

Jesus the King - 1 Kings 22v41-53

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[0 : 00] We, the people of Ireland, have had our say. Local councillors and members of the European Parliament have been elected. A few more to go, but certainly some have already got their seats.

What can we expect? What difference do you think they're going to make? Well, if they keep their promises, we are going to see greater local investment, more jobs, better facilities, new markets for trade and exports, renewable energy, protection of our sovereignty and neutrality, parents first, children first, equality and diversity.

Sounds good, doesn't it? Well, at the risk of sounding pessimistic, I don't think they're going to make much difference at all.

Now, don't get me wrong. I voted, and I'm encouraged that we should vote, and I think they will do good work. But will they make much difference?

You see, in another few years, we're going to be complaining that we need new leaders who will deliver. And there will be many who will offer to take their place.

[1 : 16] And in a year's time, there will be the same problems and new problems. Well, I wonder if that sounds familiar to you.

Well, 1 Kings is a history of old kings being replaced by new kings. From David to Solomon, Rehoboam to Jeroboam, Abijah and Bashar and Nadab and Ahab.

With every new king that has come, the anticipation and the expectation has been that things will get better.

There's a longing for something that is different. Someone who can deliver on their promises. Well, two big things we're going to see from our text this morning.

Here's the first. New kings, same story. The sad history of 1 Kings is that things get worse rather than get better.

[2 : 27] The once united kingdom is divided. Instead of peace, there's war. Instead of prosperity, there's a decline. Not only do the kings repeat the same mistakes, they begin to make new ones.

And we see all of this in our text. First, let's look at Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, king of the southern kingdom.

Verses 41 to 50 are a summary of his life. Now, there's lots of good things that we see in his life. Let's pick it up in verse 41. Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab, king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was 35 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for 25 years.

So he certainly brought stability to the nation. His mother's name was Azuba, daughter of Shili. In everything he followed the ways of his father Asa, and did not stray from them.

[3 : 37] He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. I wonder if you remember his father, king Asa. In chapter 15, we're told that Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life.

Asa was a good king. And now Jehoshaphat, his son, is following in the father's ways. In fact, his royal record proves it.

Look at verse 45. As for all the other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved, his military exploits, are they not written in the book of the annals of the king of Judah?

He won lots of battles. He did good things. And he's concerned that people love God and worship God. In verse 46, he rid the land of the rest of the male shrine prostitutes who remained there even after the reign of his father Asa.

So these were shrines where prostitutes would have been, and part of all that carried on was in some ways to enhance or to bring fertility to the land for the rains to come and so forth.

[4 : 58] But his father had left some of them behind. And it's like, well, Jehoshaphat has done one better than his father. He's got rid of them. Loyalty, obedience, and a desire to keep the covenant was a deep concern for him.

He's a good king. But he's not good enough. You see, Jehoshaphat overlooks sin in his life. Let's pick it up again in verse 43. Just the end of verse 43. Asa did not stray from them. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

The high places, however, were not removed. And the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.

The high places were pagan sites of worship. It's not what God wants. But the thinking was, well, at least it's not Baal worship.

[6 : 08] It could have been worse. And maybe it could have been worse. But they still should have been removed. Jerry Bridges, you will know him as an author, wrote a book called Respectable Sins.

It highlights the sins that we think are acceptable. The ones that we think are not too serious. Things like anxiety and frustration.

Impatience and irritability. Judgmentalism and unthankfulness. Do you recognize any of those? We put up with things like that, don't we? We just say, well, that's just my personality. It's the way I function. And rather than deal with them and remove them, we keep them.

Okay, it's not what God wants in my life, but at least it's not Baal worship. My life could be a whole lot worse. At least I'm not getting drunk and having an affair.

[7 : 21] Like Jehoshaphat. We overlook our respectable sins. And we point at the more serious ones and say, well, at least I'm not like that.

Rather than remove them, we hang on to them. Well, he didn't just overlook sin. He entertained sin. Verse 44. Jehoshaphat was also at peace with the king of Israel. Sounds good, doesn't it?

Building bridges with your neighbour, keeping in with those who are close by. But not all is as it seems. Look down at verse 48.

Now, Jehoshaphat built a fleet of trading ships to go to Ophir for gold. Ophir was way down south, right down to the Red Sea, and there was a port, and there he got his fleet of ships ready to sail across the Red Sea to go looking for gold.

[8 : 28] But they never set sail. They were wrecked at the port of Ezion-Geber. At the time, Ahaziah, son of Ahab, said to Jehoshaphat, let my men sail with yours.

But Jehoshaphat refused. What's all that about? A bit of a strange kind of detail there about building ships that all got smashed up in a port.

Well, it seems Jehoshaphat should not have been palling up with the king of Israel who had no time for God. If you keep your finger there in One Kings and just go forwards past 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles to 2 Chronicles chapter 20.

So keep going, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 35. We are given a little bit of detail that helps us understand what was going on.

2 Chronicles chapter 20 verse 35. Later, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, made an alliance with Ahaziah, king of Israel, whose ways were wicked.

