

Majesty and Mission: The meaning of the Resurrection - Jesus is Lord!

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[0 : 00] if you would, to Matthew chapter 28. A story of majesty and mission.

There really is no sense of anticlimax at all at the end of Matthew's Gospel. It does not fizzle out. In fact, it's quite the reverse. The end of Matthew's Gospel is just the beginning of a story that is still being played out to this present day.

Luke, in his Gospel, remember, tells us of the ascension of Jesus and the command that the disciples should wait in Jerusalem for the coming Holy Spirit, that they might take up their mission at Pentecost.

And, of course, Luke continues that story in his second book, The Acts of the Apostles. Matthew doesn't tell us that part of the story. Matthew's account has a different selection because Matthew has a different purpose, a particular focus.

We've seen all the way through his book that Matthew's concerned with certain great themes that come up again and again and again in his story. And above all is that great understanding that Jesus is the great King.

[1 : 17] He's the promised Messiah King. He is the one who at last has come to bring in his kingdom forever. And in his kingdom we'll be blessing not just for the Jews, for Israel, but, of course, for all the nations.

And that's the reason that Matthew's focus in the resurrection story is on Galilee, Galilee of the Gentiles. Go to Galilee, he says in verse 7. Or rather, the angel says to the women.

Jesus himself, in verse 10, repeats it. Go to Galilee. Tell my brothers. That's where they're going to see me. In Galilee, remember, he was first introduced to the world as the great King.

He was proclaiming his coming kingdom. And in Galilee, he will also assure his followers of his unmistakable majesty now that he's risen.

In Galilee, where his saving mission began, they're going to see that the climax of Jesus' saving work will now issue in a great mission. A mission that extends to the whole world, to the ends of the earth.

[2 : 30] And so these last words of Jesus are a declaration of authority. They're the declaration of one who has all the authority of someone who has defeated death. And they are a declaration of majesty and mission.

Last week, we saw the message of the resurrection. Jesus is risen. And we saw how that produced those two reactions. Rejoicing from his followers, surrounded by resistance, by rejection.

But now what Matthew is showing us is not just the message, but the meaning of the resurrection. Not just that Jesus is risen, but that because he is risen, Jesus is Lord.

And that means that despite all the opposition that the world can muster, victory is absolutely assured. That's why verse 16 really should begin with the word but, rather than the rather bland, now in the ESV.

That's what it means. The point is that in total contrast to all the hostility, the opposition of the priests, the elders, the soldiers, here is majesty and mission that absolutely no one can hinder.

[3 : 46] And what we have here is the last great revelation of Jesus himself. It's the climactic revelation of his ministry. That's the significance of the location.

Verse 16 tells us that they went up to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. To the mountain, that is, of revelation. Do you remember right the way back to chapter 5?

The beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, they went up to the mountain. And the crowds gathered round and the disciples sat and Jesus revealed to them the great truths of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Or chapter 15, where up on the mountain Jesus healed all the people. He fed the thousands and he was glorified by all. And the God of Israel was glorified.

Or chapter 17, the great transfiguration up on the high mountain where Jesus was transfigured and his disciples saw him as he really was, shining with the glory of the sun.

[4 : 43] Well now here we are in his risen power, Jesus revealing all his glorious majesty once and for all over all the world. And revealing what that means in terms of his glorious mission for the world.

You see, the majesty of the risen Jesus and the mission of the risen Jesus go together. And that's what these verses are all about. If you're wondering about Matthew's beloved symmetry, well, I try to show you that it is here in the reading.

The whole account really of Jesus' burial and his rising and his exaltation here, beginning at verse 57 of chapter 27, is really balanced, isn't it?

We have Jesus first of all there in the tomb, dead and buried. Then the great story of the resurrection and now in this last little paragraph, Jesus alive on the mountain.

It's a story of glorious reversal. There is Jesus, the king, in a sense, reigning in death. There's a regal quality, isn't there, about the description of his burial.

