

Thornbury Baptist Church  
Small Group Discussion Questions

**Talk Date:** May 10th, 2026

**Talk title:** Expectations and the Kingdom of God

**Passage:** Matthew 11: 1-19

**Speaker:** Paul Ferguson

## **Discussion Questions**

### **1. When Jesus Doesn't Meet Our Expectations**

John the Baptist asks Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3). John had expected the kingdom to come with decisive judgement and dramatic change, yet instead he finds himself in prison while Jesus heals, restores, and welcomes sinners.

**Question:** Have there been times when God did not act in the way you expected or hoped? How did that affect your faith or understanding of God?

### **2. Seeing the Kingdom Differently**

Jesus responds to John not with a simple answer, but by pointing to what is happening around him: the blind see, the lame walk, the poor hear good news (Matt. 11:4–5). The kingdom was present, but arriving differently than many expected.

**Question:** Why do you think Jesus answered John this way? What does this teach us about how God's kingdom often works?

### **3. John the Baptist — Living at the Turning Point**

Jesus describes John as one of the greatest figures in God's story (Matt. 11:11), yet John himself still wrestles with confusion and unmet expectations. John stands at the pivot point between the old age and the coming kingdom.

**Question:** What can we learn from John's mixture of faithfulness, courage, and uncertainty? How might that encourage us in our own discipleship?

### **4. The Kingdom Suffers Violence — and Calls for Endurance**

Matthew 11:12 is one of the most debated verses in the Gospel. In the sermon we explored two connected ideas: firstly, that the kingdom itself suffers violence and opposition — seen in John's imprisonment, Jesus' suffering, and the persecution of the church through history; and secondly, that disciples are called to determined, enduring faith — a refusal to give up, like the persistent widow in Jesus' parable.

**Question:** How do these two themes — suffering and perseverance — shape your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus today?

### **5. Whose Tune Are We Dancing To?**

Jesus compares the crowds to children in the marketplace complaining that nobody will dance to their tune (Matt. 11:16–17). John came one way and was rejected; Jesus came another way and was rejected too. The deeper issue was that people wanted God’s kingdom on their own terms.

**Question:** In what ways can we be tempted to shape Jesus around our own preferences, expectations, or agendas rather than surrendering to his?

### **6. Living Faithfully in the “In Between”**

This passage reminds us that we live between the arrival of God’s kingdom and its final fulfilment. There is hope, healing, and grace now — but also suffering, waiting, and endurance.

**Question:** What do you think faithful discipleship looks like in this “in between” space of hope and hardship together?

### **Takeaway**

What is the main thing each person is taking away from this discussion?

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