

King Jesus and the Gospel

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Date: 29 March 2026

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[0 : 00] So Matthew chapter 4, we're going to be reading from verse 18. While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

And he said to them, follow me and I'll make you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in the boat with Zebedee, their father, and many of their nets.

And he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

So his fame spread throughout all Syria. And they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures and paralytics.

And he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis and from Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan. This is the word of the Lord.

[1 : 18] Thanks be to God. All right. Now, if you could hear Jesus, right, preach the gospel to you, what do you think he would say to you?

Got the question? If Jesus was to preach the gospel to you right now, what do you think he would say to you? Now, I'd like you to talk to the person next to you and pretend you're Jesus and or not, I don't know, but talk to the person next to you and consider that what he would say.

If he was to preach the gospel to you. If Jesus was sitting next to you and was to tell you the gospel, what would he say to you? All right. Off you go. Okay.

Okay. I asked myself that question this week. And I'm going to just challenge you a little bit.

And my feeling is, right, that it's probably not what you just said to the person next to you. All right.

[2 : 49] Let's see how we go with that. Let me tell you what I'm trying to do when I'm preaching. I'm trying to make clear what God says in his word, right? This part of God's word this morning particularly.

That's the first thing. And the second thing I'm trying to do when I'm preaching is to help us align our whole lives in accordance with that clear word.

Right? That's what I'm trying to do when I'm preaching. To live in accordance with the gospel that Jesus preached. And it's a pretty big task, I know, for myself.

And yet, it's as we do that, right, that we are equipped to live in this world and to align our expectations, right, of the Christian life with reality.

And when we do that, we find freedom, we find joy, we find hope. Right? Now, I'm not aiming when I'm preaching to give life hacks.

[3 : 49] How to make a shortcut here and a shortcut there to get the best out of life now. That's not what I'm doing when I'm preaching. I'm aiming to set our hopes on bigger things that actually will then bring us in alignment with God's word.

Right? Right? And as we do that, our Christian life will be consistent with what God promises. And so we won't be disappointed with God when things happen that we thought we didn't expect to happen.

Right? It will help us to face the daily grind of life. It will help us face the stress of family. It will help us to face the uncertainties of what the future holds.

It will help us to face the way we conduct ourselves in every relationship as we live with that bigger picture in mind.

Which brings us to Matthew chapter 4. So here in Matthew chapter 4, we're seeing Jesus is by the Sea of Galilee and he calls four fishermen to himself. Here's a bit of a map.

[4 : 57] You might see the first two brothers. Simon, we know Peter, and Andrew's brother. And then the other two brothers, James and John, verse 21. Everyone, these men are going about their business.

They're fishermen or they're fishing or they're preparing to fish. That's what they're doing. They've been strong men. They've been fit men. They also need to have some kind of idea what they're doing and be kind of almost successful fishermen.

Not like most of us who go fishing for a hobby and, well, we go to the fish shop afterwards, don't we? Now, it's not their hobby, but when Jesus finds them and calls them to follow him, without hesitation, they do.

It's not quite a command that he gives them. It's kind of like saying, come along. Come along with me. Breakfast is ready. Or come along. Dinner's ready. Come and enjoy it with me.

That's the kind of the sense of what Jesus is saying. It's a strong invitation. It's an invitation too good to refuse to follow him. And immediately, Simon and Andrew left their nets and followed him, verse 20.

[6 : 05] And immediately, James and John left their boat and their father and their business and they followed him, verse 22. Why would they do that? Why would anyone give up and just start following Jesus?

See, Jesus hasn't been just going for a Sunday walk around the shore of Galilee. Come back to verse 17, chapter 4, verse 17. It's just the one verse beforehand.

From that time, Jesus began to preach, saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He's been preaching.

He's been preaching. He's been preaching the gospel. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. And as we saw last week, this is great news for those living in Galilee.

Back to verse 15, it quotes Isaiah chapter 9, the land of Zebulun, the land of Naphtali, the way by the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee, the Gentiles. The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region in the shadow of death, on them the light has dawned.

[7 : 13] The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, they are the first, weren't they, to feel the heel of foreign armies coming through them. And the land was intermingled with people from many nations that had come in there.

