

Mission Manifests the Kingdom

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Preacher: Mr Steve Osmond (Solus)

[0 : 00] Well, good evening. It is wonderful to be with you in Stornoway. And as you can tell, probably very quickly, this accent is not a Scottish one.

I am from a little further south in South Africa. And yes, I came to join the team of SOLAS, the SOLAS Center for Public Christianity, two years ago this month to join them to be doing the ministry that we do, which has been alluded to slightly.

So if you're not too familiar with SOLAS, we are a ministry that exists to do evangelism, persuasive evangelism. That means going out to universities and partnering with churches to go to restaurants or cafes or just joining at their churches to do really outreach, sharing the truth of the Bible, the truth of Christianity and the truth that Jesus Christ is indeed risen.

And I am absolutely blessed to be able to do that. That is one part of what we do. The other side of what we do, very much what we were doing yesterday in the hall just next door, was training. Basically training Christians to be a little more confident, to be able to have good conversations and to share the hope that we have in Jesus. A hope that is found nowhere else but in the pages of Scripture and the reality that indeed Jesus is risen and he has gifted us his Holy Spirit.

[1 : 29] So that's what we're about. And it's been my pleasure since Friday to be here on the Isle of Lewis and Harris. It's my second time out here and I just thoroughly enjoy being here. So I am blessed to be here.

The title of the message for this evening is Mission Manifests the Kingdom. Mission Manifests the Kingdom. Often when I'm out speaking at universities or doing evangelism events and sharing the truth and the relevance of Christianity, there is a question that comes up more often than I would like. And it is this.

Why do you Christians feel that you have to share what you believe? Why go and tell other people? Why not just leave them alone?

Recently I made a short video that was shared on several platforms and in the comments section in one of those platforms was that very question. And so it's something that happens regularly. But it's something that I've been seeing for many, many years.

When I was still in South Africa at the church there, there was a team that used to go out and do ministry on the streets of Johannesburg to ladies who were working on the streets, prostitutes.

[2 : 44] And they would go out and interact with these ladies and share the hope of the gospel with them. And so I decided that this sounded like something I was very keen to go and do.

And so a few times I went out and joined the team as they did this. And one evening I was able to have an extended conversation with one lady and she opened up as we spoke to her. She opened up about her broken family background and all of the things that had happened to her in her life to reach that point of being on the streets of Johannesburg. And it was a great conversation.

We had the opportunity to share the gospel with her, the hope of Jesus Christ, the good news of forgiveness of sins and new life with him. And we were able then to connect her with a ministry that helps ladies stuck in that situation to get out of that.

And it was wonderful. The team asked me if I would be open to just writing up a few thoughts that they had put on a website about that experience just to encourage others to maybe think about doing the same thing.

[3 : 46] And so I happily obliged and wrote a short piece. And that went out and a few days later there was a comment that got posted on that piece and it said this. What is wrong with you Christians?

Why don't you just leave these people alone? It's their choice to live the way that they want. Why do you feel like you need to get involved? Just leave them alone. Just leave them alone.

And that so often is the attitude. Let people just live the way they want. Thinking that we should, you know, everyone, the things that we do, we do them because that is just simply our desire.

But I was there. I was there speaking to this lady, hearing about the abuse, the desperation that had led her to that place. You know, in the first ten minutes of chatting to her, she put on a bit of a face and said, oh, she loves the work that she does.

But it took just those ten minutes until she was in tears and telling us about the struggle and that she was doing this to put food on the table for her children who thought that she was actually off doing waitressing work somewhere.

[4 : 48] And the point is this. I'll share that. Because the world is dark. The world is dark. It's broken and we desperately need a savior, even when we don't really want to acknowledge that.

Even if we've bought into the lie that we are indeed the masters of our own fate. And so every day as we go about speaking to people at work, be it, you know, colleagues or family or friends, we are rubbing shoulders with people who might look like they have it all together on the outside, when in fact they are broken and they are desperate for something more.

They're desperate for a true and lasting hope and they just don't know where to find it. And so they move from one thing to the next thing, searching and searching, be it money or broken relationships or throwing themselves at work, thinking that is where they will find satisfaction and fulfillment or alcohol and other substances.

