

# The Kingdom Of God Is At Hand

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Preacher: Gordon Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, thanks so much to Ian for reading our readings this morning. Our text is going to be taken from the second reading in Mark's Gospel, chapter 1, and at verse 14 to 15.

Now, after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the Gospel of God and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.

And the title for our sermon is taken from that passage that is attributed to Jesus, the words that Jesus spoke. The kingdom of God is at hand.

And hopefully what we'll do is we'll look at what this means to each one of us under three headings. The proclamations, the present, and the plea.

And after a week of celebrating Christmas, it is appropriate for us to pause for a moment and just reflect on the significance of the birth of Jesus.

[ 1 : 08 ] What that means to each one of us today, even what it meant in times past. And as we take our text this morning, and as we go through it, what I want us to look at is the proclamations that were made in times past.

We'll look at some passages in the Old Testament, how they were then fulfilled. And then we'll look at the present and what that means for us.

Present to us can mean different things. And we'll look at it in two different ways. And then finally, we'll look at the plea that comes at the end of verse 15 for us to repent and to believe.

So the first of these proclamations that were made, we can go right back to the beginning in Genesis, just after the fall when God was speaking to the serpent.

We can read there how God made a promise that he would send one born of woman that would bruise the head of the serpent.

[ 2 : 17 ] And he would bruise his heel. And we see here, right at the beginning of the Bible, as soon as man had fallen in the garden, that God sets out his plan and proclaims that there would be one coming.

And then again in Deuteronomy, we see in Deuteronomy 18 and 15, that the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, speaking about Moses.

Moses was one that spoke to God on behalf of the people. And God spoke to Moses, who then spoke to the children of Israel. And as we all know, Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and towards the promised land.

A land that was promised to them from the time that the promise was given to Abram, before they ever even entered into the land of Egypt.

But there was a prophet coming from among their people, and it was the one that they were to listen to, as we see there in the passage that we have before us.

[ 3 : 30 ] And then when we move into Isaiah, there are a number of different proclamations made. It's a passage that many of you have reflected on, whether it be in daily readings over the past number of days, that you'll have heard read in services, that you've maybe attended carol services, that there was a promise made, that the virgin was going to be with child and conceive, and his name would be Emmanuel.

And as many of us know, Emmanuel means God with us. That God was going to send his son, through Mary, to be in this world for each and every one of us.

And then another proclamation that we had read to us, in Isaiah 9, 6 and 7. One that we so often quote, For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Different names that were given for Jesus, when he came, and as he was proclaimed to come. Pointing, as we see in the text here, pointing to the fact, that he was going to sit on the throne of David.

For somebody to sit on a throne, it's an inherited throne, because of the line that they are in the family. And we see here, an appointing to David, that Jesus would come from the line of David.

[ 5 : 25 ] And as we say, we see the different roles that he was going to undertake and perform within this kingdom. And if we had any doubt that this was going to happen, we see there at the end, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The zeal that the Lord had to make sure that this was going to happen. A fervent commitment, as we see that the prophet writes here, that the Lord of hosts was going to make sure that what had been proclaimed was going to come to pass.

And further on in Isaiah, Isaiah 42, we see there, thus says God the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out. If anyone had any doubt as to who it was that was speaking, who it was that was proclaiming, again, we're taking right back to the beginning when the world was created, that it was the Lord who created the heavens, stretched them out to spread out the earth, that was saying that he was going to send one and that he was going to take him by the right hand and he was going to keep him and he was going to make him a covenant for the people.

Give him a, I will give you as a covenant for the people. And then we read, a light for the nations to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison, those who sit in darkness.

Moses led the people out of bondage in Egypt. We see here that one was coming that was going to open the eyes of the blind, was going to take prisoners from the dungeon and was going to take, from the prison, those who sit in darkness.

[ 7 : 17 ] Are we in bondage in darkness because of sin this morning? Are we needing to cry out and recognize that Jesus came for you, that Jesus came for me, that he speaks to us now and as we trace back, as I said with the young ones, the present that I got said from Secret Santa, that we can trace right the way back to the beginning in Genesis that God made a promise that he was going to send one.

And we can see here as we trace through Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, we could go elsewhere that that promise was going to be fulfilled.

