

SESSION ONE: LEADING QUESTIONS

The purpose of the Parables Project is to awaken hope for the Kingdom of Heaven in our world. To that end:

- We will explore the parables in Matthew's Gospel;
- Explore questions that will deepen our faithful journey toward the Kingdom;
- Creatively imagine new parables that awaken our minds and hearts in today's world.

Thousands of people knew Jesus during his lifetime. They did not first know him by the titles that we use today: "Messiah," "Savior," or "Lord." Jesus was, first of all, "Rabbi" – "Teacher." This young Rabbi from Galilee proclaimed news of a reality that was coming; he proclaimed that *this* world would be transformed by God. He called it "the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus said, "Imagine the world looking like this..."

Jesus taught the crowds, saying:

- People who are poor in spirit will dwell in the kingdom of heaven. *'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'*
- Mourners will be comforted. *'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.'*
- Meek, humble people will inherit the earth. *'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.'*
- People who hunger and thirst for justice and righteousness will be completely satisfied. *'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.'*
- Merciful people will be treated mercifully. *'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.'*
- Pure-hearted people will see God alive everywhere. *'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.'*
- Peacemakers will be known as God's children. *'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.'*
- People who suffer for doing what's good and right will see goodness and righteousness in this world. *'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'*

(Adapted from Matthew 5:1-10)

1. If there was a slim chance that such a vision could become a reality, would you want it to become reality in our world? Why or why not?

2. Can you imagine people who would not agree with you? Who would they be?

3. If there was a slim chance that such a vision could become a reality, would you work to make it a reality? Can you comprehend what kind of effort (or energy or sacrifice or investment or risk-taking or faith or grace) would be required?

4. If there was a slim chance that such a vision could become a reality, could it be realized even if you personally worked against it?

5. Does such a vision seem possible to you in today's world? Why or why not? If yes, what resources and possibilities do you see? If not, what resources are lacking and what impediments to you see?

6. How does the possibility or impossibility of such a kingdom vision describe how you believe God works in this world?