

The King's briefing for mission

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- [0 : 0 0] Matthew chapter 10. As I said, we're going to have three weeks in this chapter. I suppose the general title would have to be this, Mission That Claims Everything.
- And today we're looking particularly at the first 15 verses, Jesus the King's briefing for that mission. Matthew 8 and 9, remember the last time we saw Jesus proclaiming his kingdom in action.
- That is, proclaiming his authority over the power of sin in every aspect. Sin's power to exclude from life. Sin's power to enslave people in life.
- Sin's power to exhaust and destroy life. And all of that was swept aside by the authority of Jesus Christ the Messiah and by the power of his word. And remember each part he applied as a lesson to his disciples, showing them what it means to be part of Jesus' kingdom.
- First of all, he tells his disciples it's all to do with facing up to exclusion and separation in the world. You will be rejected as Jesus was rejected.
- [1 : 1 6] That's plain. Being a true disciple is also, he says, being transformed for a new world. The kingdom of heaven. That means that you'll be misunderstood always in the old world.
- This earth. Finally, he ended that sermon in chapter 8 and 9 by showing that true disciples must be caught up in the king's great mission.
- A mission to a helpless world of lost sheep. Verses 36 to 38 of chapter 9 show that so clearly, don't they? It's an extraordinary response. If you think verse 34, the response of the world to Jesus is this.
- They call him a demon. And the prince of demons. And yet Jesus' response, verse 36, is so different. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion. Because they were like sheep without a shepherd.
- And true disciples, verse 36, will see with these same eyes as the king himself. They'll share his compassion. Verse 37, they will sense with the same heart as Jesus, sense the urgency of the mission.
- [2 : 2 6] But the laborers are few in this plentiful harvest. And so, verse 38, they will want to share with the king in that mission. Praying that he, the Lord of the harvest, would send out laborers.
- But not just praying. Being prepared to be sent out themselves. Being prepared to begin to be the answer for their own prayers. That's something we've got to be careful about in the Christian life.
- Often the way that Jesus begins to answer his prayers, the prayers that we pray, is by saying, well, you go and do something about it yourself. And that's what Jesus is doing here.
- And notice, notice the supreme response of compassion for the people of the world that Jesus saw is what? What does Jesus tell them to be prepared for?

Verse 7, the proclamation of the kingdom of heaven. That's very important, isn't it? You see, a church which is truly compassionate for the lost peoples of the world is a church where the gospel of the kingdom is right at the very heart, right at the very center and the driving force of everything that it does.

[3 : 39] That's very, very important. Because you see, real compassion, Jesus is saying, is not necessarily listening to Bob Geldof and marching with a million people to the middle of Edinburgh to assault the G8 summit, to make poverty history.

These things are not unimportant. But they're not supremely important, not according to Jesus at any rate. Issues of trade, justice and so on, of course are important.

But of course, people will have many different views about exactly the best way of doing that sort of thing. The Christian church certainly can't claim a monopoly on that. That's why we have a clear division, isn't it?

Some people want to march and protest about that sort of thing, but 80% of the public think that pouring money into Africa is a waste of time in that naive way. And the Church of Jesus Christ is going to have people on both sides of that divide, of course.

Because the Church of Jesus Christ has a much more important and fundamental task of compassion. That is proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. And what's desperately needed today in the world, in a world of lost and helpless people, in a country of Scotland today, full of helpless and lost people, is the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom.

[5 : 01] There are many outside in Glasgow today who are like sheep without a shepherd. There are many in Christian churches this morning, in this nation, who are in a worse position.

You're listening to evil shepherds, like the Christian church leaders of Jesus' day. There's nothing worse than being a church with no gospel or with a false gospel.

And so, you see, Matthew chapter 10 has a huge amount to teach us today about mission. That's why we're going to spend three weeks in it to digest it properly. Notice it's Matthew's second block of teaching.