Moving from one thing to the next thing, looking for meaning. And all too often I think people, many people have been blinded into thinking that this is just the way it is.

This is the extent of life. But deep down I think we can all attest to the fact that we know there must be something more. So, why do Christians feel that they need to share the gospel?

[6 : 13] With the time that we have remaining together this evening, I'd love to share just some thoughts on that. And we've had this wonderful scripture from the Sermon on the Mount that's been read.

I'm going to read it again because it's a short piece and so relevant. Jesus says, You are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. But they put it on a stand and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way.

In the same way. Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

So, Jesus has been teaching in this section of the Sermon on the Mount. He's been teaching about the new life. The new life that is the life in the kingdom of heaven that he has ushered in.

[7 : 20] In what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. And in the first few paragraphs of that, he's been speaking quite generally. But then here in verse 13, he immediately begins to speak to those hearing him in second person.

To bring direct application to those who are hearing his words. He says, You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.

And I'm fully convinced that these same words apply to every single one of us here today. If you call yourself a follower of Jesus. It's amazing.

These are amazing words from our Lord. And Jesus, he uses such simple illustrations, I think. But the point that he makes comes with great force. And it's simply this.

Each of these things, both salt and light, they are essential. But has its necessary effect on its environment. Only if it is both distinct from it and also fully involved in it.

[8 : 23] I'll say that again. Each of these things, salt and light, is essential. But has its necessary effect on its environment. Only if it is both distinct from it, yet fully involved in it.

Fully involved in it. What does that mean? What does that mean? Salt is very different to the bland meat that we put it on. I'm South African, which means sort of naturally I love meat.

We have something in South Africa called biltong, which is basically a dried, cured meat. It is a very popular snack. It's amazing. If you've had it and not liked it, I'm terribly sorry, but I must disagree with you.

It's wonderful. But it takes a lot of salt to get it to be what it is supposed to be. To get it to have the right flavor and to be preserved so that you can keep it for a long time.

Right? The meat of the biltong, of that meat, is not the salt. But the salt has an effect on it and it brings out the flavor. It causes the preservation.

[9 : 24] Light, to carry on with Jesus' illustration here, is not the darkness. They're different. But light dispels the darkness and it makes us see things properly.

And so a light in a dark room is absolutely useless if we cover it up. Why would we do that? I mean, Jesus uses such simple illustrations. You look and yeah, that makes no sense. If there's a light, you put it on a stand and it lights things up.

If you cover it up, there's no illumination. It's pointless. It's pointless. Are you getting what Jesus is saying to us here today? I don't think it's very difficult.

It's not difficult at all, actually. It's just uncomfortable. And I think we all feel that as we read these words, as Jesus commissions us to be going out and being the salt and light of the world.

Jesus says, no, no. Don't cling to your comfort. Don't be scared to maybe cause a stir. Don't be scared to make things awkward if that's the perception you have.

[10 : 22] He says, no. You were made for a purpose. And life with me as my disciple means that you shine for the glory of God. So that when others see that light manifest in the world, they would be so drawn that they could not but come to me and glorify my name and live in the light of God's glorious kingdom.

That is the point of what Jesus is saying, commissioning us to go out. And so with that purpose and with that calling in mind, I think here are just three points that I'd like you to consider as we think of this idea of mission manifesting the kingdom.

Three points. The first is the reality of the kingdom. The second is the hope of the kingdom. And the third is the emissaries of the kingdom, which I will then explain.

So the first, the hope, sorry, the reality of the kingdom. What is this kingdom that Jesus speaks about so much? I think that's a very, very good question. And it can be somewhat complicated.

So hopefully I'm just going to unpack it for you just a little and touch on what is a very, very big theological concept. If we look at Jesus' words about life in the kingdom, as we've heard just a portion of from the Sermon on the Mount, it's a good thing, I think, to pause and say what is it that we're actually speaking about or thinking about when Jesus uses this terminology.

[11 : 47] It's important because when we look at the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, these biographies of Jesus' life and ministry, we, I think, are inescapably confronted with the fact that Jesus' message was that the kingdom has come.

