

The King's Message, Part 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 11 February 2024

Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0 : 00] Standing for the reading of God's Word. My wife leaned over and asked me if I asked them to sing that song.

And no, I didn't. But it is my favorite Richard Smallwood song. When Daniel and Pakash told me we were going to sing it, it blessed me and to hear you all sing it with me.

Thank you. It wasn't for me, it was for Jesus, so just keep that in mind. It's part of my language.

Jesus, the center of my joy, that's my language.

It's in my speech. It resonates for me. The heart of our contentment, hope for all we do. Jesus.

That's plain and simple.

It's Jesus. Jesus. And so we give him all the glory, all the honor, all the praise. We give him ourselves. Let's pray.

[1 : 07] Father, as we come to your Word now, we pray that you be with us. We pray that you will open our hearts to receive your Word, to receive from you. It is your voice that we long to hear.

It is your will that we hope and long to do, to obey. You saved us that we might follow you.

And we would do that with all of our hearts. So speak to us, O Lord. Speak your Word to our reality.

Speak your Word to the deep recesses of our souls.

Speak your Word to our ambitions, our emotions. Speak to our minds. Correct our thinking. Correct our deepest part.

Correct our hearts. Give us new ones. All this we believe your Word can do. And so we come. Use you, unworthy servant.

[2 : 17] May he preach your Word. In season and out of season. May he preach only your Word. So that your people might hear only your voice.

And not merely mine. In Jesus' name. Amen. Matthew chapter 4, verses 23 to 25. We began looking at this passage last week.

And we'll look at it today as well. Before we move on. Speaking of Jesus. 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, which means ten cities, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan River.

[3 : 31] That is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. Just as a reminder, what was not mentioned was that the Fitzgeralds have been married for, I believe, 60 years.

So I think they have the record. Amen. Amen. I don't see them. So if you see them, just say praise the Lord. Throughout the history of the church here in our country, there have been Christians who have said that the church should only focus on preaching the gospel, preaching the word, the sacrament, and direct evangelism.

It's called the spirituality of the church, this view. The church does not get involved with social, political issues. Its focus is on the salvation and equipping of the saints.

That's what it does, and that's it. Sadly, that view led to a large part of the American church tolerating and perpetuating slavery and slave owning members.

It also ended up supporting Jim Crow laws. Dr. King's letter from a Birmingham jail written to clergy, and one rabbi was an attack against such thinking.

[4 : 59] Sad. But then we have those who's, who seeing the mistake of that first view, put their focus on doing good deeds.

By all means, they would say, preach the gospel. If necessary, use words. For some, that meant the literal message of Jesus was less important.

It didn't even matter, really, if he rose again from the dead. It was all about showing his love, his ethic. So these folk gave themselves to fighting for justice and doing good to their neighbors, but many of them lost the message.

Now, these are two extremes, but still very influential today. I want to suggest to you that our Lord didn't call us to one or the other, but both.

By his example, he calls us to be a kingdom-focused church, to give ourselves to word and deed for his glory and the flourishing of all people, especially of those who trust in him.

[6 : 12] But we must follow him in his kingdom. As we respond to his message of grace and love, we must follow him. This is the revisioning, as you were, as you would, as we call it, of the new, of new city as a kingdom-focused church.

We've been looking, we began looking last time at the fact that the king's message came through his word and his deeds.

And we were focusing on the fact that Jesus, according to our passage, and I read others, I'm not going to review everything, but I read others that suggested to us, that showed us clearly, that Jesus was preeminently a teacher and preacher of the word.

He was not preeminently a miracle worker, but a preacher and teacher of the word of God. He came with a message, which he called the gospel of the kingdom of God.

When we say the gospel, that is really shorthand for the gospel of the kingdom. That's what he came. He had a message. He came to give us the word of God, because Jesus is not only the ultimate king, the one who would fulfill all David's line, all David's hopes and dreams, I'm speaking of King David, he was also the ultimate prophet.

