

AM Matthew 4:23-5:2 The Kingdom of God has come

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: 10 March 2024

Preacher: Rev Jonathan Watson

[0 : 00] And we'll read from Matthew chapter 4, beginning our reading in verse 23, and we'll go into chapter 5 and finish at verse 2, and that's on page 976 of the church Bible.

And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics and paralytics, and he healed them.

And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, We're going to end the reading there for today.

[1 : 34] So please turn with me to this passage that we read together, which forms a kind of preface to the famous Sermon on the Mount.

And this morning I'd like to introduce you to what has been called the Sermon on the Mount since the days of St. Augustine in North Africa, in the 5th century AD.

I think he was the first church father to give this title to this portion of Matthew's gospel. It begins in Matthew chapter 5, and you notice that it extends through to the end of Matthew chapter 7.

And it is a sermon. It is a discourse. It's teaching that our Lord Jesus Christ gave. And it's called the Sermon on the Mount because seeing the crowds, we're told in chapter 5, verse 1, he went up on the mountain.

And the mountain was his pulpit from which he could then preach. And his voice would carry over the heads of all of these people who had followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis and from Jerusalem and Judea and even from the region beyond the river Jordan.

[3 : 00] They had seen what he had done as we were speaking to the boys and girls. And his fame spread. And people hearing about this brought others to the Lord Jesus who needed his healing touch.

And because he is a gracious and compassionate and kind and loving king, he healed them of all their sicknesses and diseases and conditions.

And they come to hear what he has to say. And he opens his mouth and he begins this sermon that, God willing, we will look at in future Lord's Days as I have opportunity to visit you.

But in the sermon we have, as you would expect, teaching or doctrine. But we also have the application of that doctrine to the people who were listening.

And Christian preachers follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. They don't simply teach people and leave it up there somewhere.

[4 : 17] But they seek to bring that teaching down into your everyday lives. To show you how that teaching will impact your life and how you should live for the glory of God.

There are things in this sermon that are negative. There are things you should not do. Jesus highlights those things. He speaks bluntly about those things.

There are also things that you should do. There are positive commands. And so he's teaching them in such a way as to get them to turn their backs on sin.

Whatever form that sin takes, turn your back upon it. Put it to death. Throw it out of your life. Strip yourself of it as if you've been out in the fields.

You're covered in muck and all sorts of things. And you come into the house, you strip off your dirty clothes. You get washed. You put on new clothes. And this is what the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to do with regard to sin.

[5 : 25] Strip off that which belongs to our old sinful nature. And put on the Lord Jesus Christ with his teaching. And with his applications of his teaching.

And you notice that as the sermon goes through the various chapters, it's divided into various short sections. There are divisions. There is development within the sermon.

And then the sermon finishes in chapter 7 with these powerful conclusions. And it certainly does make a massive impact.

Now when we come to study any passage of God's word, it is always good to do so by setting the passage in its wider context.

So that we avoid the danger of misunderstanding what this passage in particular is saying to us. And it's good to try to set these three chapters of Matthew's gospel into the wider context of this gospel.

[6 : 34] The first book of our New Testament. And doing so can also help to throw light on what we are studying.

And it can really help us in our understanding of the passage under our consideration. So let us see how the Sermon on the Mount fits in to the gospel of Matthew.

And if you look through Matthew's gospel, you will see that these three chapters, chapters 5, 6 and 7, are part of a pattern that appears again and again throughout the gospel.

For example, if you jump ahead to chapter 7 and verse 28, you will see that that verse begins with a phrase that pops up again and again and again and again and again in Matthew's gospel.

Matthew 7, 28 says, And when Jesus finished these sayings. And if you go forward to chapter 11 and verse 1, it says, When Jesus had finished instructing his 12 disciples.

[8 : 00] Then if you jump to chapter 13 and verse 53, you read, And when Jesus had finished these parables.

And then for the fourth time, if you look at chapter 19 and verse 1, we read, Now when Jesus had finished these sayings.

And then for the last time, in chapter 26 and verse 1, we read, When Jesus had finished all these sayings.

So what we've got here in Matthew's gospel, are these five statements. And each of these five statements comes after a sizable chunk of teaching or instruction.

Some people have said it's almost like an echo of the five books of Moses. Because Matthew wants us to see that Jesus is the promised prophet that Moses spoke about.

[9 : 17] That God would raise up one day a prophet just like Moses. And he said, You must listen to him. And anybody who doesn't listen to this great prophet that God is going to raise up will be cut off from God and from God's people.

And so, Matthew's gospel contains these five large sections of teaching. And at the end of each section, you know it comes to an end because you get this little phrase, When Jesus had finished these sayings.

When Jesus had finished instructing his disciples. When Jesus had finished these parables. When Jesus had finished these sayings. When Jesus had finished all these sayings.

