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The Gospel According to Matthew

The King and His Kingdom are Among Us

August 12, 2018

Sermon Text: Matthew 8

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2

Last time we gave this 8th chapter a quick overview, noting Matthew's primary purpose. He is demonstrating that the Kingdom of Heaven has come, that Jesus of Nazareth is the King, and telling us what kind of people are citizens of that Kingdom.

The events recorded here, as well as others in the Gospels, are the very thing the author of Hebrews was speaking of when he wrote:

Heb 2:1-4 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have

heard, lest we drift away from it. (2) For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, (3) how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, (4) while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

The Son of God Himself, the King, has come into this fallen world, bringing with him the power of His kingdom. He gives us a "taste" of what is coming. No disease, no sorrow, no sin, no curse, no death, no devil or demons.

Rev 22:3-5 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. (4) They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (5) And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be

their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

This is particularly interesting to me –

Rev 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

Think of it. There will not be, in any single place in all the New Heavens and Earth, ANYTHING that is fearsome. Nothing that could harm. As much as we might enjoy the ocean, it is a fearful place that requires careful watch at all times. The sea is not user-friendly to man. This is the thing that Matthew is showing us about the King and His kingdom.

When you come to faith in Christ and when He regenerates your heart, you begin to experience the kingdom. You know the King and your life changes so that you increasingly live life as it will be in the New World.

This morning I particularly wanted to focus on this portion of Matthew 8 – the account of the centurion who came to Jesus. Listen to it:

Mat 8:5-13 When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, (6) "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." (7) And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." (8)

But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. (9) For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." (10) When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. (11) I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, (12) while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (13) And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

The Kingdom of God is not the earthly kingdom of Israel, the physical descendants of Abraham. The Jews thought it was and they despised the Gentiles, but they should have known better:

Isa 49:5-6 And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him-- for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength-- (6) he says: "It is too

light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

So this is really what this healing of the centurion's servant is about. Let's ask and answer some questions:

1. Who was the centurion?

He was a Roman soldier. Not a Jew, but a Gentile and on top of that, a member of the hated occupying army!

2. Why was the centurion's statement so remarkable?

"Only say the word and my servant will be healed." Jesus had just said that He would come to the centurion's home and heal his servant. "Only say the word....". And then this incredible statement:

"For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Which elicits Jesus' marveling commendation of the centurion's great faith? Why?

Because this man KNEW who Jesus

was. He knew Jesus was a King. A King with God's own authority so that the power of God was in His *words*. "Only say the word and my servant will be healed." No need to go there. No need to be there. Just, a powerful word, with authority that extends to all parts of the earth. Seeing this, the centurion was awed at the Person of Christ and his own unworthiness. This is genuine faith.

Jesus, as He commends the centurion's faith, uses the opportunity to teach something else about the nature of the kingdom of heaven. Listen again:

(10) When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. (11) I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, (12) while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The earthly nation of Israel, the descendants of Abraham, were simply a physical picture of God's true kingdom. But it is the *spiritual seed of Abraham* who compose the real kingdom – those who believe. Like this centurion even though they come from other nations.

Eph 2:11-13 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-- (12) remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (13) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Rom 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. (29) But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Deu 30:6 And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

See it? This is how Gentiles become the children and heirs of Abraham and thus citizens of the kingdom – *you must be born again.*

Rom 4:11-18 He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith

while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, (12) and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. (13) For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. (14) For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. (15) For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression. (16) That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring--not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (17) as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"--in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. (18) In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told, "So shall your offspring be."

Now, notice the announcement of condemnation Jesus made here toward

“the sons of the kingdom.” Why did He call the Jews that?

Mat 8:12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The following texts help us understand this phrase:

Act 3:25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'

Rom 9:3-5 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. (4) They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. (5) To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

These are all ways of saying that the Jews were “sons of Abraham.” Physical seed of Abraham. As such they were “sons of the covenant.” They had been given “adoption” – ie, “sons.” Just as a son inherits that which his father possesses, so it was with the Israelites and the promises to

Abraham. And yet, the tragedy is that people of such great privilege would end cut off, cast out. Why?

1Co 10:1-14 For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, (2) and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, (3) and all ate the same spiritual food, (4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

(5) Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. (6) Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

(7) Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." (8) We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. (9) We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, (10) nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

(11) Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

(12) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

(13) No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. (14) Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

As we learned in the Sunday class this morning, the visible church continues to be filled with mere “Israelites” whose hearts remain unchanged and unbelieving. They believe and they are reassured that because they are in the visible church, because they have been baptized and spoken certain words, that they are the true sons of the kingdom. But unless they are converted, the kingdom they now believe they possess will be taken from them on that Day.

And so these sober warnings in Scripture such as we looked at last week in Hebrews and now here, spoken by Jesus and the Apostle Paul.

(11) Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. (12) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

I am very, very thankful for this church that the Lord has put us in. I am thankful that we are not like most local churches, and I never want us to be. I don't say this to boast, but to be genuinely thankful that our pews are not filled with people who – like the Jews of Jesus' day – claim to know the Lord but in fact He has never known them.

Do you know how easy it would be to fill these pews? All we would have to do is stop preaching and teaching the very things we are looking at this morning. Instead, we would assure everyone God loves them, God understands them and shows them mercy even if they walk in sin as a habit of life, we tell them that their children are all saved because we put on some children's ministry where the kids are taught to pray to ask Jesus into their heart, baptized, and pronounced saved.... We would never confront sin. We would tell victims of abuse that they must forgive and reconcile with their oppressor because we are all sinners. And we would implement various programs and forums in which we could announce such a “gospel” to the community. In they would come.

I have been a pastor for 35 years now. I have seen the kind of “church” such methods produce – and I never want this church to become such a thing again. If you read the news, you know

very well what inevitably happens when such “churches” are created. One more such mega-church that has dominated the evangelical scene for years has come crashing down. It turns out that the thing was a fraud from day one and the celebrity pastor was and is an evil, wicked, lying user of people.

For all its earthly glory, the Temple at Jerusalem and all of its priesthood and ceremonies and sounding of trumpets, *was not the true kingdom of God.*

Mat 24:1-2 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. (2) But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Here is Mark’s account of that same event:

Mar 13:1-2 And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" (2) And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Do not envy what seems “big” in religion. Look to yourself. Take care that your heart is truly converted, and

is not an evil, unbelieving heart.

Deu 6:13-18 It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. (14) You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you-- (15) for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God--lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.

(16) "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. (17) You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies and his statutes, which he has commanded you. (18) And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may go well with you, and that you may go in and take possession of the good land that the LORD swore to give to your fathers