[7 : 41] The prophet is one who speaks for God. And Jesus comes as the prophet. And in a way that was so unique, because the prophets of the old covenant, including John the Baptist, came as those who were giving the word, and they gave it.

Jesus comes as the word made flesh. He comes as God to bring us the message of God. That's all together. That's a new ball game.

God comes. God comes. And he comes to make sure that we grasp the message. That God is speaking.

He has promised that he would create a new covenant, a covenant that would be better than the old covenant, which his people broke. A covenant that would not be on tablets of stone, but would be written on the tables of our hearts.

A new covenant that would cause us to be full of his spirit, so that we are moved from the inside out to obey God, to follow him.

[8 : 59] And because of that, the apostles were preachers. Sure, miracles, but they were preachers, and teachers of the word of God, all throughout the book of Acts.

What do you see them doing? Preaching and teaching, constantly preaching and teaching the message of the gospel of the kingdom.

It is striking that when Paul writes in Colossians 3.16, he says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, not poorly.

Richly. Richly. Be full of the word. Be rich. Not on welfare, rich.

Bill Gates rich on the word of God. And how does that play out? He says, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, all wisdom.

[10 : 01] And then he goes, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Notice what he does.

The teaching, the dwelling of the word in us, exploding us, leads us to teaching the word and singing the word.

One of the things that frustrates me with Christendom is some of our music, not ours, thank God, but some of the music I hear on the radio, Christian music, is so void of the word of God.

Isaac, please, somebody, go to Sunday school or something, man. Learn the scriptures before you write music. Okay. He's gone to meddling.

He's not preaching anymore. He's meddling in people's business. Hurry along. I've got to move on. Keep moving. With thankfulness in your heart. It's striking.

[11:10] Okay, I got to, forgive me, but it's striking. As I travel, me and Sandy and my girls, we get to travel here and there and we always visit churches. It is striking that more and more you see a certain design.

Contemporary churches, black curtains, black floor, incredible lighting.

What does that look like? The theater. What do we call this area up here?

A stage. And the preaching of the word? Give us less and less. Or give us happy sermons.

Preach happy things. Tell me about my best life now. How I can have a happy marriage in five easy steps. How Jesus is going to make me the head and not the tail. I'm not making this stuff up.

[12:16] You know I'm telling the truth. Minimizing of robust, robust thinking and engaging and praying the word of God.

Singing the word. Giving, letting the word just infect everything. Jesus came teaching and preaching the word of God.

The gospel of the kingdom. We are to be full of the word of God. Not entertainment. Full of the word. But notice, the text says he came teaching and preaching.

Teaching, if you want to think of teaching, teaching, he explained the passage. He used parables. He used stories. He wanted to explain the word of God.

We're going to see this as we move into the next part of this series in Matthew 5. He's explaining the word to the people, to the understanding. But he was also a preacher. And they're very similar.

[13:19] The word preaching, the word for proclamation here in that text, he came proclaiming, proclaiming, is the word preaching. Now, preaching has to do with a message.

A particular message from the word of God in context. But the idea here is that of a herald. That's the idea that the passage is communicating to us by that word.

This idea of a herald. The herald of that day was a messenger sent from a king. That herald was giving something definite to say. He was given a message, a decree, an announcement of importance from the king.

He didn't get to change the message or try to improve upon it. He had to read it as it was written. He spoke with confidence and conviction because he was delivering what the king gave him to deliver. And by the way, it wasn't a dialogue. The people were expected to listen carefully and govern themselves accordingly because the king had spoken. They respected the herald because he spoke for the king.

[14:31] To disrespect or disregard him was to do so to the king who sent him. And the people owed complete obedience not to the herald but to the king and only obeyed the herald's words as they accurately reflected the king's will.

You see, if the herald altered the king's words, that was not a good situation. He would be subject to the king's judgment. Our Lord Jesus comes and speaks for the father.

father. It's all convoluted in one sense because he's the king of the kingdom but yet he is sent by the father and together they come as it were and in Jesus to deliver a message.

He's the ultimate king who reigns and rules over God's people and all of God's creation and he is the ultimate prophet who speaks for God and he gives a definitive message.

