

The Promise of His Kingdom Reverses the Tragic Hopelessness of Sin

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[0 : 00] But we're going to, as we always do, open our Bibles now together, and this morning we're going to be reading together in Matthew's Gospel. And for the next two or three weeks we're going to be looking at this little section in Matthew chapter 8 and 9.

So do turn with me in your Bibles at home and read with me. We're going to read this morning most of chapter 8, well a good chunk of it, down to verse 22. And just to orientate ourselves, we're early on in Matthew's Gospel, these verses come right after what we tend to call the Sermon on the Mount.

You'll find that in Matthew 5 to 7 where Jesus is teaching his disciples in the presence of all the crowds gathered around and listening. And we have perhaps one of the most famous portions of Jesus' teaching in the New Testament.

But chapter 7, the end of chapter 7 marks the end of that particular part of Jesus' teaching. And we read at chapter 7, verse 28, when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching.

For he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes, their religious leaders, their ministers and pastors, you might say. Quite different.

[1 : 18] But now we read right on to what Matthew places next. When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him. And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

And Jesus said to him, see that you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a proof to them.

When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly. And Jesus said to him, and perhaps this is better put as a question, I think.

Am I to come and heal him? But the centurion replied, Lord, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof. But only say the word and my servant will be healed.

[2 : 29] 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. When Jesus heard this, he marveled. And he said to those who followed him, truly, I say to you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness.

In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 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. And when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever.

[3 : 33] It touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she rose and began to serve him. And that evening, they brought to him many who were oppressed by demons.

And he cast out the spirits with a word. And he healed all who were sick. And this was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah. He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.

Now, when Jesus saw a great crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. And a scribe came up and said to him, teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.

And Jesus said to him, foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests. But the son of man has nowhere to lay his head. Another of the disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father.

And Jesus said to him, follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead. Amen. May God bless to us this, his word.

[4 : 41] Well, do turn with me in your Bible to Matthew chapter 8 and to the passage that we read together. I think one of the most dispiriting things for me in this whole COVID crisis in our country has been the conspicuous lack of spiritual leadership from senior churchmen.

They've really been either absent, hiding in their kitchens, or when they have spoken out, their messages had really very little, if any, Christian content at all.

And certainly very little in the way of Christian hope. One thing that the bishops of the Church of England did seem to want to speak out publicly was to pass summary judgment on Dominic Cummings.

Somebody said to me last week that they seem to be unable to be certain, these bishops, about anything at all, spiritual or biblical, in case they're branded fundamentalists.

But they are certain of two things, it seems. That Dominic Cummings is evil, and that Franklin Graham is a dangerous society and shouldn't be allowed to preach in this country.

[5 : 54] Well, no wonder. Very few people have any interest at all in what they have to say. But the only message that the Church in general seems to have for our nation in this time is this, keep safe and keep washing your hands.

Well, that may be good advice, although it is rather bland. But it's hardly good news, is it? Come on. The great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ to His Church is not to be mouthpieces of the government with messages of health and safety, much as that might be needed at the present time. We are to be mouthpieces of God. God heralding a message of hope and of salvation. So I want to spend, I think, three Sunday mornings together looking at Matthew 8 and 9, which are wonderful chapters to show us clearly the transforming joy that there is in the message of Jesus and of His kingdom of everlasting life.

These chapters, as I said, they come directly after what we call the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 to 7. But although Jesus has finished His teaching, His sermon there, and it concludes at the end of chapter 7, these chapters are being deliberately put here after that by Matthew to show us that the kingdom Jesus has been proclaiming in His words is now being proclaimed also equally in His actions.

And together with Jesus' words, it's the demonstration of what the gospel of His kingdom really is all about. Now remember, Matthew is not just a recorder of history.

[7 : 31] He is that. He records accurately. He records eyewitness testimony to Jesus' life in both His words and His works. But, of course, He is writing with a purpose.

