

The King Who Restores the World

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[0 : 0 0] This evening we're reading from Matthew's Gospel, chapter 8. It's found on page 972 in the Church Bibles.

So page 972 in the Church Bibles, Matthew chapter 8, and we're reading from verse 1. When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him.

A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.

I am willing, he said, be clean. Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, see that you do not tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded as a testimony to them.

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. Lord, he said, my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.

[1 : 2 2] Jesus said to him, shall I come and heal him? The centurion replied, Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof, but just say the word and my servant will be healed.

For I myself am a man under authority with soldiers under me. I tell this one, go, and he goes, and that one come, and he comes.

I say to my servant, do this, and he does it. When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Then Jesus said to the centurion, go, let it be done just as you believed it would. And his servant was healed at that moment. When Jesus came into Peter's house, he saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever.

[2 : 4 3] He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all who were ill.

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases. Amen.

Well, good evening. Let me add my welcome to Jamie. For those of you I haven't met, my name is Simon. I am the trainee minister here. Let's pray as we dig into God's word this evening.

Father, thank you that this is your word through which you speak by your spirit about your son. We pray that we would hear it with that in mind this evening. We ask that you would shape our hearts and help us to know Jesus better through what we hear, and that you would bless us by your spirit to follow you.

Amen. Amen. A question that humanity has had to address for every stage of history everywhere in the world is what does a good use of power look like?

[3 : 57] Or to put it another way, what do we want from our leaders? It's a question that feels very modern, very contemporary. Nobody is really content with the idea that power is merely for the strong and the weak just lose out.

Yet, for so much of history and so many places in the world, that is just the case. The strong thrive and the weak don't survive. So often we find authority and power used for the gain of very few or the personal gain of an individual.

Even in good leadership, we so often find abuses of power that lead to the suffering of many. Here in the UK, we have a stable government and society, yet how many newspapers and articles can you think of in the recent years of abuses of power or scandals in government?

So faced with the question, what is a good use of power, another question comes up, which is, well, what would a perfect use of power even look like?

We've never seen it. Nothing in the world has given us even a slight picture of what that would be. We may have good rule, but perfect use of authority was something that none of us have ever observed.

[5 : 13] Yet, as Christians, we believe in one whose authority is not only total, but wielded perfectly for the good of the whole world.

And we believe that we see that in the person, the words, and the deeds of Jesus Christ. So welcome back to Matthew's Gospel, chapters 8 to 10, where the king comes down the mountain into the world.

We join Matthew's Gospel just after the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus has set out his manifesto for his kingdom. And we need to look back at that a bit to remind us where we are.

So if you just flick back with me a couple of pages, chapter 5, verse 17, we see some of the way that Jesus is using his authority. Chapter 5, verse 17, Jesus says this of the Old Testament Scriptures, Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.

I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. So Jesus claims that all the promises made in the entirety of the Old Testament Scripture are pointing to him for their fulfillment.

[6 : 18] He then goes through those laws and teaches about them, speaking with authority on the purpose of the law. Look at chapter 5, verse 27.

You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery, but I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Jesus is telling Israel that what they're hearing about the law isn't right.

And he's come to show Israel what the real and full and true meaning of the law is by fulfilling it in himself. He then goes on to give authoritative instruction on fasting and giving, even how a person should address God in prayer.

Jesus is showing these people what his kingdom is going to be like. And the words of God are being given to the people of God on a mountain, a pattern that any Israelite who knew the Old Testament well would maybe begin to look at and wonder, Who is this?

And we see this in chapter 7, verse 28, just before the passage that Graham read. When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

[7 : 35] This teaching is amazing, the people of Israel, because Jesus' words have a ring of authority that they have never heard. His kingdom will not be like the one that they have lived in or the one from their history.

His kingdom will be something far greater. And as chapter 8 starts in verse 1, when Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. So we have Jesus descending from the mountain, a crowd full of people who've just heard his words.

And the question is, what kind of king will he be when we go down into the valley? What will this king do of his authority? And what will the coming of his kingdom be like?

Well, let's find out. As we dive right in with verses 2 to 4, Jesus is a king who restores the outcast. The first person we meet as Jesus and the crowd come down the mountain must have caused some real commotion, I think.

In Jesus' day, leprosy, a highly contagious skin disease was completely untreatable. And it made you a dangerous outcast. Because think, even to get to this man, this man has had to fight for a crowd.

[8 : 43] He's probably had to shout that he's there because he's contagious. People would be disgusted spreading away from him. This leper was walking defilement, untouchable, unwelcome.

And yet here he is, walking through a crowd just to get to Jesus. And yet, whatever obstacles he's faced to get here, he comes to Jesus on his knees, kneeling before his Lord, saying, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

This leper calls Jesus Lord and is absolutely sure that he can heal. But his question is, is he willing? And notice the sequence of events from that.

