

The Kingdom Has Come

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[0 : 00] Our passage for this evening, as we've just read, is Matthew 4, 23, chapter 5 to verse 2. The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is proclaiming the kingdom.

He's going throughout Galilee and teaching in the people's synagogues and he's healing people. And through the rest of the sermon, he's saying how his disciples, how people will know they're his disciples.

And when I read this passage and the rest of the sermon, I was thinking about how when you walk down the street, you can tell certain people and what they do and what they're going to do that day by what they're wearing.

Various examples of this, the emergency services. So you walk down the street and you see a man with police written across the back of his shoulders. You've got a fair idea who he is, what he's doing and what he's working as.

Have a pretty good guess at tourists in Edinburgh, armed with selfie sticks, cameras, maps, big bags, and walking around the city centre and they might ask you for directions.

[1 : 08] People working in building sites, wearing high-vis, hard hats, carrying tools maybe, driving vans, and various other examples that we can maybe think of as well.

But as you walk down the street, what I was thinking is it's hard to tell who a Christian is. We don't wear a uniform.

We don't carry any specific equipment. We don't drive vans that say on the side, I am a Christian. Here's the company phone number to phone us up to get us out to do that job.

So we don't have any really identifiable marks usually when we're walking down the street. But as I said, in this passage and going forward, Jesus is saying, this is how you'll know who my disciples are.

This is how the world will be able to tell that you are one of my disciples. And what he's saying is he's the king and he's proclaiming God's kingdom.

[2 : 11] And he's telling the people who hear him, coming to mankind and telling us not how to live, but he tells us how to live and demonstrates why we should live this way and why we should listen to him.

And why this message from this king should affect us and the other people that we share it with as well. So by verse 23 of chapter 4, as the passage starts, a lot's happened already in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Most immediately he's been baptized by John the Baptist. He's been anointed by the Holy Spirit and led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, like I'd said, and tested by Satan.

And in that passage we see a lot of sort of similarities between Jesus being tested by Satan and Adam and Eve in the garden. But unlike Adam, crucially, Jesus emerges from the wilderness, having overcome these trials and temptations.

And that is a further proof of who he is, is this king, is this person that we should listen to. And then from coming out of the wilderness where he's had all these trials and testing and tribulation and difficulty, to put it mildly, he comes out and in verse 17, just previously in the chapter, if you look there, it says and it tells us what Jesus is proclaiming in a sentence.

[3 : 40] It says, repent for the kingdom of heaven has come near. So this is what Jesus is preaching and teaching in Galilee, as it says in this verse, in verse 23.

Repent, meaning to turn from sin, and by doing that and in doing that, turning to God. It's not just a case of stopping to do certain things, but it's a case of stopping doing certain things and starting to do other things, starting to see things differently, and starting to follow a different person, rather than ourselves, starting to follow God.

And repent, meaning to ask forgiveness for our sins from God. And by doing that, coming into his kingdom and under the rule of King Jesus, as we read about here.

So Matthew tells us Jesus proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of heaven in three ways. In verse 23, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and by healing sickness and disease.

And I'm just going to look up the three of these just now. And then at the end of the passage, towards the end, we're going to look at the response of the people then, and how this should impact and inform our response now to the king.

[4 : 59] So as Jesus taught in the synagogues, he was going into the Old Testament background to who he is, and why he was telling the people to repent, and why he came. In the Old Testament, God had given the Jews, the Old Testament people of God, commandments and laws to live by, to show that they were his people.

He gave them certain parameters and ways to live. And as we read through the Old Testament, we see time and time again, that they couldn't keep these laws and commandments, and couldn't live up to the responsibility that they brought.

They were sinners, and broke God's laws and commandments and laws. And we, like them, are sinners, and break God's commandments and laws that he's laid down for us as well.

But in light of this, God always had a plan to send someone, a perfect person, who would keep all his commandments and laws perfectly, and would rule his people Israel, and he would represent them in front of God.

And this person is Jesus. This person that the Jews are waiting on in this passage, or should be waiting on, is Jesus, and he's finally coming to bring in the perfect rule of God.