And they were the Gentiles, left without hope, without God in the world. And notice these fishermen here in verse 18 and 20, they don't actually ask Jesus to be their rabbi.

Jesus invites them to be his followers. And immediately they start following him. And when they do, Jesus says he's going to make them fishers of men. He'll change their occupation.

That's what he's going to do. Get the big picture. Instead of catching fish, they'll be catching people. In all the right ways, right? They're going to find where they are and bring them into the kingdom of heaven.

Along with them. Become members of the Galilean fishermen's club, if you like. Which then brings us to the next thing that Jesus does.

[8 : 15] He begins the fishing by teaching. He goes there, verse 23. He went through all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. And healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Jesus goes around fishing for people, for men. Now the synagogue, just so you can give a bit of background on that, is a place where the Jews would gather, primarily to study God's word.

That's what they would do there. Where Jewish law and religious rites would be practiced. That's what happened in the synagogue. Not only that, but interestingly, discipline would be meted out.

And punishments also meted out at the synagogue. Jesus speaks about it in Matthew chapter 10, verse 17. To be in a synagogue, you needed to have a minimum of 10 men.

And you'd also gather regularly of a Saturday. And have the readings from the Old Testament.

You'd then have prayers and singing. And someone would share and explain or something from the scriptures.

[9 : 14] Give something resembling a sermon. And so as Jesus goes from place to place in Galilee, he would have had opportunity to teach God's word in the synagogues. Some smaller, some bigger.

But in the synagogues around Galilee. Matthew tells us what, we're not quite sure what he's taught there. He doesn't tell us that. But we do know that his teaching was different to others.

Because he taught with his own authority, not with the authority of others. Matthew chapter 7. He speaks about that. So he speaks with authority as he goes around teaching.

But on the other hand, Matthew does teach us what he preached around Galilee. Notice what he's preaching.

Have a look at it with me there. Verse 23. He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and proclaiming, that he's preaching, the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

[10:17] He was preaching the gospel of the kingdom. Now the word gospel, as you know, means good news. Not just any good news.

It's momentous good news. It's massive good news. World-shattering announcement of good news. The message itself is intrinsically good. That's the nature of the gospel.

That monumental, momentous good news is about the kingdom. God's good kingdom of heaven. And what it's about, the kingdom that he preaches, is that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Very close. It's news to celebrate. You may have seen the picture of the dancing man at the end of the second. I've got a bit of a picture, I think, up behind me here. It's an iconic picture of the day that Australia rejoiced and World War II was over.

This bloke was dancing down the street in Elizabeth Street in the heart of Sydney. Streamers all around the place, kissing everyone he could possibly kiss. Jubilation. The Allies had won the war.

[11:25] Enemies admitted defeat. They had surrendered. Terms of peace had been signed. Guns put down. The war is over. The last bullet's been fired. Great news.

Great news. The war is over. God's rule is coming very soon. And that is good news.

Momentous good news. It's really, really close. And it's time to repent, we're told in verse 17.

Matthew chapter 1 to 4 has been teaching us that Jesus is the King of the Kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven.

And Jesus is the King of that Kingdom who is no less than God Himself, the Son. And He is the one who will bring the victory over every enemy, every opponent to His Kingdom.

He rules. And here's the answer to the question we began with. If Jesus was to preach the Gospel to us, this is what He would say.

[12:41] You ready? The Kingdom of Heaven is near. If Jesus was to preach the Gospel to us, He would say, the Kingdom of Heaven is near.

God's victory over all those who oppose His rule is very, very close.

His rule over Israel is very, very close. But not just Israel, His rule over all the world.

Isaiah chapter 9 last week we saw, is very, very close. And the ruler of this Kingdom is no one less than God Himself.

When Jesus preaches, His announcement is of earth-shattering importance and it's great news.

When Jesus preaches, His announcement is of earth-shattering, incredibly important news.

[13:49] He's not telling people about how to live their best life now. He's calling them to stop living their own way now, repent from living for themselves and start living for Him.

To love Him and then love their neighbours as their selves. The Gospel, the good news, is not about me. The Gospel, the good news, is about the Kingdom of Heaven.

And that is for all people in all the world. And then we get a glimpse, right, of what that Kingdom will look like.

We see Jesus healing people. Do you see it there? Remember that Jesus began preaching the Kingdom when He heard that John had been arrested. Back in verse 12 of Matthew chapter 4.