He's explaining. He's proclaiming the gospel message of Jesus in everything that He writes. He is preaching to His readers, both His first readers but also to us.

And He's preaching the meaning of Jesus and His kingdom. And so, like any competent preacher, He's doing His best to order His materials so as to get that message across.

Remember last year we looked at the passion narratives at the end of Matthew's gospel and we saw that how in those chapters He is teaching the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus in the very way that He frames the accounts of the last day of Jesus' life and of His death and of His resurrection.

He's teaching theology by what He writes. Sometimes people are mistaken. They tend to think of the gospels because they come first, I suppose, in our New Testaments as though the gospels just give the simple account of Jesus' life.

[8 : 42] Well, we have to go to the apostles like Paul and John and the others later on to get the theology, the understanding of the message. Like in Romans, for example, where you get the whole sweep of God's salvation laid out so logically and carefully by Paul.

But actually that's not so because in fact the gospels were written quite a long time after some of these great epistles like Romans were written.

So the earliest readers of the gospel already knew, they already had the apostolic letters, they already had the apostolic theology, the rich theology that's there. So we shouldn't be surprised then if the gospel writers fill their accounts with the same rich theology.

And you see that, as I've said, in Matthew's preaching of the passion of Jesus. It's not just an account of those last days of Jesus' life. It's a preaching of what it all means.

And that is exactly what we see here in the same way in Matthew 8 and 9. Matthew is showing us that the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus is about nothing less than the transformation of this whole earth, the transformation of the whole visible universe, the transformation even of the whole unseen spiritual realm.

[10:06] Transformation in nothing less than what is a cosmic new creation. And therefore, along with that, of course, the transformation of men and women for that new creation.

And it's all through the power and the authority of Jesus Christ over all forms of decay and destruction and enslavement and alienation that's infected this world, blighted this world, because of the rebellion of human beings against God, our creator and our rightful Lord.

He's showing power and authority over everything that is the result of the curse of human sin. And Matthew's showing us the transforming power and the transforming joy of the kingdom of heaven as it's announced by Jesus in both his words and his action, in his proclamation and in his demonstration.

And it's all of a piece. That's why Matthew structured his message, his sermon to us this way in chapters 5 to 9. And he makes it absolutely plain and obvious to us in the divisions and in the repetitions that he uses.

It's his way, if you like, of using great big bold headings as we would at the beginning of a section. Look back with me to chapter 4 and verse 23, the beginning, just before the Sermon on the Mount begins.

[11:32] We read, Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

He's going everywhere doing two things, teaching and proclaiming in the synagogues and healing every disease and affliction. Okay? Now look right to the end of chapter 9.

Chapter 9, verse 35. What do we read? Jesus went throughout all cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

The same two things summed up. Teaching and preaching, healing every disease and affliction. So that summary brackets at the beginning and at the end.

At the beginning to tell us what the following chapters are going to show us and be all about. And at the end, as I was going to say, just to remind you, that's what you've been reading about all the time in these chapters.

[12:33] And so then within those two brackets, end of chapter 4 and chapter 9, what we have is these two things. And Matthew puts them in order. First the teaching, the Sermon on the Mount, chapter 5 to 7.

And then the healing and the miraculous signs. The teaching, the proclaiming of the kingdom ends at the end of chapter 7. We saw that in chapter 7, verse 28.

Jesus finished these sayings. And they're astonished, the crowds, at his authority, his authoritative teaching. They've never heard anything like it.

Well then, in chapters 8 and chapter 9, we have a long section of Jesus' authoritative power over every disease, every affliction. And it ends, look at chapter 9, verse 33, with the people saying, We've never seen anything like this.

They're astonished at his authoritative words and at his authoritative works. And so right through Matthew chapter 8 and 9, Matthew is still preaching to us the gospel of the kingdom and its implications.

[13:41] And in fact, if you look carefully at chapters 8 and 9, you'll see that it is a very careful and a brilliant three-point sermon that Matthew gives us. Each point has three miracle stories, and then it's followed by a direct point of application to Christian discipleship.