A completely authoritative word because he is the son of God in human flesh. He is the great king and his own herald. But he did have a herald.

[15:54] You know that too. His name was John the Baptist, his cousin. John came with a message but he made it clear that he was not the message. He was not the one who was to come.

He made sure that he pointed back and that there's one coming after me. I'm not even worthy to untie his sandals. And so Jesus comes as the preacher, the preacher, the greatest of preachers to give us a message and then he sent his apostles to do the same thing, bearing his likeness, even performing miracles in his name.

I love what I love what the apostle Paul later writes as he is handing down the ministry to his disciple, a God named Timothy.

And you know what he tells him in 2 Timothy chapter 4? This won't be on the screen so just listen or turn to it in your Bible. Paul says to Timothy, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus.

Do you feel the weight of this? He is laying a divine weight upon Timothy. I'm saying this to you in the name of the Father and the Son, Timothy, who is the judge of the living and the dead and by his appearing in his kingdom and his...

[17:15] Wow! He wants to make sure that Timothy feels the weight by his appearing and his kingdom and his judgment to come. I give you this charge, Timothy.

And what does he say? The first three words he says. Preach the word. Pastor Timothy, what is your role in the church of God?

Preach the word. Now, then he says, okay, let me make this clear. Be ready in season and out of season.

In other words, be ready at all times to preach. We say, be ready to preach, pray, or die at a moment's notice. That's my calling. Be ready to preach.

Then he says, how should... What should your preaching look like? Reprove. Rebuke. That is... That has to do with correcting. Correcting.

[18:17] People... The world is always... The kingdom of darkness is always pushing in. You've got to bring the word. You've got to reprove and rebuke. You've got to correct.

You've got to get in some people's faces, Timothy, with the word. In love, of course. Now, he's not trying to tell them to be a brute or abusive, but this is the calling. This is...

Reprove, reprove, rebuke, and exhort. Encourage them with complete patience and teaching.

Preach with patience because it takes a while for people to get it.

It took you a while, Timothy, and certainly you, Kevin, and teaching. Now, listen to what he says.

For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching.

They will not endure sound teaching, healthy teaching. They won't endure it, he says. But having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions.

[19:19] people who will tell them what they want to hear and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

He said that to Timothy in his day, I tell you today is that day. But whatever, Timothy, preach the word.

when Timothy fell off the scene, he told his disciples to do the same thing all the way down to the day. So, the church, the church is committed to preaching and teaching the word of God.

That was a weak amen, but that's okay. I'm in the book. I don't know where you are. That's our commitment. commitment. We have a message.

We have a message. And if you have a message, it has to be spoken or written. It's not just something you do. It is that. Don't get me wrong. But it has to be spoken. Because if the message is not spoken, no one knows why you're doing what you're doing.

[20:37] I came, I remember we had a, when I was pastoring in the D.C. area, we had a, the Unification Church came into our area and they were trying to get pastors to join them because they were committed to the family.

And they wanted pastors to join them in that commitment to the family and they were trying to, and it was a way of trying to authenticate Reverend Sung Young Moon. And that was obvious and I said that to them when they came into my office.

I said, you know, we think you're a cult. I just told them plain and forth, you consider the cult. And, but what, why the, what was the hook?

We're going to help families. Listen, saints, we believe in helping families, but we have a message. Amen. What differentiates New City Fellowship from helping families and the Unification Church from helping families, or the Mormons from helping families? What differentiates? We may do the same things maybe sometimes.

[21:48] What differentiates? Our message. Amen. The teaching and the preaching of the word shows there's something different going on here.

What's the message? Right. But Jesus didn't just preach, did he? Second, our Lord's kingdom message was also revealed in his deeds. Notice in our passage, I'm moving fast now because I'm, the clock is always chasing after me.

He proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and affliction among the people. He got so famous, they started bringing him to all the sick, those with diseases and pains, oppressed by demons, spiritual oppression, those having seizures and paralytics, and he healed them.

