

The Invasion of the Kingdom

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[0 : 00] I don't know if you know, but at this present moment, there's a conflict going on. Many battles have already been fought, and many have died in the fighting. And yet still, even though it started a long time ago now, it seems far from finished.

Also, think about this particular conflict. There's a lot of disinformation floating around. And you can see it on social media, a very divided opinion as to who the good guys in this conflict actually are. Many people are actually siding against them, and some are in denial that there's even a war on at all. I'm not talking about Russia's war in Ukraine, and I'm not talking about Israel's war in Gaza. What I'm talking about is the war that's been raging for 2,000 years since Jesus Christ stepped into our world, a war in which Robbie has just become the latest combatant, a war for human souls, a war that is being waged every day across the world.

And yet there are many people, maybe even sitting here this morning, who are unaware that this war is even happening. Well, this passage in front of us, Jesus teaches us about the reality of this conflict, this war that's going on.

[1 : 24] But He also in this passage, and this is why we all need to listen to it, challenges each of us to consider what side we are on. And so let's see what happens and what Jesus says.

Now it all starts with a healing. Jesus has performed a lot of healings in His time on earth, and He's received a lot of fame, even fame that He didn't want, because of these powerful things He was doing.

And once again, He heals a man who we're told is oppressed by a demon, and heals him completely without much effort. And this is not the first time Jesus has shown this power that He has as a human over evil forces in our world, invisible evil forces.

So we've seen it before and we see it again, this immense power that Jesus shows over evil forces. But what we see straight after that are people are very divided in their opinion of, you know, what to make of this.

So they see this happening, and they're divided. There's a lot of disinformation floating around, and they have divided opinions. Some see Jesus as, see that this is a sign of Him being the promised, prophesied King that God was going to send to rescue people.

[2 : 47] But others, they have a different response. See, the same evidence, but a very different response. Others, actually, you'll see that they call Him evil. They say, no, no, He is driving out evil forces by Himself being evil.

They've made this accusation to Him before, called what is good evil, called Jesus evil. But this time, Jesus takes the opportunity to stop and to explain to His listeners what is really going on, and that what they're witnessing is actually part of the invasion of God's kingdom into our world.

It's much bigger than they think it is. Let's have a look at what He says from verse 25 of Matthew 12. Knowing their thoughts, He told them, Every kingdom divided against itself is headed for destruction, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.

If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will His kingdom stand? And then verse 28, If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, well, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

That's what He's saying here. That's what He wants these people to realize. And there's a few things we need to get from Jesus' response here. Firstly, Jesus is not denying that Satan exists, that there is a real spiritual evil behind the brokenness of this world.

[4 : 25] But secondly, Jesus is affirming that He is certainly not on Satan's side. He is on the other side. In fact, what Jesus is saying here is He has come into this world to oppose, to undo the work of Satan, to undo the brokenness that we've been seeing for thousands of years.

And so what we're seeing, Jesus is saying, is part of a major offensive against what Jesus calls Satan's kingdom. Did you notice that? He said there that Satan has a kingdom. What is a kingdom? And what does Jesus mean that Satan has a kingdom? Well, a kingdom is an area of influence. It's an area of control that someone exercises.

And by referring to Satan's kingdom, Jesus is referring to the influence that Satan and evil has had over humanity for thousands of years.

And we look in the history of humanity, and we see the results of this influence that evil has had over humans and over history.

[5 : 34] And the way that Satan and the forces of evil in the spiritual realms have done that, their primary strategy has been to keep people separated from God, to keep you and me separated from God, but for Jesus coming into this world.

You see, since the arrival of Jesus, all of Satan's work has begun to be undone. All of that, the kingdom, the influence that evil has over this world, has begun to change since the stepping into this world of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Evil's hold has begun to be pushed back. D-Day has happened. You know D-Day, World War II, if you're a history buff, you'll know that it was a major turning point in the Second World War, where the Allies invaded the Normandy beaches of France, and entered into mainland Europe to start releasing Nazi hold in the territory they had occupied in World War II.