Interesting. Matthew 4.17 says, Mark 1.14 and 15 says, Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled.

The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel. And we see the same thing in Luke. So what was this gospel? What was this good news that Jesus speaks about, that he came to declare?

It is that the kingdom of God was at hand, being enacted and being brought into administration by his coming into the world.

And that is the good news. It's that the kingdom is at hand. It has come in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. And the kingdom of God is what Jesus spoke about, I think, more than anything else, really.

[13 : 06] Just in the Gospel of Matthew alone, Jesus mentions the kingdom 50 times. 50 times. That's in a sort of normal-sized Bible. That's around about one and a half times per page.

And so if we want to understand who Jesus is and what the gospel is really all about, we need to perhaps pay very close attention to what the term means. Now, over the years, considering what is Christianity all about, I think different traditions and different people have emphasized a couple of different things.

All true, but maybe not the full picture. Here are some examples that sort of touch on it, but not the whole picture. Each of these shows a small part of the reality of what Christianity is about, what the kingdom is about.

The first is that people would say, well, it's all about Jesus' ethical teachings. You know, his morals that he comes to teach us, the good way to live, the right way to live. And that's true, but it's not really what the kingdom is all about.

The second is that Jesus is what would be called our moral exemplar. He is the example for us to follow. We look at his life, we see what he did, and we try and follow that out by the way we live.

[14 : 15] That is absolutely true, but again, it's not the full picture. Some would say that, you know, you read the gospels, you read the parables, the stories about Jesus' life.

And, you know, these are stories that we can identify with and step into. And that's what it's all about. Well, again, I think that's sort of, you know, usefulness to us as we reflect and meditate on scripture.

But it's, again, not the full story. And many would say, well, Christianity, the message of the gospel of the kingdom is all about going to heaven. That's what it's all about.

Now, again, that's not the full picture. But let me focus on this one for a moment because I think this is very, very prevalent. The idea is this, is that Jesus came to teach people how to go to heaven. Basically, this is sadly in our time been taken to almost be a get out of jail free card. You know, if you profess faith in Jesus and that just means you've got your ticket to heaven.

[15 : 12] And that's the extent of it. That is not at all what we see in scripture. Now, absolutely, there is a very strong affirmation in the whole of the New Testament.

And I think through the whole of scripture that God has a wonderful, wonderful future prepared for his people after their bodily death. Climaxing in the new world of resurrection and new heaven and new earth, whatever that might look like.

But this is not what Jesus' teaching is primarily about as we think about this concept of the kingdom of heaven. The point of our faith is not just so that you get to go to heaven one day.

I think that is insufficient. The phrase the kingdom of heaven is actually about the rule of heaven coming to earth. The rule of heaven coming to earth.

When Matthew has Jesus talking about heaven's kingdom, he means that heaven, in other words, the God of heaven, is establishing his sovereign rule, not just in heaven, but on earth as well.

[16 : 14] And that, in Jesus' coming, is what he came to begin. And so in a very poor nutshell, if you will, it's all about Jesus taking up his place as Messiah, the true king, ushering in the true kingdom.

And it is a kingdom in which we, as followers of Jesus, play a very important part. I promise, this does build to the point of the sermon, this question of why we should be sharing our faith.

But to me, I think that is very important to understand the context of these verses. It's all in the context of the kingdom of heaven. Before I began, we also read Psalm 8.

Why did we do that? Psalm 8 is a reflection, I think, on Genesis 1. It's a reflection on the order of creation and our place as stewards over creation, being made in the image of God.

That is the reality of the way God initially set things up as we read those pages of Scripture in Genesis 1 and read about the Garden of Eden. It's that he is the creator. He is the ultimate sovereign, but he has put his royal image onto humanity to be stewards of that creation, looking after it, to functionally rule over it in some way.

[17 : 40] And so this initial created order was good. It was a reality where God's space, God's kingdom was overlapping with or in harmony with the earth.

And it was this glorious harmony. And it's a description of this wonderful unity where God has set up this world and humanity was in right relationship with its creator, working to be his stewards, his emissaries.

In Genesis 1, 27 and 28, it says, So God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. And God blessed them and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.