Because before Jesus says that he is willing or says that he's healed, Jesus touches the leper first. And that's probably the point at which the crowd silenced.

Because since this man contracted leprosy, whenever that had been in his history, he probably wouldn't have felt the touch of another human being at all. No hugs from family, no pat on the back from friends, no handshake with people he meets.

[9 : 57] This man is fully untouchable. And yet, the first touch he feels is that of Jesus' hand going to heal him. I am willing. Be clean.

And the leprosy is gone. Here is the king that restores the outcast. The world all of a sudden works in reverse as the disease that should have made Jesus unclean is blasted away by Jesus' holiness and purity.

A mere interaction with Jesus and light from the coming kingdom breaks into the darkness of the world and it's wonderful. This leper gets not just the healing he wanted, but a full restoration of life that he so desperately needed.

And Jesus is not just able, but absolutely willing. Now Jesus, in verse 4, tells him not to tell anyone. He says, Go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded as testimony to them.

In the Old Testament law, if a leper was healed, they would have to go to their priest to be checked and then bring a sacrifice to thank God for their healing. This leper had been declared clean by Jesus, but Jesus honors the commands of the Old Testament by telling him to go and make the appropriate sacrifice.

[11 : 19] But not just for its own sake, but as a testimony to the temple and the priests in it that here is one who doesn't just follow the law. Here is one who fulfills everything the law was pointing to.

Laws about the healing of the lepers matter, but if one comes who can just heal lepers with a word, well, that should make them stand up and think. If you've ever thought that maybe when you imagine Jesus, he's powerful but cold, standoffish maybe, it's maybe something that we just associate with power and authority.

Maybe you think it's something that can only be wielded negatively or wickedly, and yet here is Jesus showing us what real power and real compassion look like when they meet together.

The king comes down the mountain to restore the outcast. That is the kind of king that Jesus is. The second person we meet as we come down the mountain is a Roman centurion, a soldier in command of a hundred other soldiers, another person the crowd probably would have avoided again, but this time out of fear.

In Jesus' day, Israel was an occupied territory under Roman rule. To most Jewish people, the Romans are the enemy invaders, yet here we see a king who welcomes the foreigner, and that's our second point, a king who welcomes the foreigner.

[12 : 50] This centurion comes to Jesus, yet another person whose interaction should have made Jesus unclean, as this man is a Gentile, again, not meant to interact with Jewish people. And assuming that he's a Roman centurion, we might have expected a kind of gruff command or even some aggression when he comes to Jesus, but instead we get a humble, honoring request of Jesus to heal his paralyzed servant.

Jesus offers to come to the centurion's servant, to come to his house. Clearly, Jesus is not worried about being defiled by going with this man and interacting with a Gentile. But the response the centurion gives amazes Jesus.

Look at verse 8. Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof, but just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority.

There's a lot to unpack there. First, the clear reverence with which the soldier addresses Jesus is appropriate for, well, a king, isn't it? And then secondly, as a Roman centurion, a man under the authority of an emperor but wielding the emperor's authority, the centurion looks to Jesus and said, that's what he's like.

He's a man under God, but if he's doing these things then he's wielding God's authority. The simple conclusion for the centurion is that Jesus, of course, doesn't need to come to his home.

[14 : 18] If he's wielding God's power, then geography is no issue for healing. He can do it anywhere because that is the power of God himself. This Gentile centurion sees Jesus for the king that he really is and in verse 13 we find that the centurion is right and as he believed so his servant is healed.

But Jesus' response to the centurion is to marvel at the faith of this Gentile soldier and to call all the crowd from Israel to see it. Truly, I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.

What a great affirmation of the centurion's faith itself but what a terrible verdict on the people of Israel. The people of God with the history of God and the promises of God do not see what this Gentile man has already understood that Jesus is the promised king that they've been waiting for.

And Jesus goes much further with his evaluation in verse 11. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown into the darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This Gentile centurion is the newest of many foreigners to Israel who've joined in with the promises that God made to Israel's founding fathers.

[15 : 51] As God promised that through them a blessing would come to the whole world we see that in Jesus that blessing has arrived and is extending across the world. Many foreigners will come to be welcomed into the great feast in the kingdom of heaven.

It's a beautiful picture. But many from the kingdom will be thrown out. By this Jesus means that many ethnically Israelite people will refuse to put their faith in him.

They'll fail to accept Jesus as king and thus will be ejected from the kingdom out into the darkness the weeping the gnashing of teeth the despair.

Darkness weeping gnashing of teeth is a threefold description that Jesus uses throughout the gospels to refer to hell. And no one in the entire Bible speaks more about hell than Jesus does but isn't that right as the one who is in fact the king with authority?