[5 : 51] He's laid in a pristine tomb with clean linen, the tomb of a rich man. But now here he is, regal in life, reigning as the risen king.

And that is the meaning of Jesus' resurrection. He is Lord. The meaning and the message of the resurrection is that Jesus is declared Lord and majestic power.

And therefore, there is a mission for the world. So let's look at these last few verses of Matthew's gospel and under three headings. It's not just, as our Bible heads it, the Great Commission.

First of all, there is a great coronation. Then, yes, there is a Great Commission. And finally, there is this wonderful Great Comfort.

So first then, the Great Coronation. That's really what verses 17 or 18 are telling us. They are proclaiming to us that Jesus is king. That he has sovereign power over all earth and heaven.

[6 : 57] That he is truly Lord over his people. That's why verse 17 says to us, And when they saw him, they worshipped him.

That is, they fell on their knees before the one whom they knew at last, without any shadow of a doubt, to be truly God himself. It's the climax of the revelation of Jesus as God, as the Lord of glory. No one, no Jew, could ever worship anybody other than God alone. Not even the angels command worship. There's no sense when the women see the angel at the tomb that they should worship him.

You perhaps remember in the very last book of the Bible, in the last chapter, when John is having his revelation, he sees the great angel and he bows down before him. What does the angel say? Get up! Don't worship me.

I'm just a servant. Worship God. God. But here they are, bowing down and worshipping him. Extraordinary.

[7 : 58] Maybe that explains why we're told here that some doubted. It's not actually a word here that really means unbelief. It might be better translated, some hesitated. It's hard to believe that all of the eleven disciples still could be in any doubt about Jesus.

We know Thomas at first refused to believe, but afterwards Jesus cleared all that up and that happened long before this. That happened back in Jerusalem. It could be, of course, that there are more than just the eleven disciples here.

Matthew only mentions the eleven, but quite often Matthew has teaching of Jesus to his disciples where he focuses on the disciples, but clearly other people are present. Some scholars think this actually is the incident that Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 15 when more than 500 saw him together. That may be so. It may just simply be that Jesus first appeared at a distance and they couldn't see clearly if it really was him. That's why verse 18 tells us that Jesus came and spoke to them.

The Good News Bible, I think, brings that out better. It says Jesus drew near. That's what the word actually means. And then they could see him. But whatever the situation was, whoever it was who was there, he drew near to reassure them by speaking to them.

[9 : 18] And when they saw him really near and close, and when they heard his unmistakable familiar voice, well then there was no hesitation. It's such a human touch, isn't it?

Sometimes happens like that. You know at home, doesn't it? The door opens, you're sitting in a room, the door closes, somebody's obviously come in, walked across the hall, you see them out of the corner of your eye, and just for a moment there's a bit of hesitation.

Is it actually your wife or your husband that's come in? Is it somebody else? You say, hello, is that you? Yes, it's me, I'm home. As soon as you hear the voice, there's assurance.

And that's what happened here. Jesus spoke with a familiar voice, and with that familiar, extraordinary authority. And now the very fact of his presence standing in front of them as a risen Christ with a risen body absolutely assures them that it is him.

I mean, just think of the emotional turmoil in the lives of these disciples. Three years of following Jesus that had changed their lives totally.

[10 : 27] Listening to his teaching, looking at his works, seeing all that he'd done, hearing about his great plan of redemption and all that God was doing. And then the horrors of the arrest and the trial and the crucifixion.

And the terrible shame of their own melting away into the background. And then the extraordinary miracle of the resurrection and the women's words to them and the command, go to Galilee.

He is risen, he's alive, he's glorious. And here he is standing in front of them, risen, alive and glorious just as he had said.

Now Jesus had claimed from the very beginning to be a king, hadn't he? Right back when Jesus was first confessed by Peter as the Messiah, as the Christ in chapter 16, Jesus was clear that that was the purpose of his coming death and resurrection.