Subdue it. See, we were set up as stewards of the creation. But we know from Genesis 3, just a few pages on, that something went wrong.

That humanity went astray. And in doing so, the right ordering of things was broken. And following that, sin and death entered the world. And the proper setup of what we saw in Genesis 1, this picture of perfect harmony reflected in Psalm 8, was then broken.

[18 : 53] It was marred. And since then, there was death. There was decay. And there was separation from God. So much of the ills that we see in the world around us.

But God, in his sovereign wisdom, had already a plan in mind to restore all things and bring about restoration and redemption and set all things right.

Okay, so I know I've said a lot there. But in summary so far, number one is that there is a reality in which God reigns. And everything that is done is God's will. And it is good.

Number two is that the story of the Bible is that the earth has become a place where God's will isn't being perfectly carried out. Because we assert our will over it.

And God, in some way, has allowed us to be doing that. And third is that with the arrival of Jesus is the announcement of God's reign to take back his world and put things right.

[19 : 56] And therein lies an amazing hope for every single one of us. That is the second point, the hope of the kingdom. The hope of the kingdom.

Jesus says, you are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth. And when we read these words, or when I read these words anyway, I experience sort of a cognitive dissonance, if you will. There's a disconnect. What do I mean? I don't know about you, but I identify with, maybe you'll identify with this. The thing is, I know myself.

I know who I am. I know how I am. I like to think that I'm somewhat self-aware. And so if I'm honest, I don't feel like I'm the salt of the earth.

I don't feel like I'm the light of the world, as Jesus says that I am. As Jesus is talking to his disciples here in this text. Rather, if I'm honest and I look at my life and everything I experience, I'm rather in full agreement with the Apostle Paul in Romans 7, where he says, For I do not do the good that I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

[21 : 11] You see, we still are experiencing a world inside of us and around us that is broken. But here is the hope of God's kingdom. When the kingdom of God comes, it brings with it healing and restoration.

And the restoration of a broken humanity and a broken creation. And that reality has already begun with Jesus coming into this world and declaring that the kingdom has come, as we see all through the Gospels.

And that reality, I think, is birthed inside each one of us as we draw near to God. For the first time in faith, and as we do this as an ongoing process, as we grow in the Lord, this process called sanctification.

God's kingdom is all about restoration. I don't know about you, but I love watching restoration shows. Maybe you've come across these on TV or wherever, you know, things where they'll find an old, dilapidated, broken-down house, and they'll revamp it, or be it someone who goes for a makeover.

I just love watching these things, how the transformation happens. And not too long ago, I was on YouTube, and I found this channel where a guy would take these really, really old, broken little trinkets.

[22 : 40] And in a sort of a time-lapse thing, he shows how he takes it and just starts restoring it. And this thing here that he found that I thought was just so amazing to look at was an old Zippo lighter.

And it was rusted and dented and broken and just not functioning at all. And through this sort of time-lapse photography, he files and he hammers and he sandblasts and chemical baths and twists and bends until finally, in the hands of this skilled craftsman, is revealed this beautifully restored little thing.

And in the closing image, the closing part of the video, he flicks it open and it sparks to life. And there's this little flame just fluttering away. There's this little lighter doing what it's supposed to be doing, restored to its proper function.

In the same way, Jesus came to restore us. He came on a mission to manifest his kingdom now and reaching its fullness one day when he will return in glory to bring that kingdom in its fullness. And it's a reality where we are now made new. We're forgiven of our sins and we're restored to right relationship with God so that we can function as we're meant to function.

[24 : 03] Being God's representatives in this world, being good stewards over this creation, bringing light, showing God's love and bringing in that kingdom as he has commissioned us to do, which goes right back to Genesis 1 and Psalm 8.

And so when we're restored to that right relationship with God and continually drawn near to him with open hearts, with soft hearts, he then uses us for his kingdom purposes.

I've seen this and I've experienced this so many times. We are obedient to the Lord. And he does this very much in spite of us, but he does it through the power of his Holy Spirit, bringing hope to a dark world that so desperately needs it.

So we've seen the reality of the kingdom, the hope of the kingdom. And my third point is emissaries of the kingdom. What is an emissary? It's a strange word.

