

NB Not a time for argument.

4. Reflection Questions

‘Pick a flower and you move the furthest star’
Comment.

What depressing or false image of God did you get rid of?
How?

Read again ‘The Fiddler of Dooney’
by WB Yeats.

How does it link with the kingdom?

5. Prayers

Mentioning the people/situations we want to pray for....

6. Background Notes to Mark 4:26-34

Given all the things that threaten seeds: birds, droughts, weeds, insects, parasites, pesticides, blight, the miracle is that anything survives. And it does.

The essence of both these parables is that the outcome is sure and goes beyond anything we might expect or hope for. And this is because the power, life/force at work is the power, life/force of God.

Every parable is a direct expression of Jesus’ own experience of God. God is an immediate and familiar reality to Jesus, this reality he relays using striking but ordinary language. And the image of God is always one of faithful, unbelievable care and abundance. Also in every parable there is a paradox: The man works at scattering the seed but the growth is really the effortless natural growth of the seed and then the natural growth as it matures becomes the work of the human harvest.

Both parables declare the kingdom of God, present, alive and active. God’s dream for people and the earth is coming true. But we need to SEE, LOOK, HEAR, ACT.

Jesus is inviting the people to move away from all the images and ideas about God that block their awareness of God’s sustaining loving presence in everyday life. It’s about walking with trust in God. And Jesus is asking people to have faith in him but also to have faith in themselves.

While the daily oppressive situation of his people made it hard to believe, the more they would free themselves to believe in God as