And when John the Baptist was arrested, John himself was concerned, right, that he might have got things wrong. Oh, Jesus, are you really the King of the Kingdom? Are you really the Messiah?

[14:53] Could I have got it wrong? I told everybody you were, but really is it you? Come to Matthew chapter 11 with me. Matthew chapter 11, turn a couple of pages. Matthew chapter 11, chapter 11, verse 2.

Matthew chapter 11, verse 2. When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him.

Right? Get the picture. John's in prison. He's got some disciples of his own. He sends them to ask Jesus a question.

Jesus, are you the Christ?

Is the Kingdom coming? Are you the one we've been longing for to come? Verse 4. The disciples ask Jesus a question and Jesus gives him the answer.

[16:00] Go and tell John what you see and hear. Look at this. Verse 5. Back to Matthew chapter 4.

Matthew chapter 4 is the things that Jesus did.

But the things that Jesus spoke about there in Matthew chapter 11 are a summary of Isaiah 35. What was written 700 years earlier, promising to return to the land of Israel and to restore the Kingdom of Israel.

But life's shifting horizons, lifting horizons, you know, horizons, you can draw down the road there. He speaks about a time far off, Isaiah chapter 35. So have a look at the things that Jesus has done there in chapter 4.

Alright? He brought them sick. Various diseases, pains, oppressed by demons, seizures, paralytics and healed them.

[17:19] Back to Isaiah 35. Come back to Isaiah 35. Isaiah, Jeremiah. Isaiah 35. Pick it up, verse 3.

Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Isaiah 35, verse 3. Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, Be strong, fear not.

Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you. And then verse 5. The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. And then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. And burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water.

In the haunt of jackals where they lie down, the grass will become reeds and rushes. And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the way of the holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it.

[18:26] It shall belong to those who walk on the way. Even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come upon them. They shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing.

Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, and shall obtain gladness, and joy, and sorrow, and sighing shall flee away. The things of Isaiah 35 are happening when Jesus brings in this kingdom, as preached in the gospel.

It's in-breaking. It can't help but come when Jesus is doing his work. It's a foretaste of the kingdom. As Jesus walks around Galilee, the kingdom of God's breaking in all around him.

Every disease is healed, not just some. Nothing's beyond his ability to heal. When Jesus casts out demons, it demonstrates that Satan and his agents have no place in the kingdom of heaven, the rule of God.

The one who led the world into sin has been driven out as the kingdom of heaven is coming in. There's no resistance that can stand against him.

[19:38] The time of great blessing has come in Jesus. And his fame then, back to Matthew chapter 4, where his fame spreads throughout the whole land. From the back blocks of Galilee, people come to him from all over the place.

Have a look at this map here. All over the region of Israel, and Syria up to the north, and Judah, Judea down south, and the Jordan across to the west, and to the capital cities, that's those ten cities. A region of ten cities probably made up of Gentiles. They're coming from a radius of about 200 kilometres to Jesus. There's a fair way on foot, or horseback, if you're lucky.

All coming to Jesus. Can you imagine it? Can you imagine what it would be like? To have people coming from Ballina down the south coast, on the north coast of New South Wales, walking to St Lucia to hear about Jesus.

Or people walking from Noosa down to St Lucia to hear Jesus preach. It's that kind of radius we're talking about, people coming to hear him.

[20:46] Because they'd heard the amazing things he was teaching, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven was near. And hearing that as the preaching of the kingdom is coming, there's people being healed, left, right and centre, every disease being healed.

Jesus, famous, crowds are coming to him, searching for him, following him. Some amazing things are happening in Galilee. So prior to his death and resurrection, the gospel that Jesus preaches is the good news of the kingdom.

The kingdom of heaven is coming. The reign of God is near. Calls for a response. Repent it and believe it. So let's have a look at the gospel then.

The kingdom of God is at hand. In Matthew chapter 4 verse 11 to 25. Clarity is good for us all, isn't it? Really? It really is good for us all. Without clarity, people are likely to have misunderstandings of expectations.

What's to be done? What we're expecting to be done? Why is it being done? And if expectations don't match reality, you get confusion. So clarity is important.