[6 : 15] And this is good news for the Jews then, as the people of God, waiting on this promised king, and the non-Jewish people there, and also for us.

When we trust in Jesus, and when they trust in Jesus, when we repent of our sins, and believe what Jesus says, and what he has done, and coming, dying, rising again, and ascending to heaven, then our problem with sin is dealt with, just like it was dealt with when people back then believed.

And because Jesus is God's perfect promised king, who lived perfectly, I'm repeating myself, then with that, we are brought into this new life, where we can properly and fully glorify God, by entering his kingdom, and living in this new way, and living for him.

And then, Matthew tells us in the next verse, the next part of verse 23, rather, that Jesus went out proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. So the last part was in synagogues, where he's speaking to the people, and arguing with them, and showing them from the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible, the proof of who he is, and why he's come.

And then he was going out, round the various towns and villages, and the open countryside, and speaking to people, and teaching them as well, who he is. For this, it's important to know, a bit of the geography, of the passage, and what we're reading.

[7 : 49] So Galilee, is in the north of Israel, it's a fairly small, but densely packed region, at that time, with about three million people in it. And Jerusalem, importantly, is in the south of Israel.

Jerusalem was where the leaders of Judaism, the Pharisees, and the teachers of the law, which we read about in other parts of Matthew's Gospel, and other parts of the Gospels, teach and live.

And that is the center of Judaism, that's where the important people live, the trendy people live, the cosmopolitan people live. And they didn't think, very highly, of Galilee, up in the north.

They sort of thought of, the Galileans, both the Jews, and the Gentiles, as like country bumpkins. They're like, less educated, less trendy, cousins up there, who just don't know as much as we do, down here in Jerusalem.

They don't know as much, they're not as well educated, they don't know as much of their Torah, as they don't know as much as us, about the Old Testament, and all these sorts of things. So, the people in Jerusalem, aren't really thinking, that this promised king, who they've been waiting on, is going to be going up to Galilee, of all places.

[9 : 06] They're thinking, he's going to come to us. Like, we are the people he really wants to speak to. We are the people that know the most, do the most. We are the best. So, when these people, encounter Jesus in Galilee, they're like, this can't be him, because he's not going to come to Galilee, to these people, who don't know as much as us, who aren't as good as us.

But, and this is sort of like, Edinburgh and Glasgow, I thought. Like, this difference, this like, rivalry, that they've got going on. Some people think, Edinburgh is better than Glasgow, when actually, you know.

So, there's that rivalry there. But, this is where Jesus did come. And I was thinking about this. And this, view of theirs, that Galilee wasn't as good.

That Galilee, was where, the uneducated, sort of country bumpkins lived. That should encourage us, and shows us part of the, point of the passage, that Jesus came, to like, an ordinary, normal area, and spoke to everyone he encountered, of all kinds of walks of life, and backgrounds.

And was, speaking to Jews, who knew the background, of what he was saying, and knew, the Old Testament, and to Gentiles, who had no idea, who had no background. And he was saying, the same thing, to all of them, and explaining it, the same way, to all of them.

[10:26] And he's saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven, has come near. And he's coming to save, all sorts of people. And that, carries forward to today. Like, he's not come to save, the people who know the most, who live in the trendiest areas, or anything like that.

He's come to save, normal, average, everyday sinners, like me, and like you. And the person who's writing the book, as well, sort of shows that. Matthew is one of the disciples.

He's written this gospel. And for those who don't know, he's a tax collector at the time, for the Romans. So he's essentially, like, a bit of a collaborator, with the enemy. And he's understandably, not a popular person, not a popular kind of person, at the time, when this is being written.

And that reinforces this point, that Jesus came to save, all kinds of people. And that, shows us that Jesus has come, and thrown the kingdom open, to both Jews, and to Gentiles.

Whereas before, in the Old Testament, the kingdom was really for Jews, and they would, the Gentiles would come, but actually, God's king, God's promised, perfect king has come, and he's come close to Jews, and Gentiles, and come to where they are, to find them.

