**Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven**

***September 24, 2017 – Lambrick Park Church, Victoria, BC***

We want to hear Jesus speaking the Good News to us today,

 using His very words to guide us as we live out the Gospel for others,

 seeking to **Be Like Him**, not just **Believe in Him**.

**1. “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near.”** Mt 4:17

*Isn’t God far off, uncaring, with impossibly high standards, just waiting to punish me?*

Think again! Change your mind!

**God is reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them!!** 2Cor 5:19

The time has come. Something big has changed.

A new relationship with God is now possible.

It is available to everyone who is open, who believes.

God is with His people. His Name is YHWH (I am) or Immanuel (With-Us-God). This is the year of the Lord’s favour: good news for the poor, sight for the blind, freedom for the oppressed (Lk 4:18,19).

Heaven is seeping into the world, so reconsider your assumptions of separateness, of distance, of God not caring, or just tolerating you.

Main Message: God is near. We approach Him as a Father Who loves us (Mt 6:9). Follow Me! (e.g. Matt 4:19) into this new relationship, new life, new way of being.

**God cares about what is going on right here, right now**

**2. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”** Mt 5:3

*Isn’t being healthy, wealthy, successful, popular, and comfortable a sign of God’s blessing?!! What could be good about being poor?*

It is when we know we don’t measure up that we are open to God, able to perceive His love, and willing to receive His Grace.

Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven. (Mt 18:3) Poor, powerless, dependent, and fully trusting is the posture which brings us close to God.

Failure, weakness, loss and grieving are not punishment, but the way in which the works of God are revealed to us (Jn 9:3). Suffering is redeemed in the KoH.

The Christian does not think that God will love us because we are good,

but that God will make us good because He loves us. ~ C.S.Lewis

***What would I do right now if I believed that God was my PAL? (Present, Active, and Loving)***

**3. “The Kingdom of Heaven is like ...**

**... a mustard seed** (Mt 13:31) small, easily overlooked, but unstoppable

**... yeast in dough** (Mt 13:32) ordinary, disappears, but brings the whole loaf to life

**... workers in the vineyard** (Mt 20:1-16) a blessing to the weak and broken

**... the restored prodigal son** (Lk 15:11-24) **or the justified tax collector** (Lk 18:9-14) available to those who call out for help ... not those who are confident in their own righteousness (Lk 18:9 and 15:25-32).

*Doesn’t it all depend on me? Working hard, performing, measuring up?*

 There is no earning or deserving in the KoH. It is all grace. Undeserved favour.

**God gives us what we need, not what we deserve.**

**4. “Father, I want those You have given Me to be with me where I am ... You in me and I in You.”** Jn 17:24 and 21

*Aren’t we all just trying to be good and get saved?*

God desires nothing less than to have all of His beloved children regathered at His table to celebrate (Lk 15:32)!

Heaven is not sitting around on clouds playing harps, but a worshipful wedding feast where our union with Him is finally made complete (Rev 19:7).

Heaven begins here and now: we are invited to be one with Him as, by His Spirit in us, we are His Presence in this world.

**God wants to remove from us anything that might block full communion with Him.**

**5. “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.**

**Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ...**

**And surely I am with you always ...”** Mt 28:18-20

*Shouldn’t we ask God to bless our plans to build this church?*

God towers sovereign over the nations, this city, my neighbourhood. We are part of His enormous plan which we cannot comprehend.

He is Ultimate, but also Intimate: as we are aware of His Loving Gaze resting upon us in our brokenness, we also notice His Loving Gaze falling on others in their brokenness. Our message, based on our experience is, “He loves you! He wants to heal you, help you, bless you, live through you!”

Contemplation is the engine of outreach: remain in Him, then bear fruit (Jn 15:5). **Come! Abide! Go!** Inhale, then exhale! His Presence with us is the key!

We invite people to follow Him by sharing how walking with Him is giving us the strength to overcome our struggles.



**Like Jesus, the Bread of Life,**

**We too, are beloved sons and daughters:**

**Chosen, Blessed, Broken, and Given!**