Now, interesting thing about D-Day, it's often, Jesus' arrival into this world is often described as the D-Day of human history, because in World War II, there were still lots of battles to be fought.

There was still a lot of fighting to be done. The war was not over when the invasion happened, but it was a decisive moment that decisively changed the war.

[7 : 09] And that's what Jesus is saying about Him coming into the world. In verse 28, He says, The kingdom of God has now come upon you. Jesus has brought God's power from heaven to earth to begin liberating people from the power of evil.

That has happened and that is still happening. And you know what Jesus describes it as? I love this. In verse 29, He describes it as the plundering of Satan's house. He says He's come in, He's broken down the door, and He's started to take Satan's stuff.

Verse 29, How can someone enter a strongman's house and steal his possessions? Unless he first ties up the strongman, then he can plunder his house. He's saying, that's what I'm doing. I'm tying up Satan and I'm coming in to plunder his house.

And you know what? He's been doing that ever since he said that. And he's doing it today still. Through the power of His Holy Spirit in His church. In His church around the world.

In almost every community and town and village you go to around this world, there will be Christians. That Jesus is put there. That Jesus is raised up. And He's raised up churches.

[8 : 18] Some of them small. Some of them big. But there are churches. And through His church declaring His word and administering His signs. The Holy Spirit is liberating people from evil and from brokenness and from separation from God.

That is what He is doing today. The kingdom is advancing. The invasion has happened. And Jesus is plundering Satan's house in every village, in every community, in every town, in every city.

Through His church and the declaration of His word. And yet, what we see in this story is that many people don't welcome that invasion.

You know, in World War II, again, after D-Day, it turned out that there were many people in liberated France who actually were on the side of the Germans.

They didn't want to be liberated. Because they had become used to Nazi rule. And a lot of them were Nazi sympathizers. And they enjoyed the situation they had under Nazi rule.

[9 : 22] And this invasion was a threat to the status quo. Well, it was the same in Jesus' day. With the kingdom of God's invasion into this world.

People were threatened by this invasion. We see it in this story. These Pharisees. They were threatened by the invasion of God's kingdom. It upset the status quo of their lives. And so what did they do?

They pushed against it. They didn't want it. But it wasn't only then. It's the same today. It's the same. There are people who do not believe the gospel when they hear it.

They are pushing against it. They don't want it. This is going to upset the status quo of their lives. To admit and to receive God's kingship. Of course.

It's a threat to our own kingship that we exercise over our lives. And so many people push against it. Either people will accept and receive the gospel, as we've seen this morning.

[10:20] Or they will push against it. And that's why Jesus goes on to say there are actually no neutrals in this conflict. That's going on in our world. There are no neutrals. You can't be in the middle. You can't get away with saying, I'm not interested.

Religion's not for me. But I'm not against it. You know, people can do what they want. Jesus says, there's no one in the middle. Actually, you're on one side or the other. Let's see how he puts it. Verse 30. Anyone who is not with me is against me. And anyone who does not gather with me scatters. That's how he puts it. He's using an illustration there of sheep farmers.

In those days, sheep farming was a big thing. And if you were a sheep farmer and you had other sheep farmers around you in the same territory, you would either help them if their flocks were kind of wandering.

You would help them to gather their flocks to keep them together. Or if they were your competition and you didn't quite like them, you would actually actively scatter their flocks. You would either work with them or you would work against them.

[11:24] Jesus is saying the same thing of every single human being who lives. They are either working for the kingdom or they're working against it. They're either assisting the invasion to proceed or they're pushing against it.

They're either helping to gather for the kingdom or they're actually helping to scatter and to discredit the kingdom.

And to resist the invasion into this world of God's kingdom and into their lives. Which are you? If there's only two types of people, according to the words of Jesus Christ, which are you? Are you someone who is gathering, helping to assist the invasion in this world to proceed?

Or are you someone who is pushing against it in your life? Well, it's an important question. And it's why we need to hear the next thing Jesus teaches us, which is a warning for those who resist the kingdom.

[12:29] It's uncomfortable, but it's my job to make sure that you understand this warning that Jesus gives. And he gives it in verse 31 there. Have a look.