We don't really use much. Basically, it's a representative, if you will. We are representatives of the kingdom. I'll make this point short as I bring things to a close.

[25 : 10] There's an interesting phenomenon that happens to many soldiers while they're in the midst of extended battles. Eventually, given the darkness and the violence and the chaos around them, they simply get overwhelmed by all of it and end up giving up, sometimes even forgetting what they were fighting for in the first place.

And so they batten down the hatches, they give up the fight, they give in to despair, and the darkness that just seems to consume everything. And I have to be honest, sometimes it can feel the same way for us.

If you look around at the brokenness of the world, if you look at the headlines, if you even just look at yourself and the sin that still clings so closely, we can forget what we are here for.

We can forget that we indeed are God's representatives in this world. We can forget our purpose in the hands of the master craftsman. But the words of Paul in Colossians, I think, are so encouraging, such a good reminder.

In Colossians 1.13, he says, And so we started with this question of why Christians feel they need to share the gospel, why they do share the gospel.

[26 : 38] God himself has stepped in to rescue us, to bring the light of his kingdom. And in a piece of theology that I just can't get my head around, God, the very creator of all, has now found it pleasing to continue to use us as his means of demonstrating his kingdom.

And it's a kingdom that is marked by love and righteousness and humility and peace and joy and mercy and truth. So why do Christians feel they need to share the gospel?

Because it is our mission to manifest that kingdom of God and shine his love into the world. We are his emissaries.

We are his representatives. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. In the same way, Storn Away Free Church, Let your light shine before others, So that they may see your good works And give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Would you bow your heads with me? Let me pray. Almighty Lord in heaven, We come before you humbly this evening And we acknowledge that you are God.

[28 : 01] You are God. And how amazing it is that you, Lord of all creation, Sovereign on high, Would choose to use us To shine your light Into this dark world That so desperately needs it.

Lord, I pray that for everyone seated here As we think about Just how tough it might be Sharing our faith That Lord, by the power of your spirit You would infuse into us Encouragement.

You would infuse into us Boldness And deep love for people. How if we have been saved With such great a salvation Could we not Go out and tell other people About the mercy that is available to them The forgiveness of sin And new life With their creator.

I pray that you would be with us That you would bring people Into our path That you would bring Conversations our way And you would help us By your spirit To have good conversations.

We would openly declare The truth of Jesus Christ And that people's hearts Would be soft and open And they would receive it And we would see them Restored to relationship With their creator.

[29 : 13] That is our heart's cry, Lord. And we know that you have Commissioned us to go out But you wouldn't do that. You haven't left us alone To do that. You have gifted us Your Holy Spirit And so we pray, Holy Spirit That you would be with us As we go.

And we would be pleasing to you Knowing that you have Wiped our slate clean As far as the east is from the west You have removed our sin from us In your amazing grace. And so, Lord, we come before you Humble Say thank you.

Pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, I'd like to thank Steve For that message to us This evening, a great reminder to us Of what we are to be As salt and light In this world And in this community In which we find ourselves We're going to conclude our worship By singing to God's praise In Psalm 103 In the last part of the psalm On page 136 To sing psalms version We're going to sing from verse 15 To the end of the psalm Verse 12 Mentions these words That Steve had in prayer As far as east is from the west So far His love has borne away Our many sins And trespasses And all the guilt That on us lay And then in verse 15 Each human life Is like the grass And like a meadow Flower it grows Its place will never

Be recalled Once over it The tempest blows But everlasting is God's love For those who fear him
And their seed For those who keep his covenant And carefully his precepts heed We'll sing from
verse 15 To the end of the psalm We stand to sing To God's praise Amen Amen Amen Amen
O grace over all, in heaven he has set his throne. O you his angels, praise the Lord, some once by
whom his will is done.

[32 : 27] O praise the Lord, you heavenly host, his serenity, and all his work.

Praise God, his work, to earth his well. And you my soul, O praise the Lord.

And you my soul, O praise the Lord. After the benediction, if you allow Steve, he'll go to the main
door and I'll go to the door to my left.

We'll close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son, and
Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.