He must suffer, he said, but then he would rise on the third day. So that, Jesus then said, the Son of Man is going to come with all his angels in the glory of the Father.

[11 : 37] That's what he promised that his disciples, some of them would see with their own eyes. Some standing here will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

And now Jesus draws near and they can see and they can hear that this is the same Jesus. And here he is standing in front of them, risen from the dead and saying it again, it's all been fulfilled. Everything I said, all authority in heaven and in earth is given to me. What more evidence could you want than that?

All Jesus' claims have been verified, they've been proved beyond all doubt by the very fact of his glorious humanity standing in front of the disciples.

He had passed through death, he has conquered death and all authority in heaven above and earth beneath is his as a result of the fulfillment of his mission as the Messiah, the great King of God.

[12 : 48] Do you remember the devil in his temptation had said to Jesus, all these kingdoms of the earth I'll give you if only you'll bow down to me. But now here is Jesus receiving all authority not just in earth but in heaven above.

He's proved, He is proclaimed to be the King of all the earth. It's a great coronation. It's the crowning of the Son of Man as Lord of all.

Jesus has sovereign power over all time and eternity. That's what these verses are telling us. And Jesus' hearers knew exactly what he meant. All of them understood exactly what he was saying.

Jesus constantly referred to himself, didn't he, as the Son of Man. And now he is saying here is the Son of Man crowned with all authority and power in heaven and earth.

The disciples, of course, would remember the words in the book of Daniel. We remember them from when we were studying Daniel just long ago. Let me read them to you from Daniel chapter 7.

[13 : 58] Don't look them up. But remember Daniel's great vision when he saw the future of what God was planning? I saw in visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a Son of Man.

And he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away. and his kingdom one which shall not be destroyed. It's a great coronation.

That's what Jesus is saying. All authority in heaven and earth is mine. It's the coronation that all history has been waiting for.

All authority and power in heaven and the earth belongs to Jesus. And he is Lord over all his people, over all the universe. It's not that he didn't have authority before.

[15:02] All through his earthly ministry we've seen that authority. He taught as one with authority. He exerted authority over all illnesses and diseases and sickness, over devils, over nature itself.

But until his work was complete, until his resurrection proclaimed that victory, everything was still curtailed.

Everything was held back. It was waiting. So do you remember when in Matthew chapter 8 Jesus cured the leper, he said to him immediately, say nothing to anyone.

Or when he healed the blind man in chapter 9 he said, don't tell anyone. Or do you remember even after the transfiguration in chapter 17 Jesus said to his disciples, tell no one until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.

You see, it's not time yet. It's not finished. Only when Jesus is raised is there certainty, is there proof that he has triumphed, that he has absolute power, that he is truly the Lord of glory.

[16:13] But now he is risen. And therefore, verse 19, the time for silence is ended. It's time to tell. It's time to tell the whole world.

We'll come to that in a minute, the Great Commission. But just before we do, don't miss the message of these verses, the coronation of Jesus. They tell us that Jesus is Lord, that he alone is Lord of earth and heaven.

That this Jesus who at his birth, do you remember, was worshipped by the major, by gentle Gentile pagans. He was worshipped by Gentiles as King of the Jews.

Now this same Jesus is being worshipped by believing Jews as King of the nations, King of the world. He is Lord of Jew and Gentile.

He's Lord of Arab or Asian, of African or European. He's Lord of heaven and earth. and therefore the only appropriate response to Jesus Christ is to do it as the disciples did.

[17:24] To bow down, to worship him as Lord and God, to worship none other. See, all true worship is an exclusive thing, isn't it?

What you worship is what owns you, it's what possesses you. And you can't serve God as he has made known to us uniquely in Jesus Christ and at the same time worship any other.

Whether it's some imagined deity or whether it's some other force in this world or in your own life or whatever it might be. No, he is Lord of heaven and earth. He has sovereign power.

