

How would you describe a color to someone who had been blind since birth? What can you say about blue or red or purple to someone who has no concept of color, of bright, light, or dark?

Well, you would almost have to use examples from the senses the blind person did have - touch, smell, sound, taste. Would blue be cold while red described as being hot? Could purple be described with the depth of a bruise? As we describe something, the possibilities are endless, as long as both parties have an understanding of how it is being described.

It can be very difficult to explain what something looks like to somebody who has never seen. In doing so, we have to use what we both know which is where the challenge begins. If you stop and think about it that is exactly what Jesus was doing.

How do you describe the vastness of divine love? How is God's time or fullness of time put into days, hours, minutes or seconds? How is the unity of all creation shared with countries who are at war, communities that are divided or families that are broken?

To get his message across of the things we did not understand, Jesus preached and taught about the kingdom of God. The world understood the concept of kingship. The nations of the world were ruled by kings, and kings were absolute authority figures with unquestioned control over their subjects. The Old Testament refers to the kingship of God more than any other divine quality. Israel was God's first kingdom, but a time is coming where all the nations would recognize God's ruling status and bow down before him.

So when Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God his audience, especially the Jews who read the Torah, thought they knew what he was talking about. However, that was not the case.

Jesus was not talking about establishing a place with borders, a kind of divine kingdom. The kingdom of God wasn't some type of political city but rather it is the presence of God in the lives of HIS people. We often think of God's Kingdom as heaven, the place we go once we die where we will live forever with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But the Kingdom of God is also here with us now because Christ came to us. Jesus used terms or illustrations that the people knew so they would have a basic understanding of what the Kingdom of God was like. As we proclaim that the Kingdom of God has come near, we hope that those who hear our proclamation will also have a basic understanding because we cannot fully understand the Kingdom of God. Another factor that complicates things is that each one of us has a different idea of what the Kingdom of God is like so we would describe it differently.

For many people, when you talk of the Kingdom of God, you talk about heaven. A common descriptive phrase of what heaven actually looks like is that it has roads that are paved with gold. But that is not the only way heaven is described because one of the favorite funeral passages says that a place is prepared for each one of us in God's kingdom. Some rooms

resemble a lake, mountains or anything with the outdoors. Some rooms are full of family and friends. I don't have a clue what my room may look like, but figure that two good possibilities would be a garage or a dirt race track. What heaven really looks like, nobody really knows. All we do know is that it will be perfect and we will be in God's presence.

Now, what about the Kingdom of God here on earth? It is near because Christ came to each one of us. How would you describe it for others to understand? What words would you use to help others understand what the phrase, "the kingdom of God has come near" means for them?

Jesus taught many different groups of people about the Kingdom of God by using parables. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed or yeast or a lost coin or a shepherd who loses a sheep. The kingdom is like the prodigal son or the servant who takes care of his master's place while the master is gone.

We too have the ability to teach others about the kingdom. We may use words or stories about church, family, or the beauty of nature and creation. The Kingdom of God is like working on a car as you repair the rust and hammer out the dents. You work to remove all of the bad areas and replace with good metal. In the same way, God works to remove the rust in our lives, our sins and replaces them with goodness.

It really doesn't matter how we describe God's kingdom in our lives as long as our descriptions teach what the kingdom is about. Use your stories to teach others about the kingdom because it has come near.