

“God is Closer than You Think” L. 6 Heaven Breaking Through (Oct. 31st, Nov. 1, 2, 3 & 6^t)

1. Opening Prayer & Sharing (What are your plans for Thanksgiving & Christmas?)
2. Why is it important for us to know that there is something beyond this life, beyond seasons of spiritual winter? What convinces you that God really exists, that He is good, and that He is with us in this life?
3. **Watch video** – Any comment on *On the other side of the hedge” (everyday hedge breaking experience), *The kingdom has arrived right here and right now, *Making “up there” come “down here”, *God is closer to us even during spiritual winter
4. Discuss if the essence of the gospel is (1) Minimal entrance requirement for getting into heaven or (2) Jesus coming to earth and bringing the kingdom of God with Him. How do we experience God’s kingdom right now (the fullness of life)?
5. Jesus invites us to experience the goodness of life in the presence of God first. What do we need to do in relationship with other people and the world in which we live with this transformative experience(the goodness of life in the presence of God)? How can we become ‘conduits (vessels) of God’s presence’ and make ‘up there’ come ‘down here’?
6. Read the scripture below. What are some examples in which we can join Jesus in making God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven? How are we called to interact with our neighbors daily according to this passage?

¹ We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. ² **Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.** ³ **For even Christ did not please himself** but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” ⁴ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that **through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.** ⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶ so that **with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15: 1-6)**

7. Read the scripture below. If we are bringing “up there” to “down here”, who does Jesus tell us to invite (serve, celebrate with) and why? In what ways can we honor the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind today? How can we bring God’s presence into the lives of these and other people who are often overlooked?

*¹² Then Jesus said to His host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. ¹³ But **when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,** ¹⁴ and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 12:12-14)*

8. Read the scriptures below. What are the virtues of “up there” in this passage? How often do we see these practiced in everyday’s life? What are the characteristics of a life lived in the presence of God?

*¹² Therefore, **as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.** ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ **And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Colossians 3:12-17)***

9. In what ways does your awareness of what lies on heaven affect your everyday life? What encouragement do you find in the fact that God is never offended when we complain to Him about how far away God seems to be? Where do you want to see God’s presence and power break into my heart and life?

10. Read together – *“Every time we pray for heaven to be present on earth, our life becomes the place where God dwells and that makes all the difference.”*

11. Joys & concerns & Closing prayer