And we need to ask ourselves, have I in my life reckoned really with that? That Jesus is Lord of all. But at the same time, don't think that to bow down and serve Jesus is a burden.

Of course not. It is supreme joy. You remember what Jesus said his coronation would mean for his people. Remember back in chapter 19 Jesus says, In the new world where the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

[18:42] Well, he was speaking to his disciples, the apostles particularly then of course. But he went straight on and said, Everyone, everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children for my name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will receive eternal life.

You see, Jesus' great coronation is a promise of glory for the whole world, for all who will follow him. His resurrection makes him the firstborn of many brothers.

He died and rose, we're told, to bring many sons to glory, not just himself. He has risen and gone before you, says the angel, and you shall see him.

And that's just as true for every disciple, every follower of Jesus. Of course, not for us, seeing him in the flesh on that particular mountain in Galilee, no. But yes, for us, when he appears to reign, we shall see him.

And as John tells us in his letter, when we see him, we shall be like him. It's glory for us too. It's a great coronation. It's glory proclaimed for Jesus, yes, but it is glorious for all believing people.

[20:04] It's the declaration of the glorifying of humanity. That's why we sang in the hymn, human flesh is in heaven, man with God is on the throne. It's the promise of real resurrection life.

It's the climax of all God's purpose for his whole creation. And it's assured because Jesus is risen and glorified. God has accomplished all that he has purposed.

All authority in heaven and in earth is given to Jesus. He is Lord. It's a great coronation. And that's why, secondly, it's also a great commission.

These verses proclaim to us not only that Jesus is king, but also that he is the saviour. He's not only a sovereign power overall, he's a saving power among all the nations.

He's Lord for his people. Because Jesus is declared Lord of glory, therefore, he says, go and make disciples of all nations. Why the therefore?

[21 : 12] Why does it follow that Jesus' resurrection and his glory should mean mission to the whole world? Not just to Israel. Why should it mean mission at all for that matter?

Well, of course, all the way through Matthew, there's been hints, hasn't there, of salvation not just for the Jews but for the Gentiles. The Gentile kings at the very beginning are one. Then there's the centurion in chapter 8.

Do you remember? And Jesus says, I've never seen such faith. No, not in all Israel. And many will come from east and west to recline at the table with Abraham in the glory of the heavenly kingdom. And there are many more instances than that but the therefore here signals far, far more than just a bit of ethnic generosity from Jesus. He's speaking about the climax of all God's plan for the whole of history.

Do you remember back at the beginning in Genesis chapter 12? God chose Abraham and his family, his line of promise, not just for themselves. No, he said, in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

[22 : 21] And it's through Christ that the blessing given to Abraham comes to the Gentiles. That's what Paul says in Galatians. And now that Jesus is risen, the people of the king, the purified, the restored, the faithful, true Israel of the Messiah, the people of God, the church of God, are going to fulfill their destiny.

As ambassadors for the king. They're going to go and carry the king's glorious rule into all the world, to every nation. Do you remember back to the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus is teaching his people?

The Beatitudes describe, don't they, they give a portrait of the people of the king. The people who have discovered the grace of God and the mercy of Christ. Christ. But what do the king's people do?

What are they for? Well, Jesus goes straight on and tells us, you are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth. That's what God's people have always been for.

He called his people in the beginning to be a missionary nation. Just listen to these words through Isaiah the prophet to God's people Israel. God says to them, you are my witnesses.

[23 : 38] You are my servants whom I've chosen. The people I've formed for myself that they might declare my praise. That's what Israel was chosen for. Isaiah is full of declarations like that but also it tells us of the failure of God's people to live up to their calling.

So often Israel ignored that. God's people just abandoned their calling. Isaiah says, you've lived like blind servants, deaf servants. But of course God promised that at last his true servant, the Messiah himself would come.