[11:43] And likewise, he's come close, and this has been written, in this way, so that, we can see, this picture of the perfect king, who's come to find us, as well. So the gospel, can now, with Jesus coming, and being proclaimed like this, can go out to every kind of people, and, and King Jesus can save them, and they can come into the kingdom, as well now.

And that's why, we're here this evening, and that's why, every other church in Edinburgh, exists, and preaches this message today, that does preach this. It's not through, anything in ourselves, but it's through this message, in the Sermon on the Mount, and through the gospel, and how it's gone out, from there, to save all kinds of people.

Amen. And with that, these people who are hearing Jesus, these people who are gathering to him, to hear his message, and be healed by him, I've heard all sorts of things, and, they're hearing from the Jewish leaders, how they're supposed to live, and what they're supposed to do, and they're also, hearing from like, pagan philosophers, and that, Galilee, again with that, is like, Edinburgh in the 21st century, like, we're hearing all sorts, from all sorts of people, about what we should believe, why we should believe it, and what we should do, but Jesus is coming, and telling them something totally different, but he, has real power, and real power, to impact, and influence lives, and change lives, because he is, God's son, this perfect king, who's come, and with that as well, this isn't self-help, and this isn't like, go away, change yourself, pull yourself up by the bootstraps, and then come back, when you're worthy, of this kingdom, because, we can't ever really be, worthy in our own right, of this kingdom, and of its king,

Jesus is saying, this, these things, but he embodies it, and he's done it, and he has completed it, and so, this has been done for us, by him, but importantly, that's not to give us, like, license, or like, freedom, just to do whatever we like, once we believe, once we've repented, and things like this, this is, still comes with a responsibility, and it still comes, with a duty, to this new king, because, Jesus does want our lives, to be conformed, to this message, and conformed, to what he says here, but that, change, and that new molding, and that new, worldview, that new outlook, is done, through the Holy Spirit, so, when we believe, when we repent, we receive the Holy Spirit, and then, through the Holy Spirit, indwelling us, working in us, and reshaping our hearts, and our minds, and our lives, themselves, that grace-driven effort, that is required, to do these things, that Jesus is saying, because otherwise, it's impossible, it's through grace, through the grace of God, that Jesus has come, and that the Holy Spirit, is sent, to dwell in us, and then, in the last part, of verse 23, we see that Jesus, was also healing the sick, and the ill, who came to him, so this is a further sign, of Jesus power, like he's speaking to them, he's sitting down, and he's preaching to them, and he's arguing

with them, in their synagogues, through the Old Testament, about who he is, why he's come, and what he's come to do, ultimately, he's also healing them, and taking care, of their bodies, he's not just, interested purely, in their minds, and their hearts, and their souls, and these things, but he's also interested, very much, deeply, in the individual people, who come to hear him, he cares about the whole person, holistically, he cares for their souls, and their bodies, and this healing, is a show of God's power, and a show of who,

Jesus is, that he is God's son, it's a confirmation, of all that, but also, it's an important foretaste, of what, it's going to be like, when the full reality, of God's kingdom, has come, so the king has come, and he's bringing, the kingdom with him, but, as we look outside, as we read our newspapers, as we turn on the news, and the TV, we see the world, is not perfect, so although we talk, about God's kingdom, just now, in this sermon, and the following sermons, and how Jesus, is God's king, we can see, that God's kingdom, has not been fully established, because the world, is still imperfect, but this is a foretaste, this is a, a show, a hint, a glimpse, of the glory, and the perfection, that's to come, when the Lord Jesus, returns, and fully brings about, God's kingdom, with him, all the sickness, disease, suffering, and hardship, that we suffer now, in this life, it's going to be wiped away, it's going to be gone, and it's going to be, because of this king, fully bringing about,

