

# God, the Father of the kingdom

## handout 7

### The kingdom of God

Baptism symbolizes our initiation into the Christian Church. The Holy Spirit commissions us to help bring God's kingdom close. The Bible tells the story of God's relationship with the world, his action in creation and in human history. Its major theme is the rule of God.

By pondering on what it means to live under the rule of God and to work to bring the kingdom of God close, we can discover a lot about the nature of God, particularly his purpose for the world.

Jesus uses many images to describe what the kingdom of God is like. Which ones speak powerfully to you? What do they tell you about the purpose and nature of God?

Here are some ideas from the Scriptures.

The kingdom of God is like . . .

- . *A man sowing seed in a field (Matthew 13.18-23).*
- . *A mustard seed itself (Matthew 13.31-32).*
- . *A portion of yeast (Matthew 13.33).*
- . *Treasure hidden in a field (Matthew 13.44).*
- . *A merchant looking for fine pearls (Matthew 13.45-46).*
- . *A dragnet cast into the sea (Matthew 13.47-50).*

What are your ideas?

### Citizens of the kingdom

Jesus describes the qualities of this citizenship in a very famous passage in Matthew's Gospel. This is his Citizens' Charter! It speaks of the attitudes we are called to have and the blessings we will receive.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.  
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

*Matthew 5.3-10*

What does your experience of being part of the Church tell you about the work of the Holy Spirit guiding people into this way of living?

## The kingdom and the Church

Membership of the Church is not like joining another organization. It is initiation into a new way of living. The task of the Church is to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus: to bring God's kingdom close to the people. How, in your experience of the Church, does this actually happen?

How does your church reflect the values, lifestyle and concerns of the kingdom?

## Putting it into practice

Think and pray about the marks of a Christian lifestyle. How should citizens of God's kingdom be different from other people?

Come next week ready to share any conclusion you have come to or decisions you have made.