And he works up to a climax at the very end that does two things. First of all, he challenges the crowds to decision for him and his kingdom.

Remember, we're told at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 5, verses 1 and 2, that he's teaching his disciples. But great crowds are gathered around. They're listening too, and he's appealing to them. So he challenges the crowds, but also, secondly, he calls his disciples to see the full significance of their new life with him.

And the ringing message all the way through is this. Jesus is the king who has power and authority over all the powers of sin in the world, in humanity, and in the unseen spiritual realm.

And his power to utterly reverse the curse of sin is going to bring about the great restoration that the world has been needing and longing for from the very beginning of human history.

[15 : 01] And is still so desperately in need of today. So we're going to follow Matthew's structure. We're going to take his three points, one each, over the next three weeks.

As Matthew shows us, first, that the promise of Jesus' kingdom reverses the tragic hopelessness of sin. And then he applies that lesson to discipleship.

That's chapters 8, verses 1 to 22. And next time we'll be seeing that the power of Jesus' kingdom overcomes the terrifying hold of sin. And then he applies that lesson to the character of discipleship. Chapter 8, verse 23 to chapter 9, verse 17. And then finally, that the person of Jesus the king answers the terrible helplessness of sin. That's chapter 9, verse 18 to the end.

And then he applies it at the end in a lesson about the call to discipleship. Well, we're going to look this morning at chapters 8, chapter 8, verses 1 to 22. And to Matthew's first point.

[16 : 01] And I want us to see that he puts these three stories together very carefully. They're ordered differently from the way the other gospel writers do it. But he's doing it to highlight for us with great clarity a message.

And that is that the promise of Jesus' kingdom reverses the tragic hopelessness of sin. The clear emphasis in all of these first three stories is his authority, Jesus' authority, over sin's power to exclude, to exclude people from true human life as it ought to be, lived in the presence of God.

In each of these three stories, we see a human being who's made in the image of God, but that image has been desperately vitiated to reduce it to far, far less than what God meant it to be.

And to exclude that person from full participation in the life of God and of his people. It's a terrible, hopeless curse.

And each of these is a picture of what sin does in human lives. The whole of the message of Scripture is that mankind is under a curse.

[17 : 21] That we're separated hopelessly from God because of that tragedy of man's rebellion. We were created for intimate fellowship with God. And yet we're now excluded.

We're diminished. We're just shadows of what true human life was meant to be. But the gospel of the kingdom is that Christ the King has come to put an end to that exclusion and to that alienation. He's come to call people back into true and full humanity once again and forever. And that glorious gospel message is acted out by Jesus here in his dealing with these three people.

Each of these three, by their circumstances, by their nature, is excluded from full access to God in the religious life of God's people Israel.

That's what connects all of these three, as we'll see. But Jesus, he has authority to bring each of them into the intimate presence of God in the person of the Son of God himself.

[18 : 29] So first of all, Matthew shows us a man who is unclean. Look at verses 1 to 4. He's an unclean leper. And so he's excluded from society.

But worse, he's excluded from the temple, from the synagogue, from the presence of God meeting with his people. Let me read it again. He came down from the mountain. Great crowds followed him.

And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean.

And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, see to it that you say nothing to anyone. But go and show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a proof to them.

He's a man with a disease, yes, but it made him unclean. And that's the real bite. And that's why we're told twice in these verses that what he needs is cleansing.

[19 : 35] Now, leprosy, we can't be sure of the exact pathology. We can't be sure if it's exactly the same as what we, in modern times, call leprosy. Although that is a horrible condition, a disfiguring condition.

But in those days, it was a hopeless condition. There was no hope of cure except for divine intervention. And these poor people were exhibited for their whole life to the most extreme form of social distancing you can imagine.

They were utterly cast out from society, separate, away, living in colonies on their own. And yet, look what Jesus does to this man.