And as we read in the passage there, we can understand why the hymn writer was inspired to write, Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness, opened my eyes, let me see, beauty that made this heart adore you, hope of a life spent with you.

Have you seen that beauty this morning? Does your heart adore him each and every day? Do you have the hope of spending eternity with him?

My prayer would be that you do and that you're able to go on as the hymn writer says. So here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God, you're altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.

[ 9 : 02 ] He came as a wonderful counselor. Do we know him as being wonderful to each and every one of us? Then we go into Micah and we see here the proclamation that Jesus was going to be born in Bethlehem.

He was still going to be of the clan of Judah and again we can trace back that David was coming forth and that promise was made and was coming forth.

It was told from the ancient of days and it brings us right up to the passage that we read in Mark. After John was arrested Jesus came into Galilee proclaiming the gospel and saying the time is fulfilled.

We can see as we go through the Old Testament of the promise that is made we can trace the line back and here we have Jesus introduced to us and what he says about himself is the time is fulfilled.

and we have to recognise that this morning that we don't just come at Christmas and celebrate the birth of a baby.

[ 10 : 25 ] The time is fulfilled of a proclamation that was made that one was going to come who was going to be the saviour of the world. Man fell in the garden and God had a plan to reconcile man to himself and it brings us to what that plan is and we see the present and as I said earlier on a present can mean a gift or it can mean the here and now and as we look at that I'd like to first look at a gift and we've already spoken with the young ones about what that gift actually is.

The angels spoke to the shepherds as they were on the hill that night. They came with good news. They came with good news that a baby had been born.

A baby had been born that was going to be a saviour and that baby was Christ the Lord. And a verse that we so often quote John 3.16 confirms that that gift came from God and he gave it out of love and whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

That gift is for whoever hears that message that God sent his son because of love into the world to die for us and whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Your name isn't written there but you could put your name in there where it says whoever. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that if you say your own name because and if you believe in him you should not perish but have eternal life.

[ 12 : 35 ] Can you put your name in that verse this morning and recognize that that gift has been given for you that you can actually say that God sent his son for me and I believe in him and I know that when I believe in him I will not perish but have eternal life.

that gift has been given for whoever believes and again my prayer would be that you would hear that message and that you would know that that gift is for you here this morning if you hear it.

The present here and now the kingdom of God is at hand. What does that mean for us that the kingdom of God is at hand?

We say it is at hand. What does that mean for us? Very often when we use that phrase it's because it's something that's close it's available to us it's accessible it's within reach.

The kingdom of God is close available and accessible to each and every one of us here this morning if we hear the voice of God calling to us.

[ 13 : 59 ] Jesus came with a message a simple message as we see and as we've read this morning. The kingdom of God is at hand and are we hearing and responding to that call?

we might ask ourselves the question what is a kingdom and what makes a kingdom a kingdom?

Well a simple search tells us that a kingdom is fundamentally a territory with defined borders ruled by a monarch a king or a queen who holds supreme authority usually inherited supported by governments laws and citizens creating a distinct national identity and when we see these elements that are there we may ask ourselves what does that mean for us in terms of the kingdom of God?

Well if we move on in the slides there we can see a monarch who read in Isaiah 9 and 6 Jesus came as a prince of peace we see in Luke he will be great and will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give to him a throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob and his kingdom there will know no end or there will be no end we can see right away if a kingdom needs a monarch we have identified who that monarch or who that king is for us what else does a kingdom need there needs to be governance there needs to be laws again the reading that we had in Isaiah we can see there the government shall be upon his shoulders the increase of his government and of peace will be no end and on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to hold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forever more there is governance within the kingdom of God and that governance comes from Christ himself and he will uphold justice and we see that in God himself and why there had to be a sacrifice on the cross that justice had to be served what do we think of a specific territory we can define the territory of Great Britain we can see it on a map but what does the Bible tell us about this territory specific to the kingdom of God it tells us in John 18 my kingdom is not of this world if my kingdom were of this world my servants would have been fighting we see this as the response that John records that Jesus gave to

