

Jesus: Our King

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[0:00] Good morning. Turn with me to Matthew 28 in your pew Bibles, page 835. This morning is the third week in our mini-sermon series on the person of Jesus as prophet, priest, and king. Broadly speaking, in the Old Testament, the priest came from the tribe of Levi, the kings came from the tribe of Judah, and God raised up prophets when and how He wanted to. And occasionally, one individual would come close to embodying all three roles in one person. Think people like David or Samuel or Moses, but what we see in Jesus is that He embodies these three roles completely.

The prophet who speaks and reveals God's Word to us, the priest who intercedes for us, and represents us before God, and our King who rules over us with justice and mercy.

And so, this morning, we're focusing on that final theme, the theme of Jesus as our King. We'll be looking at a few different Scriptures, but let's start by reading the end of Matthew's Gospel, chapter 28, starting at verse 16. Now, the eleven disciples went to Galilee, Galilee, and the eleven disciples went to Galilee, and the eleven disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

So, I have a very simple outline for this morning. Number one, why we need a King. Number two, how Jesus has become our King. Number three, why that's good news for us. So, first, why we need a King.

And I want to start by saying we need a King for two reasons. Number one is we flourish when we live under an authority above ourselves. If you look back to Genesis 1, Genesis 1 presents God as the sovereign Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth, the one by whom and through whom all things were made.

[2:33] And as our Creator, God is infinite. We are finite. He is the eternal Creator. We are His creatures. And therefore, we're responsible to love Him and obey Him. Now, of course, when we hear that, we are responsible to obey something outside ourselves. Many of us object, right? Isn't there something inside us that says, I don't want someone else telling me what to do. I want to be my own King.

I want to rule my own life. I know what's best for myself. Obedience is oppressive. And, you know, this isn't just a modern American attitude. It goes, according to the Bible, it goes all the way back to Adam and Eve, a long-standing human tradition. God had set the boundaries in the garden. You can eat from any tree in the garden except one. But Eve decided that she should take the decision into her own hands and decide for herself what was wise and good. And Adam went right along with that, was in agreement with that. They chose to make themselves the center of order and the source of wisdom instead of living under God's authority. But let me ask this question. All right, we have this instinctive reaction that we don't want someone else to rule over us. But when we behave as if no one should have authority over us, as if the meaning of life is ultimately determined by ourselves, do we really flourish as human beings and as a society? I mean, young children don't flourish if they're allowed to stay up however late they want, watch as much TV as they want, eat as much sugar as they want. You learn that pretty quick as a parent. All right, a workplace doesn't function well when every employee acts as if they have personal veto power over any decision that involves them. And a marriage won't be very happy if one or both partners think that the primary goal of the marriage is to maximize my individual happiness. A single person will tend to be shallow if they focus on maintaining their freedom from external commitments. Single people flourish when they link themselves to and play vital roles in a broader community. Now, in our modern

Western world, sometimes this ideal of being our own king, ruling our own lives, individual autonomy is idealized. But, you know, I think it's not as satisfying as it's made out to be. A couple of years ago, David Brooks wrote a New York Times editorial on this topic, and he said this. He said, in commencement speeches, college graduates are routinely told, follow your passion, chart your own course, march to the beat of your own drummer, find yourself. But this mantra misleads on nearly every front.

College grads are often sent out into the world amid rapturous talk of limitless possibilities. But this talk is no help to the central business of adulthood, finding serious things to tie yourself down to, like a spouse, a community, or a calling. Graduates are told to be independent-minded and express their inner spirit. But, of course, doing your job well sometimes means suppressing yourself, being part of a team, following the rules of an institution, going down a checklist. Graduates are told to pursue happiness. But when you read a biography of someone, it's rarely the things that made them happy that compel our admiration. It's the things that they did that were hard and even miserable, which sometimes cost them friends and aroused hatred, yet in the end, were worth it. It's excellence, not happiness, that we admire most. And he concluded his editorial by saying this, the purpose of life is not to find yourself, it's to lose yourself.