Do you see his brackets there in verse 1? He called to him his twelve disciples. Look at chapter 11, verse 1, when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples.

Between those two brackets is this whole block of teaching. And it's all about mission. It's all about mission that claims everything. It's probably quite good that we're looking at this just as we run up to the summer.

[6 : 02] I've certainly been besieged with writing references for people going on missions and camps and so on. It's a wonderful thing. It's a joy. So it's good for us to be thinking very particularly at this time about mission.

So let's think about verses 1 to 15 today. I'm going to call it this, the King's Briefing for Mission. But perhaps a key verse in this whole chapter is actually verse 16.

Let's read it. Very surprising, isn't it, that the answer for a world full of helpless lost sheep would be sending out sheep.

Rather strange, isn't it? But what Jesus is saying is that the ambassadors of the King are not a power group. They're not going to be a group marked by spin or by subterfuge or by diplomatic language.

No, he says, you have to be as innocent as doves. In other words, you're emissaries of peace. You have to be straight. You have to be sincere. You have to be transparent. But you've not to be soft.

[7 : 14] You have to be as wise as serpents, he says. You have to be shrewd people, realistic people, prudent people, not simpletons. Why? Well, because the reality is that in the world's eyes and in the world's terms, we are weak.

We are powerless. We're even foolish. Who ever heard of a mission that sent out sheep to help save wolves? That's what Jesus says we're doing.

The reality, you see, he says, is that we are facing a very hostile environment. These disciples are to be salt and light in a rotten world, in a dark world.

It's going to be tough. Do you remember Matthew chapter 5? Yes, he said, sometimes people will see your deeds and praise your Father in heaven. But perhaps more often than not, what will they do?

They'll revile you. They'll persecute you. They'll slander you on my account, said Jesus. You see, the ambassador receives the reaction of his sovereign.

[8 : 13] He's so closely bound up with his sovereign. When a country does something bad, the prime minister summons the ambassador and gives them a dressing down. He's there in the place of the king. So verse 40, you see, is very key also.

Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. And the world, you see, for the most part, scorns and hates God.

Just as the world scorned and rejected his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And that, you see, Jesus says, is what's going to face you as emissaries, he says to his disciples.

Christ himself was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And yet that was God's extraordinary power for the salvation of the world. Well, so you disciples, he says, you're going to be like lambs among wolves.

You're going to be weak. You're going to be frail. You're going to be foolish in the eyes of the world. But you see, as Paul says to the Corinthians, God uses the weak things of the world to shame the powerful.

[9 : 16] The foolish things of the world to shame the wise. And the gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing. And so are the weak and the feeble and the foolish gospel messengers.

But Jesus says, like me, like you, like master, like servant. And the heart of the message, really, all the way through this chapter is identification with the master.

Look at verse 25. A disciple is like his teacher. A servant is like his master. If they despise and ill-treat one, well, they'll do exactly the same to the other.

You'll have the same treatment from the world as Jesus had, he tells them, but you'll also have the same power in the world. Heaven's power, you see, when it's at work in the world is always something that faces opposition.

Always. It's two worlds colliding. And it only ever comes through the weakness of human frailty. And that's why Jesus' followers need to have this briefing for mission.

[10 : 26] They need wisdom. They need realism, not naivety, about what it means to be part of God's kingdom, his mission. And that's why he goes on here to brief his ambassadors so thoroughly and so carefully.

And that's what we're going to look at this morning. So how are Jesus' disciples to be wise, shrewd, realistic ambassadors? Well, verses 1 to 15 give us a very clear briefing for mission.

We're going to look at it under four headings. First of all, they need to have wisdom and realism about the plan and the progress of God's mission to the world.

In other words, they must be directed by God's unfolding story of his plan of redemption. Unless you grasp that, you will be utterly confused about what Jesus is saying here.

Often people, you see, are far too eager to want to apply the Bible to themselves. It's not wrong to do that. But we're so self-centered, you see, that we want to go straight to ourselves and apply the Bible to make it relevant, to be practical.

