

Sermon preached at OCC, 26 July 2027

Let us pray, Lord of the kingdom, Your kingdom often begins in small and surprising ways. As we read these parables together, give us humble hearts to hear your voice, wisdom to understand your truth, and courage to follow where you lead. May your Word take root in us and bear fruit for your kingdom. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Matthew 13:31-32; 44-52 - Doing SOAP with parables

Today, we are going to practice SOAP for the group reflections as well as a personal one on scripture. Before we start, let me first introduce SOAP and how to do it. SOAP is the acronym for *Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer*. SOAP is a conversation with God, which helps us to find the work of God in our daily lives. It's simple, and we can do it anywhere or anytime. Here I put a very simple description that shows what each acronym represents.

1. *Scripture – Read the passage twice.*
2. *Observation – What do you notice?*
3. *Application – What is God showing you?*
4. *Prayer – Pray your response.*
5. *How does this parable invite us to live as citizens of God's kingdom this week?*

Before we do SOAP as groups, I'll do a sample SOAP based on Matthew 13:31-32. The process is as follows:

1. Begin with prayer
2. **S**-Read the passage twice
3. **O**bservation first, before interpretation. Remember the first audience
4. **A**-Look for what the parable reveals about God
5. **P**ray your response and share

Let's begin. As you see, I chose Matthew 13:31-32 for my SOAP. I would read it two times while reflecting on the meaning of the sentences.

S – Scripture - Matthew 13:31–32

O – Observation - Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a tiny mustard seed. Though it is the smallest seed, it grows into a large shrub where birds can make their nests. The kingdom begins small but grows beyond expectation.

A – Application (A) - God's kingdom often grows in surprising ways. What looks small or even disruptive to us may be God's work. Am I willing to welcome God's kingdom, even when it challenges my expectations or carefully ordered plans?

A – Application (B) -Some scholars note that mustard was more like a vigorous weed than a prized crop. To careful farmers, it could be a nuisance rather than a blessing. God's kingdom does not always fit our ideas of order or success. What is God showing us about welcoming his surprising kingdom?

P – Prayer - Lord, give me eyes to recognise your kingdom, even when it begins small or grows in unexpected ways. Help me to trust your work and gladly welcome your reign. Amen.

Now it's your turn. Make groups of four or five. I'll give a passage to each group. If someone can write down each S-O-A-P, that will be great. I'll give you five minutes for SOAP, and then another five minutes to share with us.