Now, even though we make great against it, I think the reality is we're designed to flourish under an authority greater than ourselves. And we don't do well when we try to make ourselves the ultimate authority. So, that's the first reason we need a king, is because we flourish when we live under a good authority beyond ourselves. The second reason we need a king, according to the Bible, is that as we live under God's authority, we're also meant to exercise authority in God's world.

[7:14] Again, if you look back at Genesis 1, verse 26, God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the livestock over all the earth. In the ancient world, it was common to describe the king of a nation as the image of God. But the Bible says not just the king of a nation bears the image of God, but every human being, male and female, bears the image of God and is called to exercise authority in some way or other over God's creation. But of course, just as in our rebellion, we sometimes resist the idea of someone else ruling over us, in our reticence, we sometimes refuse to take responsibility to rule rightly in the world. And isn't that also what Adam and Eve did in Genesis 3 when they disobeyed God's command? God had said to them, have dominion over the earth and its creatures. God placed them in the garden and said, work it and keep it. Take care of it.

Guard it. Exercise authority within it. So when that sneaky little serpent came to them and started twisting God's word and mocking God's goodness and denying God's reliability, what were Adam and Eve supposed to do? They were supposed to take up their God-given authority and kick him out and say, you don't belong here. You are not living, and we have the right and authority under God to say, no, we are not going to follow you. But what did they do instead? They held back.

They engaged with him on his own terms. They were gradually swayed by his distorted perspective that maybe God really wasn't that good after all. And finally, they yielded to him when they should have exercised authority over him. What's the point? The point is humanity's original failure and the way that we continue to fail as human beings is both a matter of rebellion against God's authority or pride and also a refusal to accept our responsibility and authority in God's creation. We might call that sloth. Now, sloth is an old word, and most of us think when we hear sloth, we think laziness, being a couch potato, right, laying in bed all day for no good reason. But sloth is actually bigger than that. It's more like apathy. And so sloth can be expressed by an idleness, staying in bed all day for no good reason, but also in a frenzy of meaningless activity or constant distraction or avoidance of responsibility. And when we think about it, aren't we often reticent to take up our authority and responsibility, for those two things are always meant to go together, over the world that

God has put us in. Perhaps the first part of God's creation over which God makes us responsible is our very own physical bodies. But how often do we allow our bodily desires, our cravings for food, our desire for sex, to rule us rather than us taking responsibility for our bodies and presenting them to God as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to Him? Or how often do we let our emotions control us and drive us and overwhelm us?

Martin Lloyd-Jones said this, he said, most of our unhappiness in life is caused by us listening to ourselves instead of talking to ourselves. He said, take the example when you wake up in the morning and all the thoughts that come into your head. Anxious thoughts, fearful thoughts, distorted thoughts. Maybe I don't want to get out of bed after all. He says, you have to take yourself in hand and preach to yourself. Question yourself.

[11:42] Say to your soul, why are you cast down? Exhort yourself. Hope in God instead of muttering in this depressed and unhappy way. And then he says, remind yourself of God, who God is and what God has done and what God has promised to do and then defy yourself and defy other people and defy the devil and the whole world and say with the psalmist, I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance.

But, I mean, how often do we really do that? Right? Most of us fall short of that. Often. Another example. What about the decisions that God has placed within our responsibility to discern?

Decisions like whether and who to marry or what kind of career to pursue. All kinds of decisions that are that require wisdom and discernment. But there's not a particular biblical command that tells us exactly what to do one way or the other.

Are we wanting God to be like a GPS and tell us exactly what to do and exactly where to go and exactly when to turn and leave nothing unclear or ambiguous?

But God has not promised to be our GPS. He's promised to be our Heavenly Father and He wants us to grow into maturity and take that responsibility to, within His boundaries, discern what is best.

[13:16] When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden, He didn't say, when you wake up in the morning, you need to listen to my voice and I'll tell you which tree to eat from that day.