[11 : 31] So, some people, for example, take verse 8 about healing the sick and casting out demons. Well, that's for us. That's our mission. That's what Jesus tells us to do.

Well, they take verse 9 about poverty and acquiring no goods and having no resources or anything else. They say, well, that's us. That's for us. If you're going to be in mission for Christ, you must live totally by faith and receive nothing.

Well, if that's so, then what about verse 6? Are we to go only to the Jews, not to the Samaritans and not to the Gentiles? See, it's very, very important here to grasp the fundamental truth about all Scripture.

It's one of the instructions that we would often do at the Proclamation Trust. Let me put it in a stark way. When you're reading the Bible, you've got to remember it's not written to you, silly. It's not written to you.

He's not speaking directly to you and me today. Who's he speaking to? We mustn't treat the Bible as though it was a message that sort of fell out from heaven last week directly into my lap with instructions for me in my life.

[12 : 38] No. Yes, it's all for you and for me, but none of it is directly to you or to me. And that's a vital distinction to make, otherwise we get into all sorts of trouble.

I've been reading in the news this week about that terrible story of the eight-year-old girl having the demons supposedly beaten out of her. That comes from a bonkers approach to the Bible. Although on the radio this morning on that dreadful Sunday program, there was a sneering liberal saying that that's typical evangelicalism for you.

Well, it's not. It's foolishness in approaching the Bible. It's also actually total disregard of the Scriptures altogether. You don't find anything in the Scriptures anywhere about beating demons out of people.

you find that in medieval Roman Catholicism. And you find it in extreme Pentecostalism of a certain variety today. But no, we must take the Bible seriously.

We must see the big picture. What's Matthew telling us here? Well, in verses one to six he's telling us very clearly that God has a plan and a progress in his mission.

[13 : 51] What's he doing? Jesus here is inaugurating his new covenant church. He's inaugurating a new and refined, changed Israel. He's redefining what it means to be Israel around himself.

That's the whole significance of twelve disciples, verse one and two. Twelve apostles. Verse five, these twelve he sends out. You see, he's reconstituting Israel.

Twelve apostles for the twelve tribes of Israel. He's doing something new. And it's them he's sending out. And this teaching is for them, for these twelve disciples.

Not as the Sermon on the Mount for the disciples generally and for the crowds, but for these twelve. And we've got to recognize that. Otherwise it's like we're reading somebody else's diary and just applying it to us.

So if you go to your wife's diary and open it up on the page for Monday morning and it says hairdressing appointment at ten o'clock and you read it and say, oh, this must be for me. You get a terrible shock. Not only would you spend half the day in the hairdresser and come out with all sorts of funny colours and curls and things.

[14 : 58] You'd probably be bankrupted too. But it wasn't written for you, was it? Not yours. The way to interpret that is to say, oh, my wife's at the hairdresser tomorrow morning.

No, I must go there. So we've got to notice the context. Jesus here is speaking to his disciples, his twelve disciples, the apostles. This is part of a specific apostolic mission.

Nevertheless, we've also got to notice in the context that Jesus is actually also speaking with a wider concern in view. Jesus often mingles his teaching about events now and in the future.

He often does that. And Matthew here is grouping all Jesus' teaching on mission that you find in other parts of the other gospels and bringing it together in one place for a purpose. So clearly he thinks it's important for his readers, after the time of the apostles.

Verse 16, for example, onwards makes it very clear that later mission is in view. He mentions the Gentiles in verse 18. If you read verse 26 and following, you'll see it.

[16:03] It looks to the whole future of the church's mission. And we've also got to read these verses in the light of the whole of Matthew's gospel. We've got Matthew 26, verses 19 and 20, the great commission that tell us to go to the whole world.

So we've got to read intelligently, not superficially. Otherwise we are putting ourselves open to legitimate criticism.