[16:51] God's kingdom, properly, where we won't grow old, and all these things, will be an unpleasant memory, so as part of our response, to this king, and his kingdom, as we live out our lives, as believers, and as the disciples of Jesus, as well as, preaching the gospel, and proclaiming it, and the various, and many ways, we can do that, around the dinner table, and over coffee, with friends, and at the bus stop, and wherever else, we're speaking to people, and we're sharing our lives, with people, we also need to care, for their physical needs, their bodies, and the other parts, of their lives, because that's how, Jesus cared for people, that's how Jesus, ministered, and served people, and there's various ways, I was thinking, we can do this, there's a lot of things, that go on here, at the church, individually, we can get involved, in other things, other projects, like Basics Bank, here at church, and that can be, by coming, and volunteering, or that can be, by donating, both in terms of, finance, and money, and in terms of food, because that is a really, worthwhile ministry, that the church, is involved in, that care for people's bodies, where we also get, to look after their souls, by sharing, and proclaiming the kingdom, with them, and as well, a while ago,

I remember that Graham, was speaking about, social isolation work, that's being done, round about, and in the community, in Edinburgh, it's a big problem, a lot of people, are cut off from society, and cut off, from their local community, and that's something, I was thinking of, that people can look into, and maybe the church, at large, not just Bruntsfield, can make an impact on, and that would be, a very worthwhile, way to look after people, both their souls, and the other aspects, of them, so, and my second point, tonight, is, this is the message of Jesus, this is what he said, this is what he did, and this is, who he did it to, and then, with that, we see a response, from the crowds, and also, Jesus, in this, is asking for a response, from us, and he's asking, are you going to listen to me, listen to my message, are you going to try and do it, and are you going to take me, as your king, and he's not looking for like, a maybe, or a question mark, he's looking for a yes, or no, so as we look further, through the passage, down, down in verse, 24, it says, news about him spread, all over Syria, and people brought to him, all who were ill, with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them, large crowds, from Galilee, the Decapolis,

Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across the Jordan, followed him, and the region, and the region, and the region, and the region, and the region, and the region, and the region, and the region, so at the beginning, I had said, how we can walk down the street, and recognize certain people, by what they're wearing, we know who they are, what they're going to be doing, from what they wear, such as the emergency services, but I had said, we can't usually, identify a Christian, just by looking at them, but the proof, like they say, is in the pudding, the pudding being, how we live, as disciples, how we live, as Christians, out in the world, do we really live, the way the rest of the sermon, on the mount, is going to call us to, do we live, the way the Lord Jesus, is calling to, and do we live, the way, the Lord Jesus, calls us to, in this short, and brief passage, John Wesley once said, which is quite helpful, the gospel, is not only something, that you believe, it is something, that you behave, which is a helpful summary, again I want to, just reiterate, and reinforce, it's not about, self help, it's not about, improve yourself, it's not about, get up earlier, go a run, swim, you know, get fit, read the whole Bible, in the original languages, and do all these

things, it's about, coming to the king, sitting at his feet, taking him as your king, and obeying him, but not through, our own efforts, but through the Holy Spirit, in this grace driven effort, so Jesus has been saying, to these people,

Jews, and Gentiles alike, throughout Galilee, and anyone who, is coming to him, to hear him, and whoever he's encountering, repent, for the kingdom of heaven, has come near, he's appealing to them, to believe his message, and to act on it, he's speaking to heart, and mind, body and soul, and wants this holistic, whole person life change, on entry to this kingdom, and as I said, in verses 24 and 25, we see, the response of the people, Matthew tells us, the news spread quickly, about Jesus, in every direction, north, south, east, and west, and all sorts of people, were coming to him, from all over, people were coming to him, and he healed them, from all their diseases, and then at the end, of verse 25, it tells us, that crowds followed him, again, from all over, not just Jews, or people, from Galilee, but all over, Syria, the Decapolis, Peria, which was on the other side, of the Jordan, these were sort of, pagan places, that didn't have, any sort of knowledge, of the Bible, or the God of the Bible, so clearly, this shows us, that Jesus, then and now, as our living king, as the son of God, is different, from the other teachers, that were around, at that time, and around about, now, he has real power, he has real, power to impact, change lives, so an interesting thing, about this, is that we see, the crowds come,