No, He said, you can eat from any of the trees in the garden. You have this wonderful freedom to eat from all the trees in the garden except one tree that belongs to me, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that represents God's authority to determine and set the boundaries and determine what is right and wrong.

Represents God's sovereignty. But sometimes we, right, we don't want to, we are reticent to take up our responsibility to make hard decisions and make courageous choices within the framework of God's revealed will even when it's not totally clear.

Or another example, right, where we can sometimes hold back. What about leadership opportunities that present themselves in our workplace or in our family or in the church?

Now, there's an important discernment process. Right, we shouldn't immediately, immediately accept any leadership opportunity that comes our way. There's an important discernment process about whether that's wise, but do we sometimes hold back and shrink back because we want to preserve our own comfort or we don't want to deal with potentially awkward or messy situations?

[14:45] Right, we naturally have this, have both this tendency to rebel against God's authority and say, I don't want to live under someone's authority and also this tendency to say, I don't want to be responsible for anything else.

But you know, we're not only unwilling to rule over God's world, we're also unable. According to the Bible, we live now under the power of sin and death and the devil.

In Ephesians, the apostle Paul says, we're in a spiritual battle against rulers and authorities, cosmic powers over this present darkness. God's good world has been taken over by hostile forces and our hearts, too, have been corrupted by sin.

Paul says in Romans, we're under sin, under the power of sin. And so when we do take up authority in this fallen world, we're often prone to misuse it.

Isn't that part of why we sometimes don't want to take authority or responsibilities? Because we know how prone human beings are to misuse authority in destructive and harmful ways.

[15:57] And so we don't want anything to do with it at all. And finally, we live under the shadow of death, which in 1 Corinthians, Paul calls the last enemy.

That none of us, no matter how desperately we hard we try, none of us can overcome. We're born into a world that's under the power of Satan, sin, and death.

So this is why we need a king. Because we're meant to flourish under a good authority greater than ourselves. Because we're meant to rule over God's world and yet we're often unwilling and ultimately unable to do so.

So that's why we need a king. Second, how Jesus has become our king. One of the core messages of the New Testament is that Jesus has become our king.

And that is good news. Earlier we read Jesus' statement, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. But that statement doesn't come out of nowhere at the end of Matthew's gospel.

[17:06] It's a theme that runs throughout the whole gospel. So turn to the gospel of Matthew. I want to give you a seven-minute overview of the gospel of Matthew showing how this theme goes through the whole book to put this statement in perspective.

So flip back to Matthew chapter 1. Matthew begins, Matthew chapter 1 begins with a genealogy in three parts.

The first part goes from Abraham to David the king. Second part, David the king to the deportation to Babylon.

That was when the kingdom vanished and never reappeared. It collapsed. And the third part is from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ.

And that word Christ means anointed one. So right from the beginning Matthew is showing us Jesus is in the line of King David and he has come to restore God's kingdom that had collapsed.

[18:11] and had failed. He's come to rule over God's people to bring us back home from exile and to save us from our sins. Chapter 2. Verse 1, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king.

Behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem saying, where is he who has been born? King of the Jews. What this chapter shows us is Jesus has come to be king in the midst of a hostile world.

Right? If you read the rest of the chapter Herod is not happy that there's this report about a new king who could potentially displace him. And so Herod tries to get rid of Jesus first secretly and then openly.

And so Jesus and his family have to flee. So Jesus has come to establish God's kingdom in the midst of a hostile world. Chapter 3. Jesus is publicly anointed and confirmed by God as king when he's baptized by John.

Chapter 3 verse the end of chapter 3. Back in the Old Testament when the prophet Samuel anointed King David in 1 Samuel 16 it says, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.

[19:37] And when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River verse 16 the spirit of God descended like a dove and came to rest on him.

And a voice from heaven said, behold this is my beloved son with whom I'm well pleased. So God was publicly revealing through Jesus baptism that he had anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and chosen Jesus to be the king and endowed Jesus with everything necessary to fulfill that task.