Some evangelicals, it has to be said, are simplistic and foolish in the way they read the Bible. They think that things in the scripture are written directly to us, but none of it is written directly to you or to me today.

But on the other hand, all of it is written for you and me today. That's where the liberal goes wrong.

He thinks there are parts of it that are not for us today. None of it is directly to us, but all of it is directly for us. But we must read intelligently.

[17:07] We must grasp the big picture of God's unfolding plan, his plan and progress in his mission. resurrection. So where are we here? Well, we are in the period before Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension.

It's not yet the New Testament age of the church that you and I live in. It's not yet the period after Pentecost. Unless we see that, we will misunderstand it. We'll apply it wrongly to ourselves today.

See, when Jesus said to Peter, follow me, that meant, literally, come and wander around Galilee for three years. When Jesus says to you and to me, follow me, that's not what he means.

He's not calling us to an itinerant ministry in Palestine. Obviously, the principle is the same, of course. He's calling us to total and complete discipleship, to total commitment.

But we've got to put it in its context. So here we are at the stage of the inauguration of Jesus Christ's kingdom. This is part of the great inaugural events of it breaking in in history.

[18:14] It's absolutely unique. That's what explains verse 6. That's why he says, you're not to go yet to the Gentiles, but only to the people of Israel. In Matthew 15, 24, Jesus himself says, I was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel.

That's the Messiah's mission. Jesus is Israel's Messiah. And at this stage, it's not yet a message for the world beyond. We get hints all the way through Matthew's gospel that it will be for the Gentiles.

We saw that with the Gentile centurion. But the thrust, the focus, the heart of Jesus' mission now is still to the Jews. That's why you find in the Acts of the Apostles, Paul goes to the synagogues first.

That's why in Romans chapter 1, verse 16, he says the gospel is the power of God for salvation, first to the Jew and then to the Gentile. God has a plan and a progress in his mission.

We must grasp that. And grasping that helps us with the next point in verses 7 and 8. It helps us to have wisdom and realism about the proclamation and the power of gospel mission.

[19 : 20] And that is dictated by the gospel's abiding purpose. You see, mission is the proclamation of the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. And it's a message authenticated by the power of God.

That's what shows it's not man's doing, it's God's doing. And here we see that just as Jesus went about proclaiming the kingdom in word and in deed by speaking and preaching and by casting out demons and healing, also here the exact same words are used of the apostles, the disciples.

Proclaiming, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons. These signs you see of verse 8 are primarily revelatory. They're to do with revelation of the gospel of the kingdom breaking in.

They're not primarily to do with kindness and compassion, although they are, of course. But primarily it's all to do with the announcing of the kingdom of God arriving on earth in the person of Jesus.

And here they're being announced in terms that are instantly recognizable to the hearers, to the people of the day. It was the expectations of the prophets. The people would understand that language loud and clear.

[20 : 32] Read Isaiah 61. Read Isaiah 35. It's absolutely clear from Jesus' own words that that's how we're to think of these. Just look over into chapter 11, verses 4 and 5.

Here's Jesus telling John the Baptist's disciples to go back and tell him and reassure him that the kingdom indeed has come in Jesus. Go and tell John what you hear and see.

The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have good news preached to them. You see what Jesus is saying is what you are hoping for John, the coming of the kingdom, this is it.

This is that. Don't be mistaken. The kingdom has come. See all of this is part of the unique and momentous events of that kingdom having come.

It's the momentous unique time in history of the kingdom breaking in in the person of Jesus, the Son of God himself.

[21 : 34] It's a foretaste of what it will be when the person of Jesus Christ comes again to earth to be here forever. This is what it will be like forever when Jesus is personally present in the world, the new heavens and the new earth, forever.

forever. It's not a promise for the followers of Jesus of what it will always be like in his absence. In fact if you turn over to Matthew 17 verse 16 you'll find that just a little bit later on the apostles weren't able to cast out demons and heal in the same way anymore.