Not only does he speak to him, he touches him. Right within two meters of his personal space. Chief medical officer would have hysterics. But the word of Jesus' power, verse 3, makes him immediately clean.

And the first thing Jesus tells him to do is to go to the priests as a proof, verse 4. To allow access, once again, to God and to their people.

[20 : 45] You can read about that process in Leviticus chapter 14. It was to prove that they had a passport back into society. But also, it was to be a proof to those very priests in the temple.

A testimony to them, proclaiming that the kingdom of God at last is here. Because everybody knew that only the presence of God himself could possibly cleanse lepers.

So now this man is no longer hopeless. But he's been cleansed. And he's been brought back into life by the Lord Jesus, the Son of God.

It's wonderful. And secondly, Matthew shows us a man who's untouchable. Because he's a Gentile. Verse 5, when he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him.

Lord, my servant's ill. I'm paralyzed at home, suffering terribly. And he said to him, and I think it is a question. Am I to come and heal him? But the centurion replied, Lord, I'm not worthy to have you come under my roof.

[21 : 49] But only say the word, and my servant will be healed. 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. When Jesus heard this, he marveled. And he said to those who followed him, truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.

Here's a man untouchable. He's a Gentile. He's excluded from the presence of God by his race. He might have been a Roman. Probably not. Probably a Syrian or a Lebanese soldier.

But the point is, Matthew's emphasis here is that he is excluded. And I think he shows that in the way he tells the story. Verse 6. He doesn't even ask Jesus a direct question.

He just gives him a statement. It's as though he's hesitant. Is he even going to be heard? And then Jesus asks him a question. Well, am I to come and heal him? It's a challenge Jesus is putting to him.

[22 : 51] But in verse 8, you see, he knows he's excluded. I'm not worthy for you to come to my house. Maybe it's something deeper. Maybe there's a consciousness there also of his own sin.

But certainly of his exclusion. But what astonishing faith this man displays. He grasps Jesus' power and authority, doesn't he?

And he even astonishes Jesus. It does amaze us sometimes, doesn't it? When there are people who have come to faith in Jesus. Who have got no background in church at all.

Are ignorant of the scriptures. And yet, sometimes they're the ones who grow and mature so quickly. And outstrip many. Who in fact have spent their whole life sitting in church. And felt all the privileges.

All the upbringing and the background of that. Actually, that's why verses 11 and 12 here are a real warning. Aren't they? To those who have had the privileges of Christian teaching all their lives.

[23 : 52] Many, says Jesus, will come right from outside. And they will usurp the place of those who have been insiders. In the kingdom of heaven. There's a challenge there.

For everyone who's been a long time in a Christian church. But there's also a wonderful encouragement, isn't there? Because if you're somebody who feels like that centurion. Who feels like an outsider.

Maybe a new Christian. Or maybe somebody who's just seeking. And doesn't know whether the church will be a place that they're accepted. Jesus loves to answer faith and trust that's thrown on him.

Even when you don't know much in the way of theology. Even if you don't know much about the Bible. If you know about your own sinfulness. If you know about your own need. And if you know the power of Jesus as the Savior.

He loves to answer that prayer. And to come to that person. And that's what he does here. An unclean woman is cleansed.

[24 : 56] An untouchable Gentile is commended as having faith by the Lord Jesus himself. And then thirdly. Matthew shows us in verse 14.

An unnamed woman. Just Peter's mother-in-law. Jesus entered Peter's house. He saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever.

He touched her hand and the fever left her. And she rose and began to serve him. Why is he telling us about this? Well, she doesn't even get a name.

She's just Peter's mother-in-law lying in a corner. And the truth is that in those days women were but second-class citizens. Even in Israel.

Although in Israel, if you read the Old Testament, you'll see women were accorded great dignity in a great place. It's far, far more than any other society. And far, far more than in many societies today.

[25 : 52] Where women are still treated as almost nothing. But even though women in Israel had a far, far greater place than in any others.