Chapter 4 chapter 4 verse 17 Jesus begins to preach and what does he preach? From that time Jesus began to preach saying, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

So the first four chapters of Matthew what we basically see is that God has sent Jesus to establish his kingdom in this world. To be king in the midst of a hostile world.

But then the question we might be asking is, okay, so what kind of kingdom is this going to be? What kind of king is he going to be like?

[20:51] And that's the question that Matthew reveals to us in the rest of the gospel through Jesus' teaching and through his actions. Now if you read the gospel of Matthew, there are five major sections of Jesus' teaching, which I think is not coincidental.

I think there are five books of Moses, right? Moses' teaching was sort of divided into five parts and Matthew is sort of highlighting a parallel, saying, look, Jesus has come to complete, to bring a new kingdom.

The first part is the Sermon on the Mount, chapter five through seven. So if you look at chapter five, the beginning, chapter five, verse two, he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Again, more kingdom language, right? But who does the kingdom of God belong to? It belongs to the poor in spirit, in other words, the humble. The people who realize their need for God.

And Jesus goes on in the Beatitudes and says, my kingdom belongs to those who mourn, to the meek, to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, to the merciful, and the pure in heart, and the peacemakers, and those persecuted for righteousness' sake.

[22:17] So Jesus is describing the character of his kingdom, but you know, Jesus is also describing his own character as king. Because as you see in the rest of the gospel, Jesus mourns.

Jesus mourns, he weeps over Jerusalem, and he weeps over our sin and our brokenness. Jesus is meek, he is all powerful, and yet he is completely self-controlled.

That's what meek, being meek means. It means being powerful and having that power under control. Jesus is a king who longs for righteousness.

And Jesus is a merciful king. Jesus is a king who is pure in heart. Jesus is a king who has come to make peace between us and God, and Jesus is the king who is ultimately persecuted and crucified for righteousness' sake.

So the Sermon on the Mount shows us about Jesus' kingdom and shows us who Jesus is as king. Now there's more of Jesus' teaching in Matthew. The other four parts, the other four major blocks of Jesus' teaching are chapter 10, where Jesus sends out the disciples to proclaim and demonstrate his kingdom power as they preach and heal.

[23 : 36] Chapter 13, Jesus tells seven parables about how his kingdom grows in the midst of the hostile world. Chapter 18, he gives instruction about living in the kingdom with one another, particularly about repentance and forgiveness, and how forgiveness is the mark of people who have been brought into his kingdom and who have been forgiven by him.

Chapter 24 and 25, the last section of Jesus' teaching, he speaks about the glory of his kingdom to come in the final judgment. Okay, so that's a little bit about Jesus' teaching, which again, all focuses on his kingdom.

Now, but it's not just through Jesus' teaching that Matthew shows us about Jesus' kingdom, it's also through his actions. So let me highlight a few of Jesus' actions that Matthew points out for us. Chapters 8 and 9, if you look at chapter 8 and 9 of Matthew, there are ten little stories.

Okay, the Sermon on the Mount is a whole bunch of teaching. If you've got a red letter Bible, it's all red. Chapter 8 and 9 is a whole bunch of action. Jesus is healing lepers. He's forgiving sins.

He's delivering people from demons. He's calling disciples. He's even raising the dead. What is this showing us? It's showing us that Jesus has come to overthrow the hostile powers that have taken over God's good world.

[25 : 00] He's come to forgive our sin and set us free from the guilt and burden of it. He's come to deliver us from Satan and all evil forces. And he's come to overcome death.

And isn't that good news? That we have a king who can set us free from the things that hang over us and that we will never be able to overcome by ourselves.

Chapter 14 and 15, again another section in Matthew, we see that Jesus as the king has not just come for his own people, the people of Israel from whom he was descended, but for all the nations of the world.

That's why in chapter 14, Jesus feeds 5,000 people in Jewish territory. And in the next chapter, he feeds 4,000 people in Gentile territory.