Do you remember what we looked at last time in chapter 9? Jesus said they're feasting and they're rejoicing now because the bridegroom's here but there will come a time when the bridegroom is gone when they'll be fasted. It won't be like this forever.

You see the events surrounding Jesus' life and ministry, his death, his resurrection, his ascension and the first apostolic mission, the completion of the revelation of what the whole kingdom of God means as coming in Jesus, that is unique.

It's once for all in history. It has to be unique. And it's so important friends to grasp that because unless we grasp that we'll be in all kinds of disaster.

[22 : 56] We'll have all kinds of wrong expectations of what we think God should be doing today. We'll have all kinds of terrible disappointments because we won't see the things that we think God ought to be doing today and we'll wonder if it's something to do with our own faith or our own inadequacy.

Now don't get me wrong, of course, of course God can do what he pleases. And we do hear accounts of extraordinary things happening today perhaps especially in frontier mission fields where the gospel has never been and where a new ground is being broken but we're not to expect things to be for us exactly as they were in this unique moment of history when Jesus Christ in his person is inaugurating his kingdom.

We're not to expect that unless Jesus comes and when he does come it will surely and for certain be like that forever. Every tear will be wiped away. Every illness and every evil will be banished.

But we aren't to expect that today in the same way. But the principle does of course remain the same. Christ does always authenticate the proclamation of his kingdom with his divine power.

He does work miracles today. He works them every day. Not so much miracles of revelation because revelation is complete. We have the gospel.

[24 : 28] We have the apostolic message. But miracles of salvation. We live in the age of worldwide mission. We live in the age of the harvest.

We live in the age of the gospel going out to every nation. God is working miracles of salvation, of transformation. He's calling the dead to life today. This very hour all around the world.

Do you remember in John chapter 5 when he healed the man at the pool and he says to the disciples, you'll see greater works than these. What are they? Well, he says you'll see the voice of the Son of God calling the dead to life as you proclaim the gospel.

And that's why in Matthew chapter 10 here there's so much emphasis all through on the words of the apostles. Look at verse 14. It's all about receiving their words. Verses 19 and 20.

When you're oppressed, when you're in court, don't worry what you're to speak. Verse 20. Because it will be the Spirit of the Father speaking through you. Isn't that a miracle to get really excited about?

[25 : 35] God calling dead people to life through his words speaking through you? What could be greater than that? The God who speaks into nothingness and creates the world.

The God who speaks to the dead and raises them to life. He's the same God who's speaking through the message that he has given to you to bring people out of the kingdom of darkness into the light of the kingdom of the Son of his love.

He speaks through you. He authenticates gospel proclamation with kingdom power. That's always true then and today. And that means that however weak, however frail, however feeble, however inadequate you might feel if you've got the message of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, it has the power of God for salvation.

And you have that. So proclaim the message. Third, we've got to have wisdom and realism about the priorities and the provision for gospel mission, verses 8b to 10.

And these also are delivered to us by the gospel. Again, it's clearly not here a literal command abiding forever that there's to be no pay or no possessions or no self preparation and so on.

[26 : 55] Of course not. If you read Luke 22, 35, Jesus flatly contradicts it and says it superseded. You can take a bag along with you, he says. But the principles here also are clear and they're abiding.

Verse 8 makes it absolutely clear that gospel mission is about self-giving and not self-gain. It's about giving and not acquiring. It's about spending and being spent for the gospel.

That's because the gospel is a gospel of grace. It's about God giving to us. So there can never be any place for using the gospel for us to gain. That's why what we sometimes see with these television evangelists and the ostentatious wealth is so absolutely abhorrent.

That's why the prosperity gospel is so abhorrent. Usually the only people who prosper through it are the ministers, the pastors, their fancy rings and their gold chains and their Rolls Royces. That's the antithesis of gospel mission, says Jesus, about self-giving.

