

PARISH HOUSE

Newmarket Church of Christ



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THE KINGDOM WILL COME: MATTHEW 13

Nathan Pickard

I walked into the school. It's been a long time since I have been in the school. I wish time could afford me to keep walking through those doors and to see the children and engage in conversation with the teaching staff.

While I was standing in the lobby waiting to talk with one of the staff members, a student walked up and gave me a fist pump. "*How are you?*" With my customary response, I also ask several questions: "*How are you doing? How is school? How do you like your teacher? Getting lots of homework?*"

Wanted . . .

Parish House Minister

The Newmarket Church of Christ has intentionally lived with her neighbours for the past 15+ years. We are now looking for a Parish House minister who will (but not limited to):

- Build upon and strengthen the established ministries and friendships within the neighbourhood,
- Live with and for our neighbours
- Continue to help us live deeper into the mission of God

Those interested to apply and/or to seek more information, please contact newmarketcofc@gmail.com.

A full job description can be found at:
<https://www.newmarketchurchofchrist.ca/parish-house>

The Same Picture

I walked into our basement in the month of December and I took a picture. It was a picture of tables filled with gifts, books, clothing items, household items. As I took the picture it dawned on me that I have taken this same picture year-after-year. The same thing happens each year and I take the same picture.

Part of me was really disappointed in this. After all, we live in a world where everything must be new, everything must change. But here we are taking the same picture. Nothing new. Nothing is changing. But then I look at what is being accomplished each year: families receiving Christmas assistance, relationships being formed, people gathering around a shared meal, opportunities to pray with and for people, moments of healing and laughter, community being formed, proclamation of God's kingdom. As I think about this, I'm okay taking the same picture each year for that same picture is helping us live faithfully into God's in-breaking kingdom.

2023



2024



2025



The Kingdom Will Grow, Cont'd

Before the student has a chance to answer, Robyn arrives and I am ushered down the hall for a meeting with some staff members. But I was curious, *who was that student that started a quick conversation?* So I asked, *“Who was that?” “The student you were talking to?” “Yep.” “That was Johnny, who lives on . . . “*

My eyes bug out of my head. No way that was Johnny. That's impossible. Johnny was fifty pounds heavier and a foot shorter. Not a chance that was Johnny. Robyn smiles and says, *“That was Johnny. He looks good. Family is doing really well. They are eating properly. A great support network and the worry of affordable housing has disappeared.”* Before I left the school, I saw Johnny again. *“Johnny,”* I cried out, *“What has happened? I didn't even recognize you?” “I'm growing up!”*

It's inevitable. Kids grow. They eat food and sleep. They participate in the game of life and inevitably they grow up and it might just be they become unrecognizable. I found an old picture from twenty years ago. Something has happened to me. I weigh more. I look more middle-age than what I care to admit. I don't look the same as I did twenty years ago. When I saw that picture from twenty years ago, it's hard for me to imagine looking the way I did.

It's really easy to be churches that think we are failing in all sorts of categories. Dwindling budgets, fewer people participating in the worshiping life of the church, lack of volunteers, no or very few young people in our churches. This list can be expanded in any number of ways and as result, the church can feel a sense of fatigue and failure.

When this happens, my fear is that we begin to act on our own accord. We begin to talk about what **we** must do; about our **own** actions. And don't get me wrong, we must do something. But I am convinced that the future of God's in-breaking kingdom is not on account of what you or I do. The future of God's in-breaking kingdom is dependent upon the redemptive activity of God in our midst.

If the future of God's in-breaking kingdom is dependent upon God's redemptive activity, then I think the church can breathe. We can relax. We can loosen our grip on everything that we are grasping and trust that God will work everything out. And yes, some of our churches will not do or accomplish what they hope or what they dream about, and that's okay. Because the in-breaking kingdom of God is not dependent upon the success of our churches; it's dependent upon God.

Which is why I have really liked Matthew's telling of the parables of God's kingdom (Matthew 13).



The kingdom of God is like . . .

- Someone who sowed good seed in their field but while everybody was asleep, someone came and sowed weeds in the field. When the seeds germinated, both the weeds and the seeds of the kingdom grew up alongside each other. The servants were confused because only good seed was sown. Where did the weeds come from? The owner of the field wasn't too concerned and said, "Let both grow together until the harvest. When it's harvest time, I'll have the reapers gather the weeds and burn them. Then only the wheat will be left."
- Someone planted a single mustard seed. It's one of the smallest seeds but when it has grown, it becomes one of the greatest shrubs and it becomes a tree

It can certainly feel like God's kingdom is struggling to take root. It feels as if there is more war than peace, hatred than love, retribution than reconciliation and more darkness than light. We feel this deep inside our bones. But remember . . . God's kingdom will arrive in its fullness. God's kingdom will reign. God's work of peace, love, and forgiveness will take root and will grow until there is a new heavens and a new earth.

God is not finished his redemptive work in our midst. So take heart and know that in time, God's kingdom will reign. God's desires and dreams will be fulfilled. The future of God's kingdom is not dependent upon what you or I do; it's dependent upon God's faithfulness and God's desire to act in this world. This gives me hope!

A Shared Meal

On the wall of our basement are the words, "Welcome to the table." For those who are steeped in the life of worship, we hear these words each Sunday when we gather around a table of bread and wine. We have placed these same words on the basement wall in hopes that maybe, as we share meals with our neighbours, that our neighbours will discover a table of welcome and in time, join us at the table of the Lord.

This past month some of our neighbours took the time to cook a meal whereby the church and neighbourhood could sit at the table. Imagine that . . . neighbours cooking a meal so the church and neighbourhood can sit at the table together. I love this!



"To be most effective in bringing about change in a community or a neighborhood, it helps if you live there."

**NEWMARKET
CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

Sharing the kingdom of
God through friendship
with the neighbourhood

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