Sometimes we might read those things and you think, is that the same story all over again? I mean, did they just sort of, you know, maybe there were 4,500 people. And once they rounded up, and once they rounded down, right?

[26 : 04] Is that what's happening? No. It's actually very intentional. Jesus is feeding and teaching the Jewish people and being their shepherd, and he's feeding and teaching the Gentiles and being their shepherd.

He's come for all the peoples of the earth. Chapter 21, another high point, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah that Matthew quotes, behold, your king is coming to you humble and mounted on a donkey.

He's a humble king who's come to offer us peace. And finally, here's the climax. 26 and 27. The climax of Matthew's gospel where Jesus' kingship is most dramatically and also most ironically revealed.

What happens in these chapters? Jesus is crowned, but he's crowned with thorns. Jesus is hailed as king by mocking voices.

He's closed with a scarlet robe that is then stripped off him. He's symbolically enthroned, lifted up on a cross with a sign above his head that reads, this is Jesus, the king of the Jews.

[27:31] You see, this is, of course, the great irony of Matthew's gospel and all the New Testament gospels that Jesus' kingdom was ultimately established through his death on a cross.

through his substitutionary sacrifice. That means his sacrifice in place of others. When his body was broken and his blood was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

When he died, he destroyed the power of death. And by his faithful and solitary obedience, he broke the power of evil in this world.

This is ultimately how Jesus established his kingdom among us and how he came to forgive our sin and deliver us from death and the devil is by taking those burdens upon himself and conquering them on our behalf.

And so when Jesus says after his resurrection, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, it's a fitting conclusion to Matthew's gospel.

[28:52] It's a fitting conclusion because Jesus has come to be the king as was announced in the beginning. And we see what kind of kingdom he's come to bring. And finally we see how he's definitively accomplished that through his death and through his resurrection.

So that's how Jesus has become our king. Third part of the sermon, why is this message good news for us? And I want to say it's good news for us for two reasons.

First, it's good news that Jesus has come to be our king because he is the king under whose authority we flourish. Why do we fear coming under someone else's authority?

Don't we often fear that they will oppress us and stifle us and smother us and confine us, make us less than we could be on our own? But look at Jesus.

Look at the people who come under his authority in the gospels and what happens to them. They're liberated. Look at how Jesus treats the downtrodden, the outcast, the children, the blind, the lame, the sinners with mercy.

[30:12] If you've experienced Christianity or the church as something oppressive and stifling and confining, you have not encountered the real biblical Jesus, but rather some distorted version.

It's sort of like if somebody tells you about the burger and fries they had at Prime 16, and they assume that you're talking about a McDonald's hamburger that's been sitting uncovered in the back of the fridge for 10 days.

There's a big difference between the authentic biblical Jesus and the kingdom he came to establish and the distorted, bland, or even counterfeit versions that have grown up over time.

Don't reject the real thing just because there's a lot of bad imitations out there. No offense if you like McDonald's, but nothing's good 10 days later in the fridge, right?

Now, the other possibility, there's actually one other possibility. If you've experienced Christianity as something oppressive or stifling or confining, there's a possibility that you've encountered the real Jesus, and Jesus is calling you to surrender completely to him, and you are still trying to sit on the fence.

[31:47] You want to have Jesus, but you still want to be your own king, at least in some parts of your life. You don't want him messing with some things. And Jesus did say, if anyone would come after me, you must deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me.

And it's only on the other side of self-denial and self-sacrifice that we find the fullness of resurrection joy. Jesus said, whoever would save his life, if you're trying to hold on to your control, save your own life, you're going to lose it.

But if you lose your life for my sake, you'll find it again. You see, the promise of Jesus is in my kingdom, every death you experience will lead to a resurrection.

Everything you are called to sacrifice will one day be repaid a hundred times over. But you can only know the full reality of that promise when you actually deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Christ, when you actually surrender to Jesus as king.