Therefore, I tell you, people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy. But the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Okay, Christians have for a long time been confused over what Jesus is talking about here.

The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, this unforgivable sin. What is it? And the moment we read that verse, we kind of lock onto that. What does that mean, the unforgivable sin?

That sounds scary. But I want, before we talk about that, I want you to notice in this verse, before we talk about what can't be forgiven, don't miss the amazing promise at the beginning of it.

Okay? The beginning of verse 31. Therefore, I tell you, people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy. Okay, let's just pause there. That's amazing that Jesus can declare this.

[13:32] Forgiveness for our sins against God is now possible because Jesus has come into this world. And He's come to make that possible. Jesus has come to make possible forgiveness of your sins against God.

That's why He came. And He did that through the cross. He did that by willingly going and dying for the sins of other people, for those who put their faith in Him, to free people from the power and the penalty of their sin against God.

That's why He came. For all who put their faith in Him. But, the way Jesus brings people to put their faith in Him, to receive that, to actually receive that forgiveness, the way Jesus brings people to believe in Him, especially today when He is not here in person, how is that?

How does He do that? Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, who He left and empowered His people with in this world.

We're reading about it in our growth groups now, in Pentecost. Jesus left the Holy Spirit so that when He ascended into heaven and was not here physically, His work can continue to bring people to believe in Him.

[14:52] So you see, the Holy Spirit does today what Jesus did in person when He was here, which is basically to bring the truth into people's faces.

That's what He did. And you can see it. Throughout these accounts we're reading in Matthew, Jesus is unashamedly putting the truth in people's faces so that they cannot deny it, that they

cannot ignore it, that they cannot plead ignorance.

Well, that's what the Holy Spirit does today. When people hear this word preached, the Holy Spirit is at work putting the truth in front of you in a way that you cannot deny.

But when people push against that, when the Holy Spirit is actually bringing truth that is undeniable into people's lives, and people push against that, like the Pharisees did when Jesus was in front of them, and they find excuses to ignore the truth that's in front of them, Jesus calls that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

It means that you're resisting the powerful advances of the Holy Spirit in your life. And that is the one thing that can't be forgiven.

[16:09] Why? Simple. Because when you do that, you are actually cutting yourself off from the one place that you can find forgiveness for all your sins. That's why He says it can't be forgiven.

Because you are preventing the one channel of forgiveness, which is belief in Jesus Christ. You know, we've got a number of keys in this church for various doors and cabinets and cupboards and various things.

And a few years ago now, it was Sylvia who put them all together in a key box, sorted through all our keys. And now they're in a key box. I'm not going to tell you where.

And it's a box that has all our keys in it. But there is one key that opens that box. And if you lose that key, well then, you can't get in anywhere.

You can't unlock anything. Resisting the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit in your life is throwing away the one key that opens up salvation.

[17:22] Now you might be worrying, have I done that already? Maybe you've heard about Jesus, but you've ignored Him. Even though you had no good reason to.

Maybe you've denied Him. Maybe you've even publicly spoken against Jesus. Well, if that's you, then I want to direct you to verse 32, which should be a great comfort for you.

Jesus says, whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, talking about Himself, it will be forgiven Him. Even that can be forgiven. Even if you've denied Jesus in the past, it is not unforgivable because many people do that in ignorance or in fear.

We actually see later on the Apostle Peter. Jesus' closest follower denied Him three times out of fear, and yet He was restored. The Apostle Paul actively worked against the kingdom, actively worked against the church, persecuted Christians, and yet He was saved.

And so there's hope. Even if you've ignored Jesus up until now, even if you've been on the wrong side, it's not too late to cross over and respond to the truth that you're hearing.

[18:39] If you want to know how to do that, by the way, to cross over, you know you're on the wrong side of Jesus. Well, there's a book written by Frank Ritiff, a great preacher of God's Word, called Crossing the Line.

You can take one, if that's you. Just don't take one if you're a Christian, please, because leave them for the people who need them. They're available for free. As you leave our front entrance from the hall, you'll see a stand.