That he would be at last the true light of the whole world. Remember at the beginning of his ministry Jesus stood up in the synagogue and quoted from Isaiah 61, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news and this is fulfilled in your presence he says. Jesus is at last the true light to the world. But don't forget this, that does not mean that the role of God's people is somehow abolished.

Absolutely not. In fact, it's the exact opposite, says Jesus. If you read on in Isaiah chapter 61, you'll read these words, not spoken to the Messiah but spoken to the Messiah's people.

[25 : 03] You shall be called the priests of the Lord. They shall speak of you as ministers, as servants of our God. You see, that's exactly what Jesus is teaching in Matthew chapter 5.

Let your light shine that the world may see your good deeds and give glory to God the Father. Don't think that I've come to abolish the law and the prophets with their mission for you as a light of the world.

No, I've come to fulfill it. And this is the beginning of that great fulfillment. All authority in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ. Therefore, he says to his people, you go.

If you remember back to Matthew chapter 10, when Jesus sent out his first disciples on mission, do you remember what he said? Don't go anywhere among the Samaritans or the Gentiles go only to Israel.

But what does he say now? No longer that, is it? Jesus' own mission was to the lost house of Israel, but he came to Israel so that there might be a mission to the whole world.

[26 : 19] And it's his great mission, his saving power is over all the nations. but he spreads his lordship through his church.

You go, he says. Well, what is that mission? Well, Jesus tells us very clearly, doesn't he? I'm sure you can see it there in verse 19.

We're to make disciples of all nations. That's the controlling verb, make disciples. You go wherever is needed in order to make disciples. Well, what does that mean?

Well, again, we're told very clearly, aren't we, what making disciples means. You make disciples by doing two things, by baptizing people into, that's better than in there, that's what it really means, into the name, the one name of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to observe, to obey the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Notice, Jesus does not say, go and create interest in me. Not, as he say, go and create a Christian culture. Not even, as he say, just go and find converts or make decisions for Christ.

[27 : 37] No, he says, make disciples. And these two definitions of what making disciples means helps us to understand. First of all, Jesus is telling us that discipleship means becoming a real follower of Jesus.

we are to baptize into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. You see, Christianity is not a philosophy, not a loyalty to a particular way of thinking.

Rather, it's a relationship of total commitment to a person, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism signifies a new relationship. We're coming to the Father through Jesus Christ as we're called by the Holy Spirit.

It's becoming a member of God's household, becoming a son or a daughter in the Father's house. And that becoming means not just believing, but definitely belonging.

It means commitment to Jesus. And commitment to Jesus, to the Father's house in heaven, means always commitment and belonging to Christ's family here on earth.

[28 : 51] That's what baptism signifies. It's a public declaration of belonging. And that public belonging, as far as the New Testament is concerned, is essential for salvation.

There's no place in the New Testament for secret or self-contained faith. There's no such thing. Paul is very plain.

Romans chapter 10, he tells us you need to believe in your heart in Christ's salvation and confess it in your life that Jesus is Lord. Because he says with the heart you believe and are justified and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

Discipleship means becoming a Christian. That means a real Christian. That means a visible Christian. It means belonging to Christ's family, belonging to his church.

church. And secondly, Jesus tells us discipleship means being a real Christian. Believing Jesus means obeying Jesus, doesn't it?

[29 : 56] Teaching them, he says, to observe, to obey all that I have commanded you. Remember we saw last Sunday night in Jude, in Hebrews chapter 3, that unbelief means disobedience.

Well, so here, belief means obedience. And this is the task of the church. It's to make disciples who worship the risen Lord, who live under his lordship.

That's what true faith really is. Paul says a very similar thing at the beginning of his letter to the Romans. Do you remember in Romans 1 verse 4, Jesus, he says, was declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead.

Just like here, all authority in heaven and on earth is his. Therefore, because of that, Paul says, we receive grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for his sake among all the nations.

