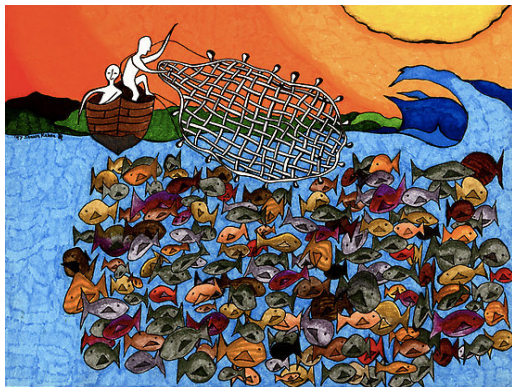




Week 5

These weekly studies are loosely based on the previous Sunday's sermon. If you missed it, you will find a recording on our website (www.knaphillbaptist.org.uk). They are designed for both Home Group discussion and/or personal reflection. Don't necessarily try to cover all the questions and discussion topics in your group at one sitting. You may like to think about them later in your own time.

... A Net



Read Matthew 13:47-52

This is the fifth study in the series on The Kingdom of God. This was the principle theme of Jesus' teaching and of the New Testament church. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe good news' (Mark 1:15). The mustard seed grew beyond its usual size as a garden shrub to be a huge and chaotic mustard tree. The Kingdom of God does not always fit our tidy or comfortable ideas as to what it should be like. The imagery of the Parable of the Net speaks not only of a great haul of fish but also of the great diversity in the type of fish caught up in the net. There are all kinds of people in God's kingdom.

Questions and pointers for discussion/reflection

1. The clue to this parable lies in Mark 1:16,17. Jesus was speaking to fishermen about the mission he was giving them. He used an example of their ordinary, workaday world to speak to them about the Kingdom of God. What examples of your everyday, workaday world could you use to illustrate something about God's kingdom?
2. In first century Palestine there were two main methods of fishing. The casting net, the *amphilestron* and the drag-net, the *sagene*. In the first method, the net was cast from the shore and in the second, it was dragged behind a boat. It is the second type that Jesus refers to in this parable. Think about these and other fishing methods and discuss how they relate to the different ways we can fish for people. How does this illustration help us with our mission?
3. When the net was hauled in, Jesus tells us that there were all kinds of fish caught up in. What does this tell of the kingdom of God?
4. Then, *'the good fish are picked out and put in a tub; those unfit to eat are thrown away. That's how it will be when the curtain comes down on history'* (verse 48,49 The Message). What is Jesus referring to here? See Matthew 8:5-13 and Revelation 20:11-15.
5. What Jesus is making clear is that the selection between the good and bad fish or the 'wicked from the righteous' will be made at the end of the age (verse 49) and not before. It is not our job to make that kind of judgment. See Matthew 7:1,2 and James 4:11,12.
6. Fishers of people must be prepared to cast their net widely over the whole field of human society. Read The Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:15-24. What does this teach us? See also Revelation 5:9 and 7:9.
7. Jesus invited all to come to him (11:28) and the Apostle Paul affirmed this in 1 Timothy 2:3 when he wrote that God *'wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth'*. Yet, Jesus also said in John 15:16, *'You did not choose me, but I chose you'*. See also Matthew 11:27. Discuss this apparent paradox.
8. In verse 52 Jesus spoke of 'new treasures as well as old.' There are both in the Kingdom of God. Read Isaiah 42:9 and compare this to Jeremiah 6:16. How can they both be reconciled?

Jesus said, *'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full'* (John 10:10). Jesus came to enrich our lives with the wide diversity and scope of this Kingdom. God's life is more life and better life. How does God want to enrich your life?