Take one of those books, if this is talking to you today and you need to know how to cross over. But do that. If that is you, do something about it. If you are hearing God speak into your life today, do something about it.

Because if you don't, if you continue to reject the truth that is in front of you, eventually you can't plead ignorance. And that can lead to a hardening where forgiveness becomes impossible.

Do something. But then finally, before I finish, what if you don't actually know what side you're on? Maybe that's you this morning.

[19:48] Maybe you've been raised as a Christian, but you're not really sure you are. You know, you might tell people, I was a Christian as a kid.

I grew up as a Christian, so I'm a Christian, I guess. But if you examine yourself, maybe you're not so sure. You read about what Jesus says here about being on the one side or the other, gathering or scattering. Maybe you're going, I don't know actually what I am.

What side I'm on? Well, then that's why it's helpful that Jesus shows how to tell what side you're on in the last few verses of our passage. Verse 33 to 34 says this, Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or make the tree bad and its fruit will be bad.

For a tree is known by its fruit. Fruit of vipers, he tells the Pharisees. How can you speak good things when you are evil?

For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. You see what Jesus is saying here. He's saying the fruit shows the health of the tree.

[20 : 49] You might know this if you have a fruit tree or something that grows fruit. And maybe you've been battling that the fruit that this tree is growing is always stunted and small.

Maybe it's growing, but it's rotting. And it's always like that. Well, then you know the fruit's not really the problem. There's something wrong with the tree, isn't there?

Well, that's the principle Jesus is giving here. The fruit shows the health of the tree. And in the same way, our fruit, what comes out of us, shows the reality of what's inside us.

Especially, Jesus says, our words. Reveal where our hearts are. How we talk.

What we talk about, especially in those unguarded moments where we're not trying to impress someone. We're not trying to fake it, but we're just talking what's on our mind. Well, what comes out then actually shows where our heart is.

[21 : 55] It shows what we value. It shows what we're focusing on in life. And it shows what's important to us. What's really important to us. Verse 35, Jesus goes on and says, A good person produces good things from his storeroom of good.

And an evil person produces evil things from his storeroom of evil. Well, that word in the original Greek, storeroom, is actually literally treasure room. And so what you treasure is what you'll talk about.

Is what will come out. What you'll focus on. But that also, your words that show what you treasure, also shows what side you're on. Especially in how you talk about Jesus.

He goes on, verse 37, For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned. What does he mean?

Well, he's spoken about this before. He's spoken about how your words are going to influence your eternal fate. And he said it, he put it like this, it's clearer.

[23 : 03] In chapter 10, verse 32, he says, Therefore, everyone who will acknowledge me before others, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever denies me before others, I will also deny him before my Father in heaven.

Your words about Jesus will ultimately determine, will show up what's really inside, and will determine what happens to you on that day that he comes back.

Because the thing is, if you really believe who Jesus is, right? If you really believe this, that he is the one who has come to save this world from all that is wrong, and he is the only one who can bring us back into relationship with God and save this world, if you believe that, well then you will talk about it.

It will be important to you. Right? And that will show you that you're actually on his side. Today, Robbie joined the side of the invading kingdom.

The truth of that, though, will be seen in his words, and whether he'll indeed not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to fight bravely in his name.

[24 : 24] If you've been baptized, is that true of you? And if you haven't, then will you change sides before it's too late?

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for speaking to us. We thank you for leaving your Holy Spirit to continue your work of plundering Satan's house.

Lord, plunder his house today, we pray. And Lord, where there is resistance in our hearts to the invasion of your kingdom, we pray that you would break that resistance down, and you would cause us to sign up for the battle.

We pray, Lord, that you would cause us to respond to your word, and that the truth of what you're doing in our lives would be seen in us, would come out in how we live and how we speak.

Lord, I pray for all those here who are baptized. I pray for us, Lord, and I pray that you would help us, indeed, to continue to do what we promised in our baptism, that we would not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to continue fighting bravely in his name.

[25 : 46] And Lord, I pray for those who are not yet, that they will not resist the Holy Spirit, but that you would bring them to the side that will prevail in Jesus' name.

Amen.