So don't sit on the fence. Jesus said, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

[33:17] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Jesus promises rest. Rest from our enemies. Rest for our souls. When we accept his yoke, when we learn from him.

So come to him today. Surrender to him as your king. He is the king under whose authority we flourish.

But the second reason it's good news that Jesus has come to be our king is that Jesus is the king who restores our ability to rule rightly in God's world.

We need a king because we don't do well at being our own authority. And we need a king who will teach us and equip us and enable us to exercise the authority that God gave to humanity in the beginning.

[34:25] Way back in the Garden of Eden, when we refused to submit to God, we lost our ability to rule rightly over the world. But in Jesus, we have a king who submitted to God perfectly.

And in him, our ability to rule rightly over God's creation is restored. He sets us free from pride, and he sets us free from sloth.

Now notice what Jesus says in Matthew 28, after he says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. He doesn't just say, therefore come to me and take my yoke upon you.

He already said that. Right? That's a wonderful promise. Come to me. You will find rest. Don't delay. But he also says, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations. Jesus the king commissions us as his followers to be his royal representatives in the world.

[35:36] And to call all people to find freedom and to find salvation in him. So on the one hand, knowing Jesus is our king humbles us as we take his yoke upon us and learn from him and find rest for our souls.

But on the other hand, knowing Jesus is our king gives us boldness. Boldness to step up. Boldness to exercise responsible, loving, life-giving authority in our families.

For the good of our families. For the growth of our churches. For the health of our neighborhoods. For the well-being of our workplaces. Jesus is king. And he delivers us from pride and presumption.

And also from sloth and apathy. Now, of course, exercising authority over creation begins with offering our very own physical bodies to God. We'll see this theme in upcoming weeks as we return to 1 Corinthians.

We'll be looking at what it means to glorify God in our body. Especially as that relates to sex and marriage and singleness. And all kinds of other topics.

[36 : 41] Now, later in the year, 1 Corinthians 12 through 14, we'll look at the topic of spiritual gifts. How we can use our gifts for the glory of God and how to build up each other in the body of Christ.

And both of these topics, glorifying God in our physical body and glorifying God as we build one another up in the body of Christ. Both of them are ways that we exercise responsible authority for the good of others in God's world.

You know, Jesus' last words in Matthew point us not just to our physical bodies. And not even just to the local church. But beyond that. Go and make disciples of all nations.

It's a call to extend Jesus' kingdom. His life-giving authority to the ends of the earth. Because the whole world rightfully belongs to Jesus.

As Abraham Kuyper once said, There is not one square inch in all creation. Over which Christ as Lord does not cry, Mine. And so our commission is to go wherever He sends us.

[37 : 49] And live under His authority for the good of those around us. And to call others to come under His authority as the rightful King.

The one who sets us free from our enemies. The one who gives us rest for our souls. The one who equips us to rule with justice and righteousness and love.

So let us boldly proclaim that Jesus is Lord. Let us pray. May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And let us rejoice for Jesus is King.

Let us pray. Lord Jesus, We thank You that When You saw us In our state of Pride And rebellion against You In our state of sloth Fear Escapism Clinging to idols We thank You that You came into this world.

We thank You that You came into this world To defeat our greatest enemies. To defeat sin And Satan And death. We thank You that You We thank You that You established Your kingdom among us.

[39 : 22] Not by Simple Force But by Your Self-giving And saving Love.

We thank You that You Have proven To us That Your authority is good. That You have come so that we might flourish.

That You are that King promised in that Psalm Who will reign to the ends of the earth And under whose rule We flourish For You are the God who Has shown mercy to the needy And to those who have no helper.

Lord You have become our helper. You have Saved us When we couldn't save ourselves. So Lord we pray that we would Joyfully Live under Your authority And see that it is for our good.

We pray that we would Wisely Exercise the authority You've given us In Your In this world That we may use it To bless others And to glorify Your name.

[40 : 44] We praise You That You are our King. And we love You Lord. In Jesus name. Amen.