[22 : 00] So let's work at clarifying what the gospel is and what the gospel isn't. The word gospel means good news, momentous good news. And the momentous good news is that Jesus is announcing in Matthew chapter 4 is this, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And he is Lord. He is the king of the kingdom of heaven. And because the kingdom of heaven is at hand, it's time for everybody and everywhere to repent and believe it. That Jesus is Lord. God is an undeniable eternal truth.

And that is good news. Light has come. Those living in the shadow of death, hanging over them, right? You and I need no longer live in that gloom.

The good news is intrinsically good news. And the kingdom has been established now. We don't live before the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We live after the death and resurrection of Jesus. So Jesus went to the cross and rose again. And Jesus was crowned king of the kingdom of heaven.

[23 : 07] Matthew chapter 28 verse 18. Jesus came and said to them, All authority has been given in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So go and make disciples.

God raised Jesus to life again. The kingdom of heaven has been established. And the father has made him the king of the kingdom. And it's the resurrection of Jesus that guarantees that the kingdom of God has come.

And yet, all the blessings of the kingdom are still yet to come. Our resurrection from the dead. When we get new bodies, freed from every effect of sin.

Sickness, disease, paralysis, cancer, blindness, lameness, lewdness, seizures, and every other malady that comes that has infested mankind. We're still looking forward to that full taste of the blessing of life in the kingdom to come.

And so now, because Jesus has been raised as Lord, he commands everyone everywhere to repent. Acts chapter 17 verse 30 to 31. Because he's fixed a certain day on which he will judge the world by a man.

[24 : 20] In righteousness by a man. And he's pointed that and he's given assurance of this by raising him from the dead. That is the day when the kingdom of heaven comes.

And our experience of it will be in it forever and ever and ever. So if Jesus was to come here this morning and preach the gospel to us now, after his resurrection, he would say something like this. You ready? I am the Lord of heaven and earth. That's what Jesus would say to us. I am the Lord of heaven and earth.

I am the King of the kingdom of heaven that has come and is coming soon. Repent and believe that good news. I'll say it again.

If Jesus was to sit here this morning and tell us the gospel, now, he would say, I am the Lord of the kingdom of heaven and earth. I am the King of the kingdom of heaven that has come and is coming fully soon.

[25 : 33] Repent and believe that good news. That's what he would say. But he wouldn't stop there. All right? He would go on and tell us what this repentance involved.

If you submitted to him as Lord. If you rely on my death and resurrection to heal you, to deal with your sin. And I'll forgive you.

And give you a new life in the kingdom of heaven that lasts forever. Brothers and sisters, the gospel is not first and foremost about me. The gospel of Jesus is about Jesus and his kingdom being established.

And while ever we think the gospel is about us, right? We will be having a real disappointing experience of the Christian life.

Our expectations won't align with reality. But you're going to say to me, you ready?

[26 : 37] You're saying to me, I thought the gospel was that Jesus died for our sins so I could be forgiven. Yeah? That's what you're going to say to me.

And I would say, yes and no. Right? That is good news. Don't get me wrong.

But it's not the gospel that Jesus preached. Is it? That is what Jesus made possible.

That's what Jesus made possible. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the way that God saves people, qualifies them to be in the kingdom of heaven.

But that is what we would call, you ready for it? That's what we would call the atonement. It's good news.

[27 : 43] Don't get me wrong. It's good news, indeed. But good news of a different kind. Right? The atonement is the means by which we can enter the kingdom of heaven.

The atonement is how God made us at one with him. The atonement is the way that God made peace between us and him. The atonement is the way that he brings an end to the war between me and him and you and him and the world and him.

Right? The atonement is the way that we are made right with God. The atonement means, is the means by which our sins are dealt with so that we become citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

It's good news for the Jew. Right? It's good news for the Gentile. It's good news for me. It's good news for you. It's good news for the world. But it's the atonement.

It's not the gospel. Jesus' mission in life was to go to the cross and there by his death and resurrection fulfil the Old Testament promises of defeating death and bringing new life and writing a new covenant.

[29 : 04] And so opening the way for people to enter the kingdom of heaven. Romans chapter 10 verse 9. Are you ready? We are saved by believing in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead and confessing Jesus is Lord with our mouth.