Only that attitude can teach us to put first things first. It's about simplicity, he says. It's about leaving the provision to God to focus on the priority which is the labor of the gospel.

[28 : 13] The urgency, you see, of the gospel ministry demands that. We have to have simplicity and single-mindedness with regards to our earthly needs.

There's nothing wrong with possessions. There's nothing wrong with bags and with gold and with spare clothes and with shoes. Of course not. But the priority of the gospel mission means that we can leave all that to God and he'll provide.

Remember chapter 6? Don't be anxious about your life, what you'll eat and drink and wear. Your Heavenly Father knows what you have need of. He'll give you. But notice that the way he provides is through God's people.

Verse 10, for the laborer deserves his food. In other words, gospel work is not a call to asceticism and poverty. Rather, it is a call for gospel workers to be able to focus on priorities without concern for their keep.

Because God's people see and value the work of mission, the labor of mission, and they support it. You see, it's two-sided. Yes, for the Christian missionary, and that's all of us, but especially for those engaged full-time in Christian missionary work and mission.

[29 : 27] Mission and materialism just don't mix. It's very sad when we see those who do try to mix them, either by using the gospel to acquire wealth or by envying those who do.

But, you see, Jesus' point is that for the church as a whole, we've got a responsibility to ensure that mission can happen and have priority, without the missionaries being distracted, without them having to worry about their resources.

We've got a responsibility to provide properly the laborer deserves his keep. There's no conflict there with verse eight, where it says, give without pay. He's not talking about pay.

He's not talking about extravagant rewards, gaining from the gospel. He's talking about needs. That's why Paul quotes it in 1 Timothy 5, and refers to wages. The worker deserves his wages.

And it's very important. This idea in some missions about living by faith is quite contrary to scripture, if what we mean by that is the faith of those who are doing the mission. No. It's the faith of those who are sending on mission.

[30 : 32] The responsibility of those who are sending in mission. To provide. Very often we find that gospel workers are in penury, and that's wrong.

How are you to labor in the gospel if you're worried sick about debt, about how you're going to pay off your debts, about where your next meal's going to come from? No, Jesus says the worker deserves his keep. We've got to think about our resources for evangelism.

We have our responsibility to provide, says Jesus. Not just the question of can we afford it after we've done everything else we want to do. The priorities and the provision, the budget for mission must be dictated by the gospel.

We've got to take that seriously, because the priority is the labor for the mission of the kingdom, not our own comfort. Mission and materialism just don't mix. And the message must have the priority, and our lifestyle must match that priority.

So friends, we have to think about that when we're planning our annual household budget. When you and I are thinking about how much we're going to spend on our car, or on our house, or on our holidays, or whatever else it is.

[31 : 51] We've got to think about that when we're planning our church budget. What we're spending on ourselves, and what we're spending on mission and evangelism. When we're planning a big project, like a building project.

It's the needs of the gospel which must dictate all of these things, not our own comfort. Mission and materialism do not mix. Fourthly, we need wisdom and realism about the people and the partnerships in gospel mission.

Verses 11 to 15. Message here is clear. We must discriminate and distinguish by the gospel. There's to be a transparency in gospel work, but there's not to be naivety.

Jesus is clear here. We're not to be isolationist. There's no place for going solo. There's no place for the lone ranger in gospel work. He says we're to join with the king's people. We're to seek them out and find them.

Worthy people. Verse 11. We're to join with them and find fellowship and mission. Worthy isn't a moral quality. Certainly not those who are just exactly like me in every way, in personality and in doctrine and everything else.

[33 : 01] No. Who are they? Verse 14. They're those who welcome the message of the gospel and therefore the messengers of the gospel. It's the gospel itself that discriminates and distinguishes the possibilities we have for fellowship in gospel mission.

That's clear. See, verse 13 and 14 are clear, aren't they? The gospel divides people. There are those who won't receive and those who do. Some will welcome the gospel messenger and they can be peace.