Still, they weren't permitted to enter right into the very heart of temple life along with the men. They had to stay in the outer courts. And certainly no rabbi, no religious teacher would ever bother himself with speaking to a woman.

You see that in John chapter 4, don't you? When Jesus speaks to the woman at the well. And she's amazed and everybody else is amazed. But Jesus not only speaks to this unnamed woman lying in the corner.

He goes right in and he touches her. To say, you are not excluded from me and from my presence. Notice, by the way, that Jesus didn't need to touch somebody to heal them.

We saw that in the centurion's servant, didn't we? We saw it in the beginning. With the leper who comes. It's his word that can heal.

[26 : 58] But he touches her gratuitously. It's a wonderful gesture, isn't it? To dignify her. And to demonstrate the inclusion. And he heals her wonderfully.

And verse 16, you see, tells us that this is just a close-up of what was happening everywhere. Everywhere. These three examples were repeated over and over and over. He cast out demons with a word.

And he healed all, all the sick. By the way, notice there that Matthew can quite clearly distinguish between those who are just sick with ordinary sickness. And those who have got demon possession.

It's not just that every sickness was attributed to demons. It's worth noting. And verse 17, you see, explains it for us. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah.

All of this is fulfillment of that great prophetic hope. The promise of the coming kingdom of God. And Isaiah's message is a message of great hope for the whole world.

[28 : 02] It's a message of transformation. Of freeing this whole universe and all God's people from the curse of sin. Read those wonderful chapters at the end of Isaiah and you'll see it.

It's what Psalm 98 speaks of. And Isaac Watts paraphrases so wonderfully in that Christmas hymn that we love to sing. Joy to the world. The Lord has come.

No more. Let sins and sorrows grow. No more. Let thorns infest the ground. Because he comes to make his blessings flow. As far as that curse has ever been found.

You see, that explains also verses 11 and 12. And the explicit reference from Jesus to the great banquet that was spoken of by the prophets. The great banquet of the messianic hope.

Let me read to you from Isaiah chapter 25. On this mountain, says the prophet, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food.

[29 : 01] A feast of well-aged wine. Of rich food. Of marrow. Of aged wine. Well refined. And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples.

The veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.

See, this is not just some random acts of kindness from Jesus that Matthew is recording. This is the beginning of the cosmic transformation.

For all peoples. For the excluded Gentiles. For the excluded lepers. For the excluded women. For everyone who has been excluded from the presence of God through the curse of sin.

A transformed world. Every trace of that curse. Gone. Forever. Forever. Every blot. Every uncleanness.

[30 : 02] Every sickness. Everything that excludes. Banished. By the power and the authority of Jesus Christ. The veil of death spread over all nations.

Gone. The veil. That covering of sin that's cloaked human beings in the shadows all of our lives. Making us half the people we should be. Making us tainted images.

Subject to death. Swallowed up, he says. Forever. In the glorious joy of his kingdom. That is the gospel of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus.

A world transformed for a humanity restored to true integrity. To true humanity. In Jesus Christ. Excluded no more from the life of God himself.

The Christian gospel, friends. Is that big. It's not about just your little life and my little life. It's not about just personal piety. It's not just about our personal forgiveness for the sins we've committed.

[31 : 03] It's about the transformation of the whole cosmos. Seen and unseen. But. Matthew also wants us to see very clearly how it is.

That that can happen. Notice the source. Of Jesus' authority to accomplish all of this cosmic restoration.

Look at verse 17 again. This was spoken by the prophet Isaiah. Who said he took our illnesses. And bore our diseases.

He drives out the curse of sin. By becoming the curse of sin for us. In our place. He took our illnesses. Our diseases.

Our uncleanness. Matthew is quoting there from Isaiah chapter 53 verse 4. But of course he's calling attention to the whole of that great chapter of Isaiah.

[32 : 07] About the servant who himself becomes the sin bearer for his people. And that's what's been emphasized in Matthew's gospel right from the very start.

The angel says he will save his people from their sins. Chapter 3. Jesus is baptized. He's standing with the transgressors to fulfill all righteousness.

