

The Message the World Needs

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- [0 : 0 0] A few years ago now, the United Nations defined the most important priorities for our planet. Our world has a lot of needs, and so a bunch of world leaders got together and said, what are the primary needs for our planet?
- They're called the Sustainable Development Goals, and they include things such as the eradication of poverty, access to health care for all people, especially in the third world, quality education being made available to all, clean drinking water in the many areas that still don't have that, and environmental sustainability, making sure that we look after our planet.
- And they said that those are the primary, the top priorities for our planet. And I'm sure you'll agree, those are all good priorities, and maybe you're even involved in causes that contribute to one of those goals, and that's a good thing.
- We need to do those things. But what's interesting is none of the United Nations' top priorities for our planet was what Jesus reckons is the most important priority for our planet.
- According to Him, there is one thing this world needs more than any of these other things, and that is a message about a kingdom.
- [1 : 2 0] The message of the kingdom is the message that Jesus gave to His disciples and got them to commit their entire lives to making known to other people.
- That was their life's mission, to making this message about a kingdom known to the world. And today, in today's passage, we are reading about the beginning of that mission, the very start of Jesus sending His disciples on that mission.
- And as we read in Matthew, you'll see how that mission develops. But this is the very beginning of that most important mission for the world that Jesus reckons is the most, the highest priority for our planet.
- And today we are going to look at the beginning of this mission, find out why it's so important, but also find out how every Christian is called to be a part of it today. And so first, we need to look at why this message about a kingdom is actually so important, why it is needed in our world.
- And the basic reason why this message is needed, we see in this passage, is because humans are lost without it. Lost without it.
- [2 : 4 0] Notice who Jesus said the disciples must first take this message to in verse 6. He said, Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- The lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim, the kingdom of heaven has come near. Okay, so He says you've got to go to the lost sheep of Israel.
- Now, by the way, when He says that, He doesn't mean that there are some people in Israel who are lost and you must go find them. No, He means that all of Israel are lost sheep. He's describing the whole nation of Israel as lost sheep, which in fact the prophets for hundreds of years had been saying they are.

And that is actually a profound thought, that Israel were the lost sheep. Because, think about it, of all the nations in the world, Israel were the one nation who shouldn't have been lost.

They knew who the real God is. All the other nations, the pagans, the Gentiles, they were chasing after idols. They had no clue. But Israel had been exposed to the true God and His truth.

[3 : 51] He had revealed it to them. They had the Scriptures. They had the Bible. And so of all the nations in the world, they are the ones that shouldn't have been lost. They knew the Gentiles were lost because they didn't have what they had.

But Israel shouldn't have been lost. And yet Jesus says here they were. He describes Israel as lost sheep. And that's why He says before His disciples even think of going to other nations, which later they would with this message of the kingdom, they need to start here.

Israel first, before anybody else needs to hear this message. It's that important. And so what is the message of the kingdom that is so important and so needed?

Well, it's a message about a king who has come to rule. That's what Jesus means in verse 7 when He tells them, Proclaim, the kingdom of heaven has come near.

That's the message in summary. It's a message that God's rule in heaven, the kingdom of heaven, the rule of God in heaven, has now come to our planet, has now come to earth, to rule people.

[5 : 08] Just as God rules angelic beings and hosts of heavenly beings, that rule now has come and landed on earth and it's going to start ruling people.

And it's a message about who's come to be in charge of our lives. That's what the message of the kingdom is. It's a message that the rule of heaven has come and who it is who has come to be in charge of the lives of human beings.

That's what the message of the kingdom is. That is what the gospel is. If you continue to read the New Testament, you look at the book of Acts, you'll realize that is the message the disciples were proclaiming over and over again.

A message about a king. A message about a king who's come to be in charge of our lives. And yet, when I look around today, especially at the Christian church, even before looking at the world, look at the church, I think many Christians don't realize that that is the gospel.

See, I think many Christians think the gospel is just about forgiveness of sins. The gospel in its entirety is that God has sent Jesus to die for us so we could be forgiven of our sins.

[6 : 22] And yet, they don't go further than that. They forget, or maybe they've never heard, that the message of the gospel is actually about a kingdom, a rule that has come to this planet.

And that is why this is as vital a message for us as a church to hear today as it was for Israel to hear and realize, before it even goes out to the rest of the world. Now, of course, forgiveness is wonderful, and it's an essential part of the message of the kingdom.

As we heard earlier, as we were reminded, as Jesus wants us to be reminded of over and over again, that those who come and trust in His blood and body are forgiven of their sins against God.

They're in the clear. They are in right relationship with God. That is an essential part of the gospel because without that, you can't be part of the kingdom. But that is not the whole gospel.

