

Who fulfils the word of the prophet?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 February 2024

Preacher: Rev Gordon Kennedy

[0 : 00] We were through in Glasgow yesterday, getting the accent rechecked and making sure it was all working in good order.! And we were near Annisland Cross, which always reminds me of something that happened when I was a roads engineer in Glasgow.

One of the projects I worked on was to computerise the traffic lights in Glasgow, just to make sure that maximum chaos was being caused at every junction all through the city.

What happened was, myself and another engineer would go out and we would meet the folks who had made the computer and were putting it into the wee grey box at the side of the traffic light. And we would work away for a bit and then we would need to switch the lights off so that they could do what they did and then switch them back on and hopefully they would come back on.

In a move of stunning simplicity, they said, well, you can't switch them off unless you've got a policeman or a traffic warden to go out and do the...

[1 : 09] Right? So that's brilliant. That all worked fine till we got to Annisland Cross. Now, Annisland Cross is like Toll Cross but much bigger and much busier.

There's five or six roads all coming in at different angles at different times and they sent one policeman. So he looked round to see a likely suspect and picked on me and said, well, today you're helping me stop the traffic.

All went well. He got me a yellow vest and he said, you stand in the middle of the road there. So I did. And then he shouted at me, stop. And this big van came hurtling up the road and I said, it's not going to stop. Stop.

Until I bumped into him. He said, what are you doing? I told you to stop the traffic. I said, it's not going to stop. Stop. And of course it did. Of course it did.

The driver had recognised the yellow jacket and the hand signal and figured out that he was supposed to stop. It just didn't look like it at the time. And I had forgotten that I had been authorised, commissioned by a policeman no less, to go and get this done.

[2 : 31] Authority is important. Who gives the commands? When we are thinking of doing something, who is asking us to do it?

Are they able to ask us to do it? Are they allowed to transfer their authority to stop traffic to someone else? In our passage this morning from Matthew 4, we hear an invitation to become disciples.

Not a command. But an invitation. Who is able to issue an invitation? If I was to stand here and say, you know, we're all invited down to Holyrood Palace for lunch.

You might think, hmm, not sure about that. He can maybe invite us to the hall for Chagoria lunch. But we're not sure he's got the keys and the wherewithal to have us all for lunch at Holyrood Palace.

And you'd be right. Who has the authority to call disciples? To invite everyone in the whole world to become his disciple?

[3 : 46] Who has the authority to proclaim God's kingdom has come? Who can say that? Who is the Messiah?

Who is the Messiah? We need to increase our confidence in the good news. That God's Messiah has come and that God's Messiah has the authority, has the power to invite us and everyone else. To proclaim that the kingdom has come and it has come. We need to be confident that Jesus is the Messiah.

Indeed, he has been given authority by God. Jump to the end of Matthew's Gospel and Messiah Jesus says, All authority in heaven and in the earth is given to me.

He really can invite you into God's kingdom. He really has opened the door for you and me and for everyone else to come into God's presence.

[4 : 59] When Jesus calls you, you can come. You can enter. You can live as a citizen in God's kingdom.

Messiah Jesus is the one who is attractive to us and who draws us into the kingdom. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah declared, The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. We heard that. Light is attractive, is it not? We are moth-like drawn to the light. Think about the difference when you threw back your curtains this morning and you went kind of, hmm. Look at that, grey, drizzly. Compared with that other day during the week, was it Thursday or Wednesday? We threw back the curtains, bright sunshine. It might have been cold and windy, but it was bright sunny.

What a difference. Our hearts rise to the light. We are attracted to the light. When Messiah Jesus calls all people to follow him and live as his disciples, it turns out he is pushing against an open door.

[6 : 19] We are attracted by that message. It's as though we cannot help ourself. But when we hear the words, the light has come.

You can come to the light. We are up out of seats and we are going towards the light. The light which Jesus is for us is the light of God's presence.

Jesus really is Emmanuel, God with us. Not just for Christmas, but for all the time. As though a candle has been brought into a dark room, so God's presence shines a light which chases away all the darkness.

Don't hesitate then. Don't sit there wondering if it really is the light. It really is. Messiah Jesus really is the light who has come into the world that we might be drawn to it.

Let it draw you. When it pulls on your heart strings, go with them. Come closer to Jesus, the light of the world, for more of his presence and more of God's presence.

[7 : 42] What about verse 17? From that time Jesus began to preach saying, Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. We have very closely attached the word repent with the idea of sin.

Repent is what we do in relation to sin. For many of us, for many people in our city, that is a wholly negative association.

Repent becomes an entirely bad word. So let's look again at this important gospel word.

At root, the word repent signifies change your mind. Have a different way of thinking. I wonder how many of us think that God's kingdom would never come.