Jesus sits down, in chapter 5, verse 2, they listen to him, and they're healed, by him, but later, these crowds, some of them anyway, will be in Jerusalem, during the week, of his passion, and will have a hand, in his execution, the crowds, abandon him, including, his closest disciples, four of whom, are here, as we read it, in Matthew, to hear the Sermon, on the Mount, so this shows us, that this message, that Jesus is proclaiming, and what it leads to, is not easy, it's not something, to be taken up lightly, and this, proclamation, of the kingdom, by the king, is not to be taken on, or listen to lightly, and is going to call, for real, radical living, real radical change, and real, radical discipleship, that is totally, like, against our own nature, against our own thinking, and our, against our own view, of everything, the very world around us, ourselves, who we are, and who God is, this king,

[24 : 02] Jesus, is not saying, these things, to impress people, or sell anything, or for his own gain, he's here to call people, out of rebellion, out of sin, to follow him, into new life, in his kingdom, and if we say, we accept this, out of anything, other than faith, and to truly worship, and follow God, with our whole lives, then we haven't, taken on the full responsibility, of this kingdom, and its king, Jesus has done, these things for us, but again, this doesn't mean, we can just come, for the many benefits, like some of the crowd did, some of the crowd, came for the benefits, they got the main one, of healing, and then, we can assume, that after they heard, this message, after chapter 5, verse 2, that they left, because they didn't like, what they heard, they didn't like, this king, they didn't like, this kingdom, because it was too hard, to follow, too hard to listen to, and too hard, to do later, but we mustn't, make the same mistake, as these people, as these crowds, we're seeing, a clear picture, of the king, and his kingdom, and we mustn't, mock this king, and his kingdom, by listening to this lightly, and not fully, taking it on, and fully understanding, the full ramifications, of what we're hearing, and who, is saying it to us,

Jesus doesn't say, like other kings might, again, here's the deal, here's what I'm offering, but here's what you need to do, he's not saying, go away, sort yourself out, fix yourself up, wash yourself off, and then come back to me, when you're worthy, of me and my kingdom, he says, here I am, here's my kingdom, come into it, receive me, as your good king, who's done all these things, for you, who's given himself, for you, and take on, the responsibilities, of my kingdom, which will be difficult now, but will pay great dividends, in the future, for all, the people, us, those people back then, and all the people, throughout history, and in the future, who will take on, this king, who will repent, and believe, and take this king on, as their king, so, another couple of minutes, we'll close, and then, there'll be a coffee break, and then some discussion, and prayer time, so this sermon series, like we thought about, is going to be tough, to listen to, because the message, of the sermon on the mount, is completely counter cultural, here in Britain, and abroad, everywhere, it's been shared, everywhere, it's been proclaimed, but through it, we are going to get to know,

King Jesus, and his kingdom better, this passage, is the beginning, of this revolutionary king, and his kingdom, this is his first proclamation, as the king, he's taught the people, and shown them, how he is this promised king, from the old testament, sent to live God's way, and rule God's people, through his preaching, we've seen, that he came to save people, from all backgrounds, and the door to the kingdom, of heaven, is being thrown wide, to include everyone, Jews, non-Jews, people

who have a background, in it, and people who don't, alike, and we saw, a mixed response, from the crowds, from loyalty, to disinterest, and apathy, as some, came, listened, and stayed, and then, others, departed, once they'd enjoyed, the benefits of it, so, going forward, we're going to hear, the demands of living, as a Christian, and we're going to see, what it will mean, to be identifiable, as one, of the subjects, of this kingdom, and the subjects, of King Jesus, this, so, these are the questions,

I'd like you to discuss, just now, in your tables, what worldviews, are people hearing, and believing today, so, thinking about, the things people here, in Edinburgh, and elsewhere, are hearing about, that are different, from what we're going to be hearing about, later in the sermon, on the mount, and what are the differences, between these worldviews, and the worldview, of this king, in this kingdom.