Those who do so are saved and rescued from the wrath of God when Jesus returns. We're forgiven for our sins by the death of Jesus in our place for our sins.

For our rejection of the righteous rule of God and then brought into the kingdom of heaven. Now that's fantastic news. Right? Wonderfully good news for the world to hear.

But the gospel is not first and foremost about me. The gospel is not an earthly insurance policy. Let's get this right.

The gospel is not an earthly insurance policy that I take out, file in the drawer and then forget about and pull out when I die. Go, oh, I believe the gospel. The gospel is the good news that Jesus is Lord of heaven and earth of the coming kingdom of heaven.

[30 : 21] 1 Corinthians chapter 15 speaks about Jesus being granted. We sung about it in Philippians, the Lord is the highest place. But he has to be Lord to be saviour.

Right? Now for some, what I've been preaching may be nothing new. For others, what I'm preaching this morning may be very, very unsettling.

And I hope it is. Right? Because it requires you to have a change of mind. And me to have a change of mind. To be absolutely clear, Jesus is Lord before he can become saviour.

Right? He must be our Lord to be our saviour. It has to be that way, else we're going to be continually frustrated by our experience of Christianity.

Jesus is Lord. He's the one we need to submit to. We must obey. After all, he's the king of the kingdom. If we don't, we sin. Right? But he's not only Lord.

[31 : 27] Right? He's the one and only saviour of mankind. Now, if we only ever serve him as Lord, then we will move into legalism and moralism.

Becoming modern day Pharisees. Looking down on others. Right? Putting ourselves, putting ourselves, some way, much better than them.

Or, we can be in despair how sinful I've been and try hard to make up for what I've done.

My wrong I've done. And so, end up being in works righteousness trying to please God by what I do. However, because he is now the king of the kingdom and Lord and God, he's done everything that God promised and required so that we could be forgiven for our sins.

So, we could be saved from our sin and the wrath of God by submitting to him as Lord and relying on his death for our salvation. But, if we only ever want him as our saviour without him being Lord, then I'm afraid to say, with all respect, you actually haven't got the gospel.

[32 : 57] Those who only have Jesus as the get out of jail free card, a heavenly insurance policy, have a fundamentally wrong understanding of sin. If you want him only as saviour, well then that leads to a life of licentiousness and a false gospel.

Having Jesus Lord changes everything and affects everything in our lives. It's the foundation upon which Christianity is rightly built.

God's sake, we have to meet these, we've met these first four fishermen who became followers of Jesus and he called them to follow him and they did.

And being called in the kingdom changed everything for them, everything for them and like them, those who are followers of Jesus have been called into the kingdom of heaven and like them, all believers are disciples of Jesus.

He is our Lord and so he has a certain hope of being in the kingdom of heaven with him and that will shape our whole lives. Every decision we make or it should, every priority we have or it should or every aspiration that we have or it should, for what we want for our kids or we should want for our kids, what we want for our nation or should want for our nation, for what we want for ourselves, what we want for our neighbours, we want them to be in the kingdom of heaven because not to be in the kingdom of heaven means they're shut out of God's kingdom forever and not eternity and they do not give Jesus the honour as Lord that he deserves.

[34 : 42] This reality of Jesus being Lord of the kingdom is going to be expressed in our love for God himself. Nothing he asks us to do will be too great a sacrifice.

Expressing our love for God and his word, we will treasure his word because by it we know the realities of the world and the universe and he reveals his mind to us and how it is to live in this world. Expressing our love for one another as we joyfully care for each other in all kinds of practical physical ways and for by the way the world will know that we're disciples.

I say you guys are different and expressing our love for the lost, those who are without God, without hope in the world and who desperately need to submit to Jesus Lord and rely on him as their saviour so they can be welcomed into the kingdom of heaven where Jesus is Lord.

Let's pray. our Father in heaven we thank you that Jesus came and preached that the kingdom of heaven is near and now we know that the kingdom of heaven has been established by his death and resurrection and he is the king, he is the Lord.

We pray in your mercy that you'd continue to delay the final coming of this kingdom so that many might come to believe in him and to submit to his rule and trust in his death for their salvation and be in his kingdom.

[36 : 18] We pray for ourselves that this reality, this priority would shape the way that we live in all that we say and all that we do and we pray in Jesus name, Amen.