And if you were to go and read through carefully each of those five sections of teaching within Matthew's gospel, you would discover that they each have the same general theme.

And that theme is the kingdom of God. That was the great burden and theme of all of Jesus' teaching.

[10 : 40] Now, notice how Matthew has already alerted us to that theme in the summary that he gives of Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

Look at verse 23 of chapter 4. And he went throughout all Galilee teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.

That's the theme. That was the burden. In all of these synagogues and in the open air too, the Lord Jesus was teaching the people about the kingdom of God.

That's his great theme. And in an earlier verse, Matthew tells us what the Lord's message was focused on. As he taught about the kingdom, what was his application of that teaching?

Look at verse 17 of chapter 4. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

[11 : 42] It's at hand. It's as close as that to you. And if we were to put these three chapters that contain what we call the Sermon on the Mount into a little summary, into a nutshell as we say in English, we would have to say that this sermon shows us what it means to repent and what it means to belong to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven.

The sermon teaches us how those who belong to this kingdom live as kingdom citizens. this is what the kingdom's life looks like in a fallen sinful world.

Now before we go any further, we need to be clear as to what the kingdom of heaven is. And what does Jesus mean when he says that the kingdom of heaven is at hand or near?

Well the terms the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God mean exactly the same thing. If you compare how Matthew and Luke use these phrases, they are used interchangeably.

In Matthew 5 verse 3 for example, Jesus says, Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And in Luke chapter 6 verse 20, Jesus says, Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God.

[13 : 29] So the kingdom of heaven in Matthew is the same as the kingdom of God in other parts of the New Testament. The expressions are interchangeable and they mean the same thing.

So the kingdom or as one writer calls it the king dominion because when we think of kingdoms we tend to think of geographical areas with borders. But when we think of the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God we shouldn't really think in those kind of terms.

We should think in terms of king dominion or the rule or the reign of God. The kingdom of heaven is the expression of God's gracious sovereign will.

that's what it means the kingdom of heaven the kingdom of God. And I want you to notice that the Lord Jesus Christ says that the kingdom has already drawn near.

The kingdom he says is at hand. And Jesus can say this because Jesus is himself the king of God's kingdom.

[14 : 54] And where Jesus the king reigns there the kingdom of heaven is already present. And that's the real significance of those glorious miracles of grace that Matthew records in the verses that come immediately before the account of the sermon on the mount at the end of his fourth chapter.

These works that we've read twice already in the service these works of mighty power on such a scale had never been seen or witnessed before or after.

And they were signs that the kingdom of heaven had arrived on earth. and to those who heard the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ the good news of the kingdom that he preached his message must have been truly astonishing preaching.

Because these Jewish people who knew their Old Testament scriptures would have known that the Old Testament prophets like Isaiah or Micah spoke of a time when God would reign on earth. faith. And the Lord Jesus Christ in saying that the kingdom of God was at hand was now saying those prophecies are being fulfilled today in your presence.

[16 : 40] This kingdom is not something that's going to happen in the far distant future. It's come now witness the power of God at work in the healing of the sick.

I think this is why the Lord Jesus Christ's preaching also included this call to repent to turn away from sin sinful thoughts and words and actions.

Repent was his command to those who heard him preach. Why was that? The answer is for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

In other words the king of God's kingdom has come and his presence demands a new way of living a new lifestyle that is in keeping with his kingdom.

kingdom. There is something else in the wider context of Matthew's gospel that we should take notice of. We have noticed already this recurring phrase which pops up five times throughout the gospel and which comes at the end as I say of these five blocks of teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[18 : 12] but there is another important phrase which occurs only twice in his gospel and this phrase in effect divides the gospel into three separate parts and it is the phrase from that time and it first appears you notice in chapter four and verse 17 from that time Jesus began to preach and you say well what is the time being referred to there from what time and if you look into the passage you see that it's referring to the time when Herod put John the Baptist into prison so from the imprisonment of John the Baptist from that time Jesus began his public ministry he began to preach

and then the second time that this phrase from that time appears you have to jump forward to Matthew chapter 16 and verse 21 where we read from that time

Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day rise again and here Jesus is explaining more fully what kind of a king he is to be but what was that time that's referred to in Matthew 16 verse 21 and it's referring in the passage you can see it's referring to the time when Simon Peter one of the disciples made this great confession about who Jesus was Jesus is Christ Jesus is God's anointed one God's Messiah the king whom God had promised to send to save his people now step back a wee minute a little bit what we have here is a very helpful way of looking at Matthew's gospel and dividing it into three parts with these as little divisions from that time from that time section one of

Matthew's gospel begins in chapter one verse one and it goes all the way through to chapter four verse sixteen and then in verse seventeen you've got from that time end of section one and in this first section of his gospel Matthew is showing us who Jesus is and he you notice in that section he very skillfully brings in the Old Testament scriptures to show that this Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament scriptures so chapter one verse one to chapter four verse sixteen section one this is who Jesus is and then section two begins in chapter four verse seventeen and it stretches right through to chapter sixteen verse twenty and in the second section of his gospel

