

**"The Kingdom of Heaven"  
Mathew 13: 24-30  
(October 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> 2017)**

“According to Iowa Agriculture Literacy 2015, there are a lot of reasons for farmers to plow or till their fields. But, plowing does present some challenges. One of the principle problems with plowing fields is the potential wind and water erosion that might carry soil away from the field. For this reason many farmers chose to plant their fields using no-till technology in which last year’s organic matter is left on the surface and seeds are drilled directly into soil without plowing. The organic matter from previous years helps hold the soil in place.”

In the parable of the wheat, Jesus illustrates how we like farmers have to be careful not to erode the soil or those God is calling to himself, but to drill the seeds of the Gospel message directly into their hearts.

**Answer and discuss the following question with your group.**

1. If you or your small group was put in charge of building a kingdom, what would it include and why?” Is there anything or anyone that would definitely be left out?

**Read the following excerpt out loud or watch message segment #1.**

An excerpt from the StoneBridge message, “Kingdom of Heaven”.

“One of the things that was different about Jesus – than all of the other religious teachers was – that Jesus hung around folks that just didn’t fit in. The religious leaders – the Pharisees big complaint about Jesus was that he hung out with sinful people. It really bothered them that Jesus wasn’t bothered by them.

A real religious person would not have talked with – associated with – eaten with – or even let them touch their robe – if they did not keep the law. The world was divided into 2 worlds – good and bad –

They would have been very bothered that Jesus was not weeding out anyone.”

**Read Matthew 13: 24-30 and answer/discuss the following questions.**

2. From Matthew 13:24-30 identify who is:
  - a. The Enemy
  - b. The Man who sowed the good seed
  - c. The Wheat (good plants)
  - d. The Tares (weeds, bad plants)

3. Look at Matthew 13:27 and 28, Sometimes we are like the owner's servants who see others as bad seed, something evil, something to get rid of, or to keep out of the church. What are some of the ways or the reasons we do this in the name of Christianity?
4. Look at Matthew 13: 29 and 30, Jesus doesn't want anything to happen to the plants until they have the chance to mature to see if they will be wheat or not. Jesus feels the same way about people inside and outside the church. What are some ways we "the church" can keep from pulling up the "wheat" (judging) when interacting with others that are different than ourselves, have "sin issues," or just do things we don't like?

**Read the following excerpt out loud or watch message segment #2.**

An excerpt from the StoneBridge message, "Kingdom of Heaven".

"Lovingly confront Christians on sin issues. But I would say that we are anything but loving and usually we yell at people who are outside of the faith. I certainly need Christ followers who will lovingly hold me to the path. This should be done in a humble manner that is grace filled. But when it comes to people who are outside the church – leave the judgement to God. Let's tell people about Jesus and his grace rather than judging and condemning."

**Read Answer/discuss the following questions.**

5. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:2 tells us, "... we are to correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction." Those that have accepted Jesus as the Lord of their life, do need others in a loving, humble manner to help correct and encourage them using scripture. What would be some good examples of this practice? What would be some poor examples of this practice?
6. In the sermon, Pastor Mark said, "Loving God and loving people would mean that we talk about sin and repentance – but it also means that we love – and that involves relationships not rules." What does this mean to you and what does it look like?
7. Pastor Mark also shared, "Love involves time." What are some ways you are currently spending time to show God's love to those inside and outside the church?

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8. Love also involves telling people about the goodness and the grace of God. How do you or would you tell people about the goodness and grace of God?

### **Reflection and Wrap-up**

8. As a result of this study, what practical steps do you need to take to ensure those attending Stonebridge find a place that is safe, loving and with the main focus being sharing the message of God's love and saving grace through Christ?

### **Pray Together as a Group**

#### **Additional Study**

If you have time during your Small Group or you want to study more about the Kingdom of Heaven read and consider the following passages:

- Matthew 5:20
- Matthew 7:21
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- John 1:16
- Acts 11:23