Pilate when he was being interviewed by Pilate or cross examined by Pilate at his trial my kingdom is not of this world it's a kingdom that he promised as we read in John 14 let not your hearts be troubled believe in God believe also in me in my father's house are many rooms if it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you what a fantastic opportunity to get an insight into what the kingdom of God is well Jesus tells us in one hand that his kingdom is not of this world what he does tell us is that he goes to prepare a place for each and every one of us who trust in him and that in his father's house there are many mansions many mansions prepared for those that he has called to himself and for those of us that hear that call as he calls us and indeed answer how do you get citizenship into a kingdom again we can read what citizenship is about legal membership in a sovereign state granting of rights it's acquired through birth in the country or to citizens can be acquired through descent marriage partnership or naturalization where you apply and you meet certain criteria to be able to pass a test to get citizenship in that country that's not the

case with the kingdom of God there's only one application and as we read in John 3 3 it's acquired through birth you must be born again as Jesus said to

[ 19 : 33 ] Nicodemus truly truly I say to you unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God perfect attendance at church sitting an entrance exam being born to Christian parents doesn't guarantee any entry into the kingdom of God only by coming as an individual and being born again do we actually see the kingdom of God or have the opportunity to see the kingdom of God and this brings us to our final point the plea repent and believe in the gospel each one of us must come and repent repent as individuals not trying to hang on to the coattails of our mother our father our husband or our wife we must come as an individual and as it says in 1st

Timothy 1 15 this saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the foremost as Paul said of himself and many of us may be sitting here this morning thinking that that's me as well I am the foremost of sinners I can't be accepted into the kingdom of God but the fact is as it says here Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners it's a saying that's trustworthy and it's a saying that each one of us must fully accept that Jesus came to save sinners and there's not one of us here this morning that can say that we're not a sinner there was only one man that lived on this earth that was without sin and that was the one that was given to us as a gift that we celebrate at Christmas the man

Christ Jesus he came into the world to save sinners and the plea that he has that Mark recorded Mark doesn't record that Jesus was born and where he was born he just introduces us to Jesus and he gives us Jesus a simple message to believe the gospel that the kingdom of God is at hand and that we must repent and believe and that's for each and every one of us here this morning may be sitting thinking oh well that applies to the person on my right or the person on my left or I wish so and so was here to hear this message it applies to each and every one of us and we must come and believe on him no matter how dark our life may feel no matter how far we may have strayed from God Paul thought that he was the foremost of sinners but even

Paul recognized that Jesus came into the world to save sinners some of you may use daily readings we were reading yesterday sorry on Friday in the truth for life Alistair Begg daily devotions and there was something that we read that resonated with the text that we had before us here and I'll share it with you just now I apologize it's a slightly long quote but I think it's worth sharing there is only one true dividing line between people it's a dividing line between unbelief whether that unbelief manifests itself as hostility or indifference and belief those of us who have heard the christian christmas story countless times who know our old testaments and who are in church Sunday by Sunday are not immune to the indifference that is seen in a lack of joy over the lord and a lack of response to his word when it calls us to change our plans and whoever we are if we won't have Jesus as our king in this life we won't live in his kingdom on the other side of death if you choose to ask Jesus to leave you alone either in your hostility or in your religiosity he will leave you alone forever your response to Jesus has eternal significance look on him who came to die for hostile and indifferent sinners sinners then and allow him sorry look to him who came to die for hostile and indifferent sinners then and allow his great love to soften your heart so that you respond to him in real joy obedient faith today and every day I don't know your individual circumstances do you come here out of a sense of duty is this your first time here that Jesus has ordained for you to be here or God has ordained for you to be here this morning to hear a message from his word as we prayed earlier on God's word has been given to us to direct us on how we may glorify and enjoy him forever and that is the prayer of each and every one of the elders and the minister here that those that come to hear God's word will respond to God's word will know what it is to repent and to believe in Jesus and we'll go out and respond to him as it says there in real joy obedient faith today and every day that we will walk with him recognizing what he has done for us and that we will indeed come repent and believe because as the message is to us this morning the kingdom of God is at hand at hand for each and every one of us we don't know how much time we have here in this world those of us that know and love Jesus as our savior long and look forward to a kingdom that is to come the only promise that we can have is that if we love and trust in Jesus he has promised that he will take us there he has prepared a place for us he has gone before us are we going to accept the greatest gift that has been

given to us that we celebrate at Christmas and acknowledge that Jesus is the king of kings that we seek to be in his kingdom and that we will come repent and believe let us pray that we that we to be and!

[ 27:22 ] !!!