What did this tell us? That Jesus did good deeds of mercy and healing. He brought shalom. He brought peace. He brought well-being to people.

What we have here is the inbreaking of the future kingdom of God into the now. It's not all there yet. It's coming. But Jesus, when Jesus the king shows up, what he does is show us what our ultimate reality is going to be.

[23 : 09] So he begins to, he begins to reverse the curse. And so the heal, he healed, the power of the future kingdom breaks in and people are healed and touched.

Even demons are made subject to him because he's the king of kings and lord of lords and creator and sustainer of all things. Later, he'll feed thousands of people with just a few fish and bread. He'll walk on water. He'll do, he'll raise folk from the dead. Why? Again, the power of the kingdom. When he drives out demons, remember what he'll say in Matthew 12, 28, if it is by the spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

The power of the kingdom, Jesus brings it to bear on the pains and illnesses and issues of our lives. And then he sent those apostles, apostles, uniquely gifted and called to represent him.

And what you see in them, Paul calls it in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, he saw in, we see in them signs of a true apostle. Signs and wonders and mighty works that authenticate their connection with Jesus because everybody thought Jesus was dead.

[24 : 30] and by their ministry they declared he's alive and working in us. And then the apostles taught the church.

Are we to go out to do signs and wonders and miracles? That's God's call. That's not your call. That's God's call. What are we to do? What are we called to do?

Indeed, continually we are told to do good deeds. Preach the gospel and do good. Galatians 6, 10, we're reminded that we're to do good to all people, especially to those of the household of faith.

Ephesians 2, 10, we are told that God prepared in advance for us to do good deeds. In Titus chapter 2 and chapter 3 we're told to give ourselves to doing good.

Not do it, not drive by good deeds, give ourselves to doing good. Give ourselves to bringing the shalom as God would use you to bring the shalom, to bring the peace, to bring wholeness and healing and well-being and flourishing to people around you.

[25 : 45] How do we proclaim the gospel? We preach the message and we do good. Why? Because that's what our Lord did. Do we do it just like Him?

No. But we do it. Because listen, saints, the ultimate good has been done for you. He did the ultimate good deed by living and dying and rising again for your sins.

He did you the best good. And because you've received His best good, He now makes you an ambassador of His goodness. Because you live in another kingdom.

You are citizens of the kingdom of God now. He says, and He says, lastly, follow me because you have a new allegiance. you may be a citizen of the United States of America, but there's a citizenship over that citizenship.

You are now in the kingdom of God. And the king of the kingdom says, follow me. Stop looking at them. I can almost see the Lord going, right here, right here, right here.

[27 : 06] Come on, come on, Andrew, right here. Follow me. That's how He has to talk to me because I got spiritual ADD. Lord, look at that.

That's pretty, ooh, no, He's, Kev, Kev, right here, boy. Follow me. And in following Him, we follow Him and again, proclaiming and doing, proclaiming and doing.

The proclamation empowers the good that we do. The teaching builds us up so that we can do with perseverance. Don't you understand?

Without the gospel in your life, without the word of God constantly building you up, you will give up. You will give up doing. Some, I, every church I've ever been in, I've met folks that, I'm tired, I ain't doing nothing, I ain't doing nothing else.

You just showed that the word of God is not dwelling in you richly. You gotta go back. Follow your faith. Open the book. And once again, let the Lord empower you.

[28 : 13] Let the gospel empower you so that you keep going because it's easy to give up. When Paul told Timothy to preach the word earlier in one of his other letter, he told him, stop being afraid.

Timothy was, he was sick of them, folk. And as he was in Ephesus, he was tired, he was scared and tired. They were running him ragged. And he wanted to quit.

And Paul says, stir up the gift in you. Stir up that work of God that God has put in you. Get up, Timothy. Pastor, Pastor, I can see Timothy, if Timothy was married, I can see Timothy on Sunday morning hiding behind the bed.

And his wife comes in and says, you have to go to church. You're the pastor. That was Timothy. I know that feeling, Tim.