But others reject them and then they just can't be peace. True gospel unity, you see Jesus is saying, occurs when the message of the gospel is clear, when it's transparent, when it's open.

But of necessity, you can't have that kind of gospel transparency and clarity without at the same time dividing and cutting off from others. We don't want that clarity and don't want that clear gospel imperative.

That's why the ecumenical movement is so naive and doomed to failure. Now Jesus says we've got to be realistic, not sentimental. We can only unite with those who disbelieve the gospel, who disregard the gospel, if the focus of our unity is not the gospel, if the focus of our unity is keeping quiet about the gospel and speaking a lot about other things.

[34 : 25] But the whole focus in this chapter, the whole heart of gospel mission is gospel proclamation. It's all about proclaiming the kingdom. And that's why verse 14 is the deciding factor.

Notice the crucial place Jesus has for words, the words of the apostles. See, the great thing today is to say, well, let's not quibble about words, let's not quibble about points of doctrine, that doesn't matter.

But Jesus says that is exactly what matters. If anyone will not receive or listen to your words, shake off the dust of your feet. Notice the status that Jesus is giving you here to the apostles' words.

Acceptance of the apostles' words now leads to the verdict worthy. Rejection of the apostles' words equally leads to the verdict condemned.

That's what it means to shake the dust of your feet off on somebody, to condemn them. And verse 15 is even more stark. The same reaction to the apostles' words will lead to that same verdict on the day of judgment.

[35 : 36] Isn't that chilling? Those who reject the words of the apostles of Jesus Christ, having heard them, will be in a worse situation than Sodom and Gomorrah. So you see, we're not to be naive and foolish in our partnerships and in the people that we can be allied with in Christian gospel work.

Of course not. The gospel is the great discriminator. We mustn't be slow, says Jesus, to embrace people, however different from us in peripheral matters who love the gospel.

But the way it will happen is not by relentlessly seeking a bogus unity. No, it's by relentlessly pursuing the mission of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And that naturally draws together those who love the gospel and love Christ and love his kingdom. But equally, he says, and equally clearly, we're not to be slow to distance ourselves from those who reject the gospel.

We cannot work in the same way with such people. You can't have peace. That's a pretense. We're not to gloss over the differences. Jesus says we're to emphasize them.

[36 : 48] We're to be clear and open about what the gospel really is. The words of Christ and his apostles. That is the whole of scripture. That may seem harsh.

But you see, urgency of the gospel demands it. The stakes are very high. Look at verse 15. There is a day of judgment coming.

Jesus is absolutely clear about that. And friends, we are in a rescue mission of eternal significance. It's not just a flash in the pan.

And that must dictate our thinking about every single thing we do. We are not the apostles. But we are sent out, not just to Israel, but to the whole world, to a hostile world.

And we too need wisdom. We need realism. But we can have confidence. This is the mission of the king. It's in his name. And we have his power.

[37 : 55] He authenticates his mission. And he promises that he will be with us even to the ends of the earth. He's in charge of the plan.

He's the one who gives the power. He's the one who promises to provide what we need. Through God's people. And he's the one who gives us the people and the partnerships we need.

And so we can have confidence. We can proclaim the kingdom. We can make it the priority in our life as a church, as a congregation, and in our personal lives.

We can and we must. Because it is a mission of the king's because it is a mission of eternal importance. So as we think on the king's briefing for mission, let's ask him to speak to us through the words he spoke then to his apostles, that we too might have the same sense of priority, of urgency, and of eternal significance.

And let's ask too that we would have a great sense of his presence with us, knowing that that promise is true and real. As we do that, it's of great importance and with great joy that we prepare to gather around the Lord's table when in action we proclaim the reality of that presence with us, the real presence of the Lord Jesus with us now and to the end of the age as we engage in our mission.

[39 : 30] So let's sing as we prepare to come to the Lord's table.