[10 : 07] He agreed with him to construct a fleet of trading ships. After these were built at Ezion-Geber, Eliezer, son of Dodavahu, of Merahesha, prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have made.

The ships were wrecked and were not able to set sail to trade. back to 1 Kings. You see, he shouldn't have been piling up with a wicked king.

Not only was he overlooking sin in his own life, he was beginning to entertain it and absorb it into his own life. Not only ignoring it, but intentionally desiring it.

Now, isn't that a picture of our life? We choose to do things and watch things and say things that we know are wrong.

We know what God's word says, but because we like it, we indulge our desires. Or am I the only one like that?

[11 : 25] Well, maybe Jehoshaphat's son would learn from his father. Jehoshaphat was good, but not good enough.

Maybe his son, verse 50, would do a little bit better. 1 Kings 22, verse 50, Then Jehoshaphat rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the city of David, his father.

And Jehoram, his son, succeeded him as king. Surely he's going to do better. A change in leadership is always good, isn't it?

Well, just have a flick through to 2 Kings 8, verse 18. 2 Kings 8, verse 18, we give a little insight into Jehoram.

2 Kings 8, verse 18, He, that's Jehoram, followed the ways of the kings of Israel as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab.

[12:36] He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. new king, same old story.

Well, let's look now at Ahaziah, king of Israel, in the northern kingdom. Let's see what he was like. back to 1 Kings 22, verse 51. Ahaziah, son of Ahab, became king of Israel in Samaria in the 17th year of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel for two years.

Ahab, he did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Ahab, whom we've been looking at recently, was infamous for holding the title of being the most evil king, and he wore that title proudly.

Chapter 16 tells us that there was never anyone like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by his wife Jezebel.

[13:50] But it seems now that his son Ahaziah wants the title for himself. Let's read verse 52 again. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord because he followed the ways of his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel and of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin.

This is evil tripled. It's the evil of Ahab who had encouraged Baal worship, added to that the evil of Jezebel who killed prophets for a hobby, and it's the evil of Jeroboam who had split the kingdom in the first place and introduced idolatry to the nation.

You see, when we think that evil has reached its climax in the case of Ahab, well, it's only just the beginning.

Things only get worse. A few years ago, we went to Dachau. It was the first concentration camp set up by the Nazis.

It was to become a model for others like Auschwitz and Belsen. And in the main courtyard, as we walked around, is this memorial to those who were murdered in the camps.

[15:19] It's a large bronze sculpture of skeleton-like figures who are caught up in barbed wire. And at one end of the memorial is a plaque with just two words written in Hebrew, French, German, Russian, and English.

And the two words simply say this, never again. Never again will there be such evil done by man.

The problem is, it continues to happen again all the time. Since the liberation of those concentration camps, Pol Pot saw the slaughter of 1.7 million Cambodians, Pakistan has overseen the murder of over a million in Bangladesh, raping close to half a million women on the way.

In Rwanda, in just 100 days, Hutu and Tutsi tribes bludgeoned and slashed each other to death, 1 million dead in 100 days.

and there is the hundreds and thousands who are bombed to bloody pieces in Bosnia, East Timor, Darfur, Iraq, and in Yemen.

[16:52] Never again we say, never again. When we think evil has reached its climax, it's only just the beginning.

And so today, our wonderful country, Ireland, boasts one of the most liberal abortion laws that has ever come into being.

Things are only getting worse. Yes, justice will be done. Verse 53, we're told that Ahaziah served and worshipped Baal, and because of that he aroused the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, just as his father had done.

God's righteous, controlled anger at such horrible evil will mean justice will be done. Judgment will fall.

fall. But in the meantime, evil only increases. You see, whether it's Ahaziah or Jehoshaphat, both are failed kings.

[18:06] It doesn't matter if it's outright rebellion or just passive rejection. New king, it's the same old story. And let's not forget, this is our story.

You and I are really no better. We might point the finger at all the evil in the world, but the problem is, we are simply not good enough.

Each new generation adds to the decline. Left to ourselves, we spiral out of control. And let's not kid ourselves and think that, well, if I were king, then things would be different.

That's what Adam and Eve said. If I'm king, then this world would be different. The history of mankind is a catalogue of terrible failure.

So, new kings, same story. The second big thing we want to look at is new king, different story.

[19 : 19] First kings may be history, but it is history with a purpose. You see, the kings may fail, but God remains faithful.

The consistent message throughout the book is that God will not fail. He will see to it that his promises are fulfilled. God will not be promised.

Well, remember what Solomon had prayed to the Lord. I have it here on the screen. It's back in chapter 8. This is what Solomon prayed. Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below.

You who keep your covenant of love with your servants, who continue wholeheartedly in your way.

Now, Lord, the God of Israel, keep your servant David, my father, the promises you made to him when you said, you shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me faithfully as you have done.

And now, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David, my father, come true.

Well, we've read and we've looked at the story.