The only one in the Bible who could have the authority for people's eternal destiny is God himself Jesus the king. Many of the people of Israel who should have been the first to accept Jesus will reject him and in doing so they will lose the kingdom and be thrown into hell.

[17 : 19] And this is true of whoever rejects Jesus as the king with the authority to make that decision all who reject him no matter what their claim no matter what their background will be rejected as well and end up in hell.

But the news that Jesus comes with is all who come to him in faith no matter who they are or what their background will be welcomed. People who should be foreigners to the promises and the covenants will be welcomed in joyfully and gladly into that eternal banquet in heaven because that is the nature of Jesus' kingdom and he is a king that welcomes the foreigner.

No wonder that that is then true when we look at the church today. We find people from all the tribes and tongues and nations of the world flooding into the church.

And of course we do because that is what Jesus said would happen. Jesus' kingdom is for anyone and everyone who calls on him and so therefore we should expect the church to be full of people who are different to us from all over the world.

The vast majority of here if not potentially all of us are not ethnically Jewish. We are foreigners that Jesus has welcomed in. This is about us. If we are people who have put our faith in Jesus then we are looking forward to that wonderful banquet in eternity forever as people who have been joined into the promises of this king and his kingdom because that is the type of king that Jesus is a king who welcomes the foreigner.

[18 : 58] Now if you have been a Christian for a while you might find it easy to become almost too familiar with this idea of Jesus' kingship and just forget how remarkable it actually is.

Jesus is so unlike the other rulers we see in the world. His power expressed so perfectly in love and restoration and in welcome. But in Israel many couldn't see that Jesus was king because he is so different from the ruler that they had expected.

Or for some of them so different from the ruler they desired. He simply wasn't what they wanted. They wanted someone to come in and smash the Romans and take back the country and Jesus instead comes in to bring his kingdom and restore the world.

The biggest surprise of Jesus' kingship is what the whole gospel points to. It's his death on the cross. It's signposted throughout the gospels and we get just a hint of it here in our final passage.

So our final section here a king who suffers for his people. The third person we meet is Peter's feverish mother-in-law another diseased person whose presence again should have made Jesus unclean and yet she too is healed.

[20 : 15] And then that evening the crowd comes. A flood of the sick the struggling the possessed the hurt the afflicted they all flow to Jesus and with just a word from him receive healing and restoration and release and health having their lives restored and renewed by Jesus.

The king has come the kingdom is breaking in as evil is banished freedom and life spread forth from Jesus and it's just a glimpse of what the kingdom will be like in full when he comes.

It is absolutely glorious in the real sense of the word glory. It is the first truly real and excellent thing to enter the world.

and as the sun sets on this image as Peter's mom uses every single cup in the whole village to make tea for everyone Matthew steps in as the narrator to tell us what we are really seeing and help us to understand it in verse 17.

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah. He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases. Matthew quotes the prophet Isaiah speaking about a figure often referred to as the suffering servant a prophecy of one who would come to heal and restore the people of God by giving his own life.

[21 : 37] So let's read those verses quoted with a little more context. If you want to follow along this is Isaiah chapter 53 verse 4 on page 741 of the church Bibles. Isaiah chapter 53 verse 4 Matthew tells us that Jesus is fulfilling this prophecy the glorious king is the suffering servant.

The one who comes to heal us to bring us peace with God is the one on whom God would lay our sin and our punishment on his son. Jesus the king who came down the mountain to be with us in the valley to die on a cross that we might live.

In his death on the cross Jesus would take the weight of the sin of a fallen world that not only would those who believed in him be saved but that all things would be remade new now and forever.

The kingdom is coming a kingdom where sin and death are defeated by Jesus and he reigns over everything made new forever because Jesus is the king who suffers for his people.

And so there we are just a quick snapshot of the beginning of a longer section of Matthew's gospel where the king meets the world. The king has come and who is there like him?

[23 : 23] Has there ever been an authority like his? Complete power yet a complete compassion true justice and true love perfectly intertwined a king whose reign brings restoration and peace to a broken world a king who welcomes the outcast and the foreigner a king who steps down from the mountain to help us in our sinfulness and despair only to take them on himself that we may live.

Jesus is a king completely worthy of our faith in every way. He is an authority we can gladly submit to. He is a king worth putting your whole faith whole trust and the weight of your whole life in who will one day bring everything to complete restoration when he comes again.

friends we have only seen a mere glimpse of his kingdom so far but one day it will come in full and that day will be more glorious than we can possibly imagine because we will see our king.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus thank you that you came down to earth to be with us that you came to teach and to speak to show us what the kingdom will be like and to die that we may live.

Heavenly Father thank you that you sent Jesus for us and placed our sin and iniquity on him that we may live and be brought to you. Holy Spirit we pray that we would understand that that we would take great joy in knowing you and that you would change our lives by the truth of living under the king Jesus.

[25 : 03] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.