Or we watch the news and as item follows item of destruction and falsehood and deceit.

[8 : 46] We think, well, God's kingdom has never come. And it's never going to come. We need to change our way of thinking. In the person of Messiah Jesus, God's kingdom has already come.

And although the news is never going to tell you it at 6 o'clock on the BBC, it is changing lives. And we need to change our thinking.

We might think that we would never be able to enter. Why would God invite me? It brings tears every time I hear one of you say that to me.

Why would God invite me? Change your way of thinking. You are the one for whom Messiah Jesus has come. You are the one for whom he pushes open the door and says, come on in.

Change your way of thinking. You are invited. You are made welcome. We need to change our lives.

[9 : 58] Stop living like citizens of some other country. Change the choices you would make. We know what this is like.

A couple of years ago Fiona and I went to Barcelona. It was March time. It was t-shirt weather. In fact, it was too hot. Except for the people who usually live in Barcelona.

They had big puffy jackets and hats and gloves on. Because they thought it was cold. We know that in the world where we live, we change how we live.

When in Rome, do as the Romans do. When you're in God's kingdom, do what you do in God's kingdom. Change how you live. Change what you do with your money.

Change what you do with your time. Change what words you use when you speak to one another. Enter the door. Be transformed from what you have been before into a citizen of God's kingdom.

[11 : 04] Yes, this change of life will include a change from sin to godliness. And so to that extent, repent and sin do go together.

We leave sin behind. We are changed. We are transformed into citizens of God's kingdom. But doesn't this now seem like a wholly positive, life-affirming, life-transforming thing?

It's like this. Imagine you and your family owned a vast mansion with beautiful ground spread around. You know these programs you see Escape to the Country where somebody's got a budget of a million pounds just lying around to spend on a new house.

And you see these houses with their beautiful gardens and you think, So imagine you had one of those. And you and the family chose to huddle together in a windowless basement.

And never went outside the door. And you thought that was how you got through day by day. You live in this windowless basement. And that's all there is to it.

[12 : 19] Jesus has pushed open all the doors in that mansion. And he invites you to live in all the rooms of it. To go into the dining room and the sitting room and the bedrooms and the luxury bathroom.

To go out into the beautiful garden and enjoy it and come back in. And enjoy the whole of the place that Jesus has opened the way for you to live in. We need to change how we live.

We need to live in the fullness of the kingdom which Messiah Jesus has brought. On the authority of Messiah Jesus. You are welcomed into the wide open spaces of God's grace.

Don't live in the basement for a minute longer. Come in. Then accept the welcome that Jesus has for you.

The characteristic words of Jesus it turns out are only two words in English. Follow me. That's a characteristic saying of Jesus. Everything else that Messiah Jesus says is working out what those two words mean.

[13 : 34] It's as though you could write the whole gospel. Follow me. And put a wee footnote back. And all the rest of it is the footnote. We have heard these verses of the call of the fishermen many times.

Many of us have heard them since Sunday school. Leave the boat. Come away from your nets and follow Jesus. Do not doubt for one minute that Messiah Jesus knows the way.

He is the way. You can follow him and trust him to get you home. He is not like the sat nav that is going to lead you down a lane and end up in a lake.

Sometimes people say I don't know the way. I would follow Jesus but I don't know the way. Well that's okay. Nobody has asked you to know the way.

All they are asking you to do is follow Jesus. And he knows the way. Because he is the way.

Following Jesus takes that pressure off us. All we need to do is fix our eyes on him.

[14 : 40] And walk where he walks. Go where he goes. And follow the leader. Messiah Jesus' invitation is generous.

All are invited. All are called. Do not doubt for one moment that you are not called. You are called. This is not an exclusive invitation but an inclusive invitation.

And inclusive welcome. All are included. You can follow Jesus today. Whatever Jesus leads you.

That is a good way for you to follow.

Do not doubt that for one minute. If you turn your eyes to the side. It may not look like a good way.

There might be storms and clouds and steep paths and narrow lanes.

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Remember Peter. Who began to follow Jesus at this call. Follow me and Peter left the boat and followed.

[15 : 45] Peter following Jesus led him to stepping out of a boat. And walking onto the waves. And he was getting on fine walking on the waves. As long as he looked at Jesus.

But when he turned and looked at the waves. He began to sink. If you look at the hardness of the way. At the mountains and the storms and the narrow path.

You are going to tremble on the way. Fix your eyes on Jesus. And follow him. And he will lead you home. There are some.

Who have often said to me. This good news of the gospel sounds awful selfish. This good news of personal salvation. Is not something we should be talking about.

We should be feeding the hungry. And caring for the poor. And protesting about this or that. Well they haven't read on long enough.