You see, that's our task, to bring people to the obedience of faith and to be people marked by the obedience of faith, to obey Jesus in everything he commanded.

[31 : 10] And that's an obvious challenge, isn't it? That's our task, to teach people everything Jesus has commanded, then we need to know everything Jesus has commanded, don't we?

And by the way, the Apostle Peter tells us quite clearly in 2 Peter 3 and 2 that Jesus commands come to us just as clearly through his apostles as from his own lips. That's why if we want to make disciples, you can't do that without a serious and relentless teaching ministry in the church.

That's pretty obvious, isn't it? But of course, it's more than just intellectual knowledge too, isn't it? It's not just didactic teaching that makes disciples, although that is essential.

It's life teaching. People learn Jesus' commands and learn how to obey him and follow him as other disciples exhibit that before them. Isn't that true?

Of course it is. So that's a real, real challenge, isn't it, for those of us who are disciples? But let's be clear what our task is as the church. It is to make disciples.

[32 : 17] It is to make people who become true Christians in a real and a visible way with a personal allegiance to Jesus Christ. It's not to go for decisions for Jesus, but disciples.

It's not to go for spectators just to fill the church pews and make us feel nice and full on a Sunday. It's not that kind of observer that Jesus is after.

No, it's observing his commands. Committed members of the body of Christ. Committed visibly. That's what baptism means. And submitted visibly.

Devoted to obedience to God's word. God. That's why we take church membership seriously.

That's why I'm often saying that. That's why you should take church membership seriously too.

That's what baptism signifies. It's not just a personal statement of faith. Not at all. It's a sign of public belonging. It's a sign of taking your stand with God's people, with his real flesh and blood people, in a particular place, at a particular time.

[33 : 26] And if for whatever reason you feel you want to decline to play a full and public part in the family of Christ's church, in his visible family where you are, if you insist on just wanting to be a spectator, well then according to Jesus, that's not what it means to be a disciple, you see.

And our task is to make disciples who commit publicly and who submit in public and in private to the lordship of Christ.

And of course, by the way, that's also our task domestically, isn't it? Jesus, of course, here is primarily talking about mission, about those who are outwith the whole extent of the family of faith. But he's clearly not saying, do that except in your own family. Of course he's not. All of us here this morning who are parents have a missionary task right in our own home, don't we?

To make disciples. That's what we want our children to be, isn't it? Disciples of Jesus. That's not what we want. Well, it's what Jesus wants.

[34 : 37] We better listen. That's why we baptize our children. Because we're making disciples. We're marking them out publicly as belonging to Jesus Christ.

And we're calling them to behave as disciples. To behave as those who belong to Jesus Christ. To follow Jesus Christ. By teaching them through our lives and through our words everything that the Lord has commanded.

It would be absurd to think the Lord would want us to do anything else, wouldn't it? Can you imagine Jesus saying, go and make disciples everywhere, never mind your own children? Just wait and see.

Hope for the best. Maybe they'll turn out to be Christian after all. Of course not. We know Jesus rebuked that attitude completely, didn't he? In chapter 19.

Let the little children come to me. Do not hinder them. For of such is the kingdom of heaven. Our children, if they have the enormous privilege of being born into the household of faith, they have the privilege and the great responsibility of being made disciples from the earliest days.

[35 : 49] Baptized into the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit and taught to obey from earliest days all that Jesus has commanded. I think sometimes if we realize the great responsibility that baptism places on the head of a child of the faith, not just the privilege, we'd understand a lot more about what it really means.

But that's the great task. It's a great commission. Because Jesus is risen, he is Lord. And he has a saving purpose for the world. And he calls us to be ambassadors of that rule, to make disciples of all the nations.

And that sounds tough, but remember the context that Jesus is writing in. Surrounded by unbelief. Surrounded by opposition and hostility. And yet he says, all authority in heaven and earth is given to me.