That is not the whole message. And the problem with people who think it is, think that the gospel is just about me being forgiven and being in right relationship with God, and that's where it ends, when you think that, and the problem with people who think that is that they're actually all still living under their own rule.

[7 : 40] They're just forgiven, or they think they are. But they're still in charge of their lives. You see the problem? If the gospel is limited to a message of forgiveness, wonderful as that is, if that's all it is, people will still live their own lives, their own ways, chasing after their own goals, and know, okay, well, I'm forgiven.

I can just go to church on Sunday and make sure, you know, that I say the prayers and I get forgiven again, but in my week, I'm going to carry on doing my own thing. That's the problem. When people don't realize what the message of the kingdom actually is, that there is a king who has come to rule your life.

In other words, people, and I know people do, they take the benefits of the gospel without the obligations that come with it. It's like, imagine you get a new job, and it's a great job, and with it, you get a whole lot of perks.

You get a company car, and you get a budget to spend on the things you need to for your job. But imagine then that you, you actually took the car, and you took the budget, and you just used it for your own personal use, and you never used it for what it was given to you to do.

Well, I think that's how we can take this message of forgiveness. We can take it and say, I'm forgiven. I'm in right relationship with God. We can take the benefits of Christianity, and then carry on using it for our own lives, and where we want to go, and what we want to do with our lives.

[9 : 13] To live under our own rule. And I know this is true, because I have the tendency to do that as well. Nobody likes to be ruled.

We all want to be in charge of our own lives. Even when we hear the gospel, we still, you know, deep down inside, it's a part of sinful humanity. It's our instinct to want to run our own lives.

Exactly what Israel did. That's why Jesus called them lost sheep. If you look in the Old Testament, where the prophets called them lost sheep, it's because they still wanted to live the way they thought was best.

They didn't want to submit to rule. No one likes to be ruled. We want to live our own way. By nature. That's why we need to hear this message. And yet, you know what?

We don't seem to, even though we want to live our own way, and we want to, we want to chase our own goals. Each of us. We've got goals in life. We've got what we want to do.

[10 : 15] And we live our lives chasing after those things. We want to be kings of our own life. And yet we don't realize how bad we are at that. You know?

We don't realize how, we fail to actually go where we need to go with our lives and do what we need to do with our lives. We still think we're the best qualified to be in charge of our lives.

It reminds me, actually, of when I was in preschool. I don't have a lot of memories of preschool, but this is one that I do have. There was a day where they brought go-karts to our preschool.

Motorized go-karts. It was an exciting day. Okay. And they set up a track. I still remember the day, clearly in my mind. Because it ended with all the kids laughing at me.

And maybe that's why I remember it. I'll tell you why, though. Because they set up these go-karts, and the older kids were allowed to drive the go-karts. They were introducing us. It was the first time these kids had driven go-karts. Preschool kids, right?

[11 : 17] But the younger kids, they could sit and get driven around, and it was very exciting. And the older kids could try it out themselves. Now, I was one of the younger kids, but I wanted to drive one of these go-karts.

And I nagged and nagged. I said, can I please, can I please, can I please drive? And so they were like, okay, let him drive one circuit around the track. I got into this thing. I pressed the accelerator, and boom, I hit the tires in the side.

And I didn't know how to operate this thing. And I just carried on hitting the tires until they said, okay, get out. And all the kids laughed at me. Okay, I really wanted to be in control, but when I was given the opportunity to, I didn't know what to do with that control.

Do you see what I'm trying to illustrate? That's exactly what we do with our lives. We really want to be in control of our lives, but when we're given the opportunity to, we just hit into barriers. We don't know where to go. We don't know what to do with it.

That is the nature of humanity. We don't know where to go to find real life. We don't know how to use the lives we've been given.

[12 : 26] And that is why the message of the kingdom is so vital for us. It's a message about someone who has been given to you who can take you to real life if you submit to him. And it's also a message about where to find real life and how to find real life.

Because no matter how much we might try to put up the impression that our lives are fine and me in control of my life is doing fine, if we step back and we look at our lives with us in control, they're really not fine.

But we don't like to admit that because that humbles us. We're too proud to admit that our lives are not what they should be if we're in control. But there is a way to go to where real life can be found if we submit to this king.

That's why I notice that his message of the kingdom was accompanied by signs of life to show people that this is where life can be found in this kingdom.

Look at verse 8. He said, well from verse 7, As you go, proclaim the kingdom of heaven has come near. And then together with this message, verse 8, Heal the sick.

[13 : 39] Raise the dead. Cleanse those with leprosy. Drive out demons. You see, so the message is that not just has a king from heaven come to rule human beings, but he's a king who can lead you to real life, to undo the curse that messes up your life, if you submit to his rule.

He's a king who can take you to life that you can't find by yourself if you're in charge of your life. That is why, that's why I need this message of the kingdom.