[20 : 46] The king's kept failing, but God has kept his promise that he would always have a king, and he would provide a true and faithful king who creates a different story for us to live.

Matthew records for us the coming of that king. I want us to look together to Matthew's gospel, chapter 9.

Matthew's gospel, chapter 9. Of course, Matthew, chapter 1, opens by telling us the genealogy of Jesus, the Messiah, the son of David.

He was God's chosen king. So, Matthew, chapter 9, verse 35. And as we look at these few verses together, there's three things that I want us to see.

As we look at this new king who brings a different story. First, a king who brings good news.

[22 : 08] Look at verse 35. Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and illness.

Jesus came as God's promised king, proclaiming a message, announcing, proclaiming that I am God's king, the one with absolute power and supreme authority.

I am the one who is going to bring about a glorious new rule in people's lives, going to establish a kingdom where there is peace and where justice reigns, where there is forgiveness and where hope is offered, a kingdom where lives are renewed and restored.

I am the king. I am the one who has come to establish God's promised kingdom. What you are longing for, the fresh start, the better future, is all fulfilled in me, says Jesus.

And Jesus proved it all by what he did. End of verse 35, he went about healing every disease and illness, restoring and renewing.

[23 : 29] A king who comes to bring good news because this world is desperately needing good news. Second, the good news of a king who shepherds his people.

Verse 36, when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

You see, the kings were also known as shepherds. That was what God called them. He said, you are to shepherd my people. But the kings and every leader since has not shepherded the way God has called them to be.

And so Jesus comes as the true shepherd because sheep are stupid animals. They don't know the right way from the wrong way.

They don't even know when they're in danger. They wander off. They cannot even see where they're going. And that's the picture that Jesus paints of people as he looked out on the crowds of people.

[24 : 43] People just like you and me and saw them as harassed and helpless. Jesus saw lives broken and ruined by sinful behaviours and selfish choices.

He saw how helpless people were heading towards hell not even knowing the danger that they were in. And just like sheep need a shepherd to lead and direct them and show them a way to safety so we need a shepherd king who will lead us and bring us to safety.

And that's what the shepherd Jesus did. He had compassion. he was moved in deep love and he did something about it.

He gave his life on the cross taking all our failures. He rose again from the grave defeating death for us. And he calls us now and says follow me.

Submit to me. Surrender to me. Come and live under my rule and my authority. For I am good and what I give to you is only right and what is best for you.

[26 : 10] Jesus is the true shepherd king who comes to bring good news to a world and a people who are harassed and helpless. A king that we can trust with our lives.

A king who will do what is right and best. But the story doesn't finish there because this is a king who sends out workers.

Verse 37 Then he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

Let those words settle. he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.

I wonder how you see the community of Carragaline when you drive up and down the street you do your shopping or how you see the people of Ireland people you work with people who live next door to you.

[27 : 22] Well Jesus said they're like sheep, they're harassed and helpless. They're wandering, they're in danger. But you see what he also says?

He says they're like a harvest. A harvest that is plentiful. They are ripe and ready for harvest.

The people around us Jesus says it's not my perspective it's his perspective. these sheep that are wandering around following false promises and living according to their own desires they are waiting and longing for someone to tell them a true and better story.

A story of a shepherd king who gives them life. A king who will not overlook evil but will punish it. a king who will forgive and welcome them into his eternal kingdom. That's what Jesus sees. But there's a problem.

[28 : 35] The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Now I know that you serve well.

I know your stories. I know what we do together as a church. Don't get me wrong this is not a stick that I'm going to take out and beat us with and say serve more do more work harder.

you do serve. But here's the challenge. There is a need I believe for more evangelists more church planters and more pastors in the nation of Ireland.

Ireland has the lowest number of believers in all the English speaking countries in the world.

He is calling us to say I am looking for people who will make radical life changing decisions to work for me.

[29 : 50] Well you sit there and you go well I'm a little bit old and I can't really do that sort of thing, yes you can. Well I'm just starting out in life and well I've got to get my exams and I've got to get my career.

Well yes you may do but there are other paths. You say well I'm not trained I couldn't do this sort of thing.

I couldn't be a church planter. I can't be a pastor. Well we can give you training. no problem there.

Yes it may mean that you have to move house.

It may mean a little less secure income. It will mean hardship and struggle. But Jesus is looking out on the nation of Ireland and upon the peoples of the world and he sees sheep harassed and helpless but he says they're ripe they're ready for the harvest.

All it needs is for people who will go and tell them the better story of a shepherd king who comes to give life. How is this going to happen?

[31 : 18] Well look verse 38 ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into his harvest field.

We're going to pray. We're going to pray that prayer right now. And I invite you where you are to pray that the Lord would raise up people from within this church.

Sunday school's going on. Pray for those children that some will become evangelists, church planters, pastors, will go to other nations where the gospel is not known.

It may mean you don't see them as parents. It may mean that you don't see them for many years. It may mean they even lose their life.

let's pray. Father, we thank you for people you sent to us to bring the good news of the shepherd king.

[32 : 51] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.