I will build my church, says Jesus. And the gates of hell themselves will not prevail. But you, remember, are going to have the keys that open the gates of the kingdom, the gospel of God. You have the fullness of the biblical truth in all the scriptures. scriptures. And that's your task. Go and make disciples. Well, who is sufficient for these things?

[37 : 14] Is world conquering mission something that you feel you're up to? We find it such a struggle to do any mission, don't we? In our homes, in our workplaces, in our streets at home.

That brings us to the final thing, doesn't it? The great comfort of verse 20. Jesus is king. Yes, he's lord over his people.

He is saviour. Yes, he's lord for his people all over the world. But Jesus is also Emmanuel. He's the lord who is with his people. Our God is not just a sovereign power.

Nor is he even just a sovereign God with a saving purpose. He's a God who is himself in his presence with us. A strengthening presence.

All through the ages, he says, and right to the very end. And that's a comfort that is so wonderful in Jesus' very last words to us in this book. Behold, I am with you always, even to the ends of the earth, to the ends of the age.

[38 : 22] Nothing quite like having somebody with you, is there? It's what our children want when they're ill, isn't it? Or when they're distressed.

Stay with me. Not necessarily to do anything or even to say anything. Just to be there. That's our God. The God who loves to be with his people.

Who loves to be in the midst. And yet, who up until this moment, even with his great desire for intimacy, it has always been less than he's wanted it to be because of sin.

He's always been with his people to bless them, to give them hope and help. But now, now it's altogether different. This is God with us coming to its climax.

The beginning of the gospel, we're told he'll be called Emmanuel, God with us in the flesh. And now Jesus is saying, I, Jesus, the Jesus you know and love, I myself will be with you to the very end of the age.

[39 : 27] Because the barriers have all gone. The temple curtain is torn down. Yes, he was going to ascend bodily into the heavens. But the very first thing he would do would be to send his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the risen, human Jesus Christ into the very hearts of every single believer in all the world.

Guaranteeing the intimate presence of God. Not just nearby, but actually within. He is Emmanuel. He's God with us. He's God within us.

And he is so forever. Forever and ever. And that's what makes all the difference. That's what makes his great coronation so glorious for us.

That's what makes his great commission possible for us. That Jesus, the Lord and Savior, is with us. He's with us today. He's with you tomorrow morning. He's with you to the end of your life.

Till the end of the age. It's his promise. But notice what he says. It's as we go, as we obey, and as we make disciples, that he's with us.

[40 : 46] It's true, isn't it? We know that. It's the joy of obedience to Jesus that we know his intimate presence with us. Alexander McLaren, the great Victorian preacher from Manchester, put it like this.

If you will keep Christ very near you and want to feel him with you, it doesn't happen by cultivating religious emotion. It's not through filling your head with books and songs, although these have their place.

No, you know him near you and with you on the dusty road of doing his will and keeping his commandments. Jesus said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. It's a real challenge, isn't it? Because it's in obedience to God that Christ proves us true, isn't it?

[42 : 00] Not those who say, Lord, Lord, or who sing, Lord, Lord, who will enter the kingdom. That's what Jesus said. It's those who do the will of my Father in heaven. It's a real challenge.

It's what proves us true disciples. But when we grasp the challenge, we find it such a great comfort also, don't we? Because it's also in obedience to his command that we prove Christ true.

That we discover that he is with us, to bless us, to strengthen us, to comfort us, all of our days, to the end of days, to the end of all the ages.

That's Matthew's last word to us. He says, Jesus is King. Bow down to his sovereign power. He says, Jesus is the Savior.

Join in his saving purpose. He says, Jesus is Emmanuel. Rest in his strengthening presence.

[43 : 03] That's what it means to be a disciple. That's what it means to be a disciple maker. And there is no greater thing, no greater thing, until the ends of the ages of this world, than to be a disciple of King Jesus.

And a disciple maker for King Jesus. That's what it means to be a Christian. Amen, says Matthew.
That's the end of his story.
Let's pray.