And don't forget where it's all going. It's going to end up at the cross. All through the unfolding story of Matthew's gospel.

It's punctuated with references to the cross. The death of Jesus Christ. And the preceding verse in Isaiah from the one that Jesus quotes here says this.

He was despised and rejected of men. A man of sorrows. Acquainted with grief. He was excluded. So that the excluded could be brought home.

[33 : 05] And that's the great paradox. That's the great exchange. At the heart of the Christian gospel. It's expressed, isn't it, wonderfully in that Christmas poem of G.K. Chesterton.

The House at Christmas. Where he speaks about the journey of Mary and Joseph. There fared a mother driven forth out of an inn to Rome. In the place where she was homeless.

All men are at home. A child in a foul stable. Where the beasts feed and foam. Only where he was homeless. Are you and I at home.

To an open house in the evening. Home shall men come. To an older place than Eden. To a taller town than Rome. To the end of the way of a wandering star. To the things that cannot be and that are.

To the place where God was homeless. And all men are at home. The Lord of the world to come.

[34 : 11] In this world. Was despised. And rejected. And that's why friends. You see in verses 18 to 22.

Matthew applies this message. To Christian disciples. To show us. The cost. Of real Christian discipleship.

Two would be followers. Are confronted with what it really means. To follow Jesus. Into that transformed world. Verse 18. When Jesus saw a great crowd. He gave orders to go over to the other side.

And a scribe came up and said to him. Teacher. I will follow you. Wherever you go. But Jesus said to him. Foxes have holes. Birds.

There have nests. But the son of man. Has nowhere. To lay his head. And another disciple said to him. Lord let me. First go and bury my father. Jesus said to him.

[35 : 08] Follow me. Let the dead. Bury their own dead. For Jesus you see. That. Transformed world.

Comes about. Through his rejection. Verse 20. He's the son of man. He is nowhere. To lay his head. He has no home. He is excluded.

He's the son of man. His glory. As the divine son. Is veiled. Here. On this earth. He's scorned by the world. As the man.

The man of the cross. That was so shocking. So shocking. To the Jews of Jesus day. And to their national pride. Of course they had a great hope.

From the prophets. But it was for their salvation. Not the salvation of lepers. And Gentile dogs. And people who don't matter. And it was the glorious Messiah king.

[36 : 03] Who would come. And liberate them. Not. Just a man. Not one who would be beaten. And despised. And rejected. And killed on a Roman cross. And it's still the same.

Isn't it? With our world today. Still the same. Even with so much. Institutional religion. Today. That calls itself Christian. There's no time. For the son of man.

For a crucified Messiah. And for the message. Of a crucified Messiah. Because our world. And the worldly church. In the same way.

It wants. Earthly power. And glamour. And something to see. And something to bring glory. Right now. That's why. So often.

Alas. Bishops and other church leaders. Behave as they do. But Jesus says. It's not approval. In this kingdom. That you need. It's my kingdom.

[37 : 01] And my kingdom. Is not. Of this world. It's the kingdom of heaven. Says in verse 11. That's where that great banquet. Is going to take place. And nothing.

Can exclude. Any longer. From that great. Feast. At the table of. The king. Anyone. Who comes. Showing this simple faith.

And trust. In Jesus Christ. Who come to him. To be restored. By his great authority. And by his word of power. That's the glory. That's the hope.

Of the Christian gospel. Verse 11. Many. Many will come. From east. And west. The whole world over. To join in that glorious joy. Why? But here's the harsh reality.

That Jesus won't hide from us. You see this old creation. Doesn't want anything to do. With the new creation. And the king of heaven. And this world. Will. Constantly.

[38 : 00] Exclude. Jesus. From its table. And reject him. He's a man of sorrows. And it's going to do the same thing.

For Jesus' disciples. Verse 22. Just shows us. Doesn't it? The starkness of the divide. Follow me. And leave the dead.