I need more than just to hear that I'm forgiven. I need to hear that there is a king who can be in charge of my life. We all do. I need that king.

I need that king because I know I'm a lost sheep. I don't know where the green pastures are. I don't know where the right paths are. I need someone else to drive.

And that's exactly what Jesus has come to do. To be my king. To give me someone who I can swear allegiance to and bow the knee to and live for instead of living for myself.

[14 : 53] And I know that that goes against every fiber in our rebellious beings, but let me tell you, for those of us who have, since I did that, since I submitted to this king to be in charge of my life instead of me, it feels so right.

It feels so right for me not to run my own life, but for this king, this God who made me to be the ruler of my life, I realized when I became a Christian that I am not meant to be the king of my life and neither are you.

That's the message of the kingdom. A king has now come to rule your life. And it's the most important message that we could hear.

And that is why next we see in our passage, it's a message that must be freely available to all people. It's such an important message for this world that the kingdom has come, the king has come to rule, that it's a message that must go far and wide and it must be freely available to all people.

Notice as we go on from the second half of verse 8, that Jesus insisted His disciples don't charge any money for their ministry.

[16:07] Did you notice that? Let me read again from the end of verse 8. Freely you received, freely give. Don't acquire gold, silver, or copper for your money belts.

Okay, so He sent these disciples and one of the instructions He gave them was don't charge for your work. Don't charge for your ministry. And the thing is, with their ministry, I mean, look what they're doing.

Healing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing those with leprosy. It would have been a great opportunity to raise funds. It would have been a viable way to get money and people would have paid.

But Jesus said, the disciples should give for free what they've received for free. There's a guy called Edward Gibbon.

I don't know if you've heard of him. He wrote a very famous book. He was a historian. He wrote a book called The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire. He wasn't a Christian. But one of the things that struck him as he studied the history of Rome is the growth of Christianity in the first three centuries and how it eventually took over the Roman Empire.

[17:19] And it was from a band of like 12 men. And it grew to take over the most powerful empire in the world. Now, he was, as an historian, he was like, how did this happen? Now, he's not a Christian, but he observed this.

And I quote from his book, this is why, according to him, one of the world's most famous historians, why Christianity grew so fast. He said, It became the most sacred duty of a new convert to diffuse among his friends and relations the inestimable blessing which he had received.

That's why Christianity grew. Because it became the sacred, the most sacred duty of a new convert to share with those around him the inestimable blessing which he had received.

Christians could not keep to themselves what they had received. That's how the church grew. And that's what should happen today as well. It's what should happen for all true Christians.

We have an obligation to share what we've received. We can't keep it to ourselves. If we realize the value and the blessing of what we've received, we know we can't keep it to ourselves.

[18:31] We must diffuse among our friends and relations the inestimable blessings which we have received. Like these disciples that Jesus sent out, he said, go.

And he said to them, go. And that word in the original is depart. Leave what you're used to. Go to where you're not used to going and make this known. It's that important.

Because you received it freely, you must give it freely. Make it available to those who need to hear it.

And that is the message to us today. To make the message we've heard about this kingdom available to those who still need it in our lives. And so think about the people in your life who need to hear this message.

Who are lost without it. who are still trying to run their own lives and still hitting the rubber barriers and they don't know why. Maybe they're pretending that they're not.

[19 : 38] But of course, you know, ultimately you hit the ultimate barrier of death. Which we can't combat as kings of our own lives.

Now think about those people who are heading for that in your life, that God has put into your life. Is this message about a king freely available to them?

Is it accessible to them through you? Are you going out of your comfort zone to talk to them about this king who has come, Jesus, and to give them what you've received?

Or are you keeping it to yourself? Because you see, the king's people don't hide their king from the world. And we can't afford to for the sake of our friends and for the sake of our family members.

We can't afford to keep him to ourself because of the next thing we see in this passage and that is that the message of the kingdom demands a response. Have a look from verse 10.

[20 : 48] Look what Jesus says to his disciples. Don't take a traveling bag for the road or an extra shirt, sandals, or his staff for the worker is worthy of his food. Now let me just pause there.

What was going on is he just said to them don't charge for your ministry and now they're going but okay but how will we be supported in our ministry? And that's what he's now going to answer.

He's saying you don't need to support yourself, you will be supported. Just like ministers today. Just like those who enter full-time ministry today. They don't go in for the money.

If they do, please don't employ them. If that's their... It's just... If you're in it for the money you're in the wrong career anyway. But ministers of the gospel, full-time ministry workers, freely give what they've received but when they do that Jesus promises them too that they will be supported.

How? Well, let's read on from verse 11. When you enter any town or village find out who is worthy and stay there until you leave.