Matthew is setting Jesus before us as the king clothed with divine authority who teaches the people and who performs these mighty works of grace and power and who calls on men and women to enter into the kingdom by repentance and faith and then section three the last section of the gospel runs from chapter sixteen verse twenty one to the end chapter twenty eight verse twenty and in this final section Matthew presents Jesus as the suffering king who is crucified but by his death and resurrection he conquers death and then he sends his apostles out into the world to bring all nations into his kingdom as little was it

Thomas reminded us and you notice how the gospel ends with Jesus saying all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to me Matthew and we could say in the words of the closing of the Lord's prayer his is the kingdom the power and the glory forever God so so then what does the wider context of Matthew's gospel teach us well it shows us that the main theme of this gospel is Jesus Jesus himself and in each of the three parts of his gospel we learn some new aspect about who Jesus is and the whole of the gospel and each part of the gospel focuses our attention on [24 : 18] Jesus Christ who he is what he does what he says and the sermon on the mount should be understood in the light of this wider context and if we listen to the sermon on the mount properly with ears to hear we will learn more and more about Jesus himself now I have to stress that this is of great importance why do I say that because you cannot live out the sermon on the mount apart from our right relationship with Jesus Christ the King this teaching of Jesus in this sermon will only change us when we submit to the sovereign gracious reign of the one who preaches it because this sermon enshrines in its teaching the very authority and lordship of

Jesus Christ himself notice how this connection between Christ himself and his teaching pops up again and again in the sermon do you notice that it is being persecuted for his sake see the connection with Jesus anybody can be persecuted but being persecuted for his sake is what brings divine blessing on your life blessed are those who are persecuted and falsely accused for my sake for my sake theirs is the kingdom Matthew chapter 5 verse 11 and notice too when Jesus explains in his sermon God's law you notice that he is the prophetic voice he is the great prophet clothed with divine authority you notice in those verses from chapter 5 verse 21 all the way through that section of

Matthew chapter 5 you have Jesus using this little formula you have heard it was said but I say unto you it is only somebody clothed with divine authority who can say but I say unto you it reminds us doesn't it of that prophecy in Deuteronomy 18 by Moses that God would one day raise up a prophet just like him and you must listen to him no one else only him only him and if you don't listen to him and do what he says and believe what he tells you to believe if you don't repent of your sins if you don't follow his law you will be cut off from God and from God's people it's that serious you have heard that it was said but I say unto you Jesus is the authoritative interpreter of the law of God then again look at the conclusion or the climax to the sermon in chapter 7 and particularly verses 21 to 23 not everyone who says to me

Lord Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven but the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven on that day many will say to me Lord Lord did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name and then will I declare to them I never knew you depart from me you workers of lawlessness Jesus Jesus is the one who is the judge and who has power to allow us into heaven or to send us to the place our sins deserve eternal punishment in hell it is Jesus who says I never knew you depart depart so the point I'm making here this morning is that you cannot live according to the sermon on the mount without submitting to the authority of the

Lord Jesus Christ you must come to him and you must take his yoke upon you and learn from him and you know it's impossible to come to Jesus and say Lord I want you to be my saviour but I don't want you to be my master maybe at some later date in my Christian experience I will bow to your authority and obey your commands but for now I want you to save me from my sins but I want to live like everybody else in this world according to my own wishes and desires you can't accept Jesus as saviour and not accept him as Lord the saviour is the king and he cannot be divided and when we ask him to save us we are asking him to be our ruler and our king at the same time our time is gone and I don't want to labour the point but I hope you see the context in which this sermon is presented to us it comes from one who is the king of God's kingdom and since he is present the kingdom of heaven is at hand and it can only be entered through repentance and faith through coming to the king submitting to his authority taking his yoke upon us and learning for the rest of our lives what he wants us to believe and how he wants us to live and in future

[31 : 23] Lord's Day mornings as opportunity arises we'll look at this great sermon in its various points but may God bless his word to us this morning let us pray our heavenly father we thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ for being true to your promises to your old covenant people for fulfilling that promise you made through Moses that one day you would raise up a prophet like him to whom we must give our undivided attention we thank you that in the fullness of time Jesus was sent forth his very name means saviour for he came to save his people from their sins we thank you that he is the king who is able to deliver us from all our enemies who has power to conquer sin and the devil and the world and death and hell and we praise you that by trusting in him by coming to him as confessing sinners we can have eternal life so we pray that you would make us those who love to hear about the Lord

Jesus Christ and love to hear what Jesus Christ is saying to us through his written word bless these thoughts to us may we treasure Matthew's gospel more because of what we have seen from it this morning and may we worship and follow and serve the king of the kingdom the Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Muito Amen Amen Amen