When I get to heaven, we'll talk. Yeah, you got, the word, the message empowers the ministry. The message gives purpose to the ministry.

[29 : 18] Without the message, the ministry gets old. And it gets off track. We have to always bring the ministry back to the message to get it reformed and empowered and strengthened.

But listen, the ministry, the good that we do, also reveals the message. It says, it's real to me. It says, this king of the kingdom is all over me. He's not just a theology. He's real, a person, a being. And so Jesus equips you to do good, to do maximum good. Man, the Lord will have you doing good when you want to do bad.

When you meant to, you meant to say something, oh, the word of God rises up in you. Or you meant to do something and the word of God says, it comes back.

[30 : 18] The spirit of God says, hold it. You remember the word. Don't go there. Don't do that. When you, when you need wisdom, you're trying to make a decision and, and the word of God rises up. But the spirit is at work.

Brothers and sisters, we need both to be faithful in the kingdom. Word and deed. Always remember what Paul said in Philippians 3.20, our citizenship is in heaven and from it we wait a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen, I, I'm an American. I'm glad to be an American. I love my country. I do. Mess with my country, you mess with me. You're my peeps.

They messed up, but they're my peeps. All right? But that is not my identity. Amen. Amen. Amen. I have another kingdom.

A kingdom that defines me. A kingdom that is eternal. A kingdom that says when America is wrong, you stand with me.

[31 : 29] And America has been wrong quite a bit. Christian nationalism is idolatry. It puts America first even sometimes above the kingdom.

Family, you are a citizen of the kingdom of God. That is where your identity is. Your first loyalty is not, listen, don't you understand? This is what the early church dealt with too. They were in the midst of the Roman occupation.

Christian. The reason they got into so much trouble is because they would not say Caesar is Lord. The Romans had this emperor cult where they worshiped the emperor as a god.

And they said, you must say Caesar is Lord. And the early Christians said, we can't say that. We are good citizens of the empire. Paul says that in Romans 12.

They'd be good citizens. They were good citizens. Romans 13, excuse me. They would be good citizens, but they had a higher citizenship. And so therefore they could not say Caesar is Lord.

[32 : 30] And then that's when they became a threat. They had to go. And so our forebearers were persecuted and persecuted and murdered because when you refuse to give in to a totalitarian regime as a Christian, you are now a threat.

It's happening around the world now. Christians are a threat in China because they refuse to say communism is king.

They want to be good citizens, but they refuse to make the state their god. Family, we're dealing with the same thing here. Not totalitarianism yet.

Who knows? It might come. But we are fighting the battle of making the state Lord. And you know it's happening because how we vote is dividing the church.

Who's in the office is dividing the church. The early Christians worshiped under Caesar. We ain't got nothing like that.

[33 : 47] nothing like that. And Paul told them to respect him. Why? Because he was not in control.

King Jesus was. Your citizenship is in heaven. And when you anathematize or call your brothers and sisters a curse because they vote for a candidate you don't like, you are functioning in another kingdom.

You are functioning in another kingdom. The kingdom of darkness, the kingdom of this world, that kingdom will fight. But for us, no.

Jesus said, follow me. Render unto Caesar, he says, the things that are Caesar and render unto God the things that are God's. And what is God's? Us.

Our hearts. Our soul. Our lives. That's where our hearts go. Brothers and sisters, fear not the election. Fear God.

[34 : 52] Trust in the King of kings and the Lord of lords. That's where your citizenship is. And because of that you can do good in this life. And you must do good. And you will do good if you are full of his message.

Full of his love. Full of the message of the gospel of the kingdom. You will do good. And you will be persecuted. And all I can say to that is amen.

Father, may your word find us when we follow Jesus no matter what. Being ambassadors, declaring his message, doing the deeds that he gives us to do that are good and profitable for all.

May we do that even as we share this message of reconciliation. That you are reconciling the world to yourself in Jesus. May we point people to him as they behold how we love one another and even love them.

In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Everyone, please stand. We will continue to remind ourselves that Jesus is...