To bury their own dead. This world. Will exclude. From its table. Jesus. And those who share. Jesus' table. He can't be at home. In the kingdom of life. And in the world of death. He can't be at home. In both of those things. So Matthew is saying.

Be clear. At home with Jesus. Being brought in with him. Will mean. Being excluded. By the world now. To be a disciple of Jesus.

[39 : 00] Will mean that you're an alien. It will mean that you're. A stranger. It will mean you're a misfit. It's inevitable. Can't be otherwise. Jesus said back in Matthew chapter 10. Like master.

Like servant. If they call the master. Beelzebul. The devil. Then how much more. Are they going to use that language. For the people of his household. And we need to know that friends.

You need to know that. So do I. In the office. In your hospital. In the school. In the university. In your neighborhood. That's how it will be.

And you need to know the truth of it. Jesus says don't be naive. It's just reality. Jesus was a misfit. He was an alien. He was a stranger. He was a slave. Especially.

Among. It seems the most religious of people. In this world. And so it's going to be with every true disciple. Every true servant. Of the kingdom of life.

[40 : 01] In this world. Which is the kingdom of death. If you and your message. And your life. Are truly at home in Christ's new creation.

Then by definition. You can't fit in happily. You can't be at home. With those whose only home is this world. There's a cost in this world.

Of having your citizenship elsewhere. In the world to come. So don't be naive. Says Jesus. And Matthew to us. Be realistic. But neither be blind.

Don't miss the wonderful. Transforming joy. Of this kingdom. Of Jesus. Jesus Christ. Is remaking. This whole world. And those who are excluded.

Those who are scorned. Those who are hated. By this world. And indeed. By the worldly church. Those who have no home. In this world. And no place.

[41 : 00] In this world's valuation. They will rejoice. In that great host. From east and west. And north and south.

At the table. Of our glorious king. Forever. And ever. And ever. That vision of verse 11 and 12. Here is wonderfully true. Because Jesus Christ.

Has the authority. Over the tragic hopelessness. Of sin. He breaks. All sin's power. To exclude from life.

Whatever. That hold. Has been. He has the power. To transform. Everyone. Who will come. He has power. To make them. To make you.

Fit. For his. Wonderful kingdom. Even those who are. Unclean. In this world's eyes. Even those who are. Untouchable. In this world's eyes. Even those who are. Just unnamed.

[41 : 53] Unimportant. To those of this world. And friends. When you know that. You have glimpsed. The glorious reality.

Of Jesus kingdom. And you'll follow him. Won't you? Surely. It won't be easy. It'll be hard. Of course it will. Because we belong to another world.

From this world. But Matthew's message is clear. Rejoice. Be glad. That is the evidence. That you are at home. In the new world. If you're finding it hard. In this world. You belong.

In the world. Of the joy of Jesus Christ. Blessed are you. When people revile you. And persecute you. And slander you. On my account. Rejoice. He says. And be glad.

For great. Is your reward. In heaven. In my everlasting kingdom. Jesus Christ. And the promise. Of his kingdom. Reverses.

[42 : 51] The tragic. Hopelessness. Of sin. And to glimpse that. In the reality. That we see here. In Jesus presence. Then. Is.

To have glimpsed. The transforming joy. That will be forever. And ever. And ever. When he comes again. That. Is what the gospel.

Of our Lord Jesus Christ. And his kingdom. Is all. About. And thanks be. To God. Let's pray. Heavenly Father. We thank you.

For these. Wonderful pictures. In the presence. And in the power. Of our Lord Jesus Christ. That shows us. In a wonderful.

Technicolor. The future. That is ours. Through the death. And the resurrection. Of your holy son. Our savior. He bore. All our sickness.

[43 : 45] All our disease. All our sin. It's guilt. And it's shame. That we. Might be brought home. That in the place. Where God.

Was homeless. We. Who come. To your son. Might be at home. Forever and ever. Help us Lord. To be filled. With the joy.

Of this truth. To live it. And to share it. For we ask it. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.