[21 : 55] Greet a household when you enter it and if the household is worthy let your peace be on it but if it is unworthy let your peace return to you. If anyone does not welcome you or listen to your words shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town truly I tell you it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the lands of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Okay, so what Jesus is saying here what we realize about this message of the kingdom is when it comes into the world people now need to pick a side because of this message.

Now that the kingdom has come now that God's rule is here everybody needs to pick a side. For Jesus or against Him? For this King or against Him?

Or as Jesus puts it worthy of Him or unworthy of Him? Those are the words He uses. But what's interesting do you see what marks out the people who are worthy who receive this message?

How do you know someone is worthy? Someone is for this King? Well they support the mission to make Him known. They're the ones who house the disciples. They're the ones who support and feed the disciples.

[23 : 09] They're the ones who are the King's people. And they're the ones who receive the disciples' peace. You see what Jesus said? He said to them if they take you in then you may give them your peace.

But if they don't then don't. And what He means by that is they may announce to that household you are now at peace with the King because you are supporting the King's messengers.

And that's how you know someone has truly received this message of the Kingdom. In the New Testament the Apostle Paul over and over again he writes to Christians who have received this message of the Kingdom and he calls them partners in the Gospel because he knows that and he writes a lot about the people who support his work in making this known.

And that's how he knows that they are the King's people. Wherever he goes he finds the King's people and they will support him. That's how you know someone's truly received the Gospel is that they become involved in the work of making it known to others.

And so the question that I want to ask you this morning is not do you believe the message of the Kingdom it's how are you involved in making it known to others? How are you involved in the Kingdom work?

[24 : 29] You know giving towards the Kingdom is not just a voluntary option. In the New Testament it's an obligation of Christians to contribute towards this great work this most important work.

Now doing that just like any other Christian service or obligation does not make you a member of the Kingdom but it shows that you are a member of the Kingdom.

Do you support the Church? Do you give to the Church? To God's work? Do you contribute your resources your money or your time towards what God is doing in the world?

Are you making sacrifices that show that you think this is the most important work on the planet? Because I mean the thing is we spend our money on what we think is important don't we?

If we think entertainment is important we'll spend all our money on that. If we think eating healthy is important we'll spend our money on that. If we think you know removing plastic from the oceans is important which it is we will spend our money on that.

[25 : 43] We will spend our money I can if I got your bank statement I could see what the priorities of your life are. Okay? We spend our money on what we think are most important in our lives. If we think our children are most important we'll spend all our money on them.

We spend our money we spend our time on what we think is important. Do you think this work is important? Do you think it's the most important work in the world? Because look what happens to those who don't who have no time or not willing to spend resources on these visiting apostles and this message look what happens to them from verse 14 If anyone does not welcome you or listen to your words shake the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town truly I tell you it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Now I know that sounds pretty harsh right? But we need to understand why Jesus says that because when you ignore the king's messengers you are ignoring the king himself just like that story we heard from 1 Samuel about Nabal remember that Janice read it for us the king's messengers king David's messengers came to Nabal and they greeted him and all nice to him and they asked for his support and he's like who's David?

No man this is my stuff I'm not going to give it away to you he rejected the king's messengers didn't see the importance of them which meant he rejected the king and it did not end well for him you can read on that story in your own time but that is also why for those who ignored the apostles here they were told to shake the dust from their feet now that's an interesting and rather weird thing to do to wash their feet when they leave a town that rejected them or a house that rejected them but it had a symbolic prophetic meaning actually for for Jews it became habitual for when they were in traveling in Gentile territory and they entered again the land of Israel they had to wipe all the Gentile dust from their feet so that none of the paganism entered into Israel and so for Jesus to tell his apostles to do this to Jews to Jewish towns what he's saying is that the Israelites who reject their king are no longer part of Israel they've become like Gentiles and they are liable for judgment just like the pagans

Sodom and Gomorrah actually more so because they should know better that's what that means but forget the Israelites for a moment you've heard the message of the kingdom what are you going to do with that either you're going to realize how much you need this king to rule your life and you're going to come under that rule and you're going to receive his peace and get involved in his work or you're going to ignore that king you're going to keep living your own way but let me tell you that's not a good idea it wasn't a good idea for Nabal it's not a good idea for you and so I pray and I will be praying as I pray for you often I will be praying in response to this passage that you are one of those who submit to that king that you know his peace that you support the work he's given us to do and you make the message of the kingdom available to others let's pray that we will be people like that

[29 : 41] Lord we thank you for this inestimable blessing we have received in being part of your kingdom with this hope of life after death and the knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of glory in a restored creation we thank you for all these things but help us not to forget our obligations as the king's people help us at st mark's to be people who prioritize the message of the kingdom and making that message known to the people around us Lord will you rule us and will you make us joyful and submissive servants to the king who loves us who died for us and who can live and run our lives much better than we can in Jesus name we pray amen