

A King for the World to Bow To

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[0 : 00] Well, it's been the best part of three years, 70 sermons. Tonight we come to the end of our time in Matthew's Gospel, and we end exactly where we started.

The Bible loves to do that to us, to take us on a long walk up the hills, down into the valleys, around the bends, stop to take in the view, and just when we're starting to think we've got a few miles under our feet, we get to the end and find out that it was a circular walk. We've ended where we began. Jesus came and said to them, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

If you're thinking, well, I didn't see that coming. What? Jesus, crowned Lord of all, now wants to bless every nation on earth. That's a bit of a bombshell to end on, Matthew, don't you think? Well, think back. Haven't we heard that before?

We certainly have. It will be worth it to turn back to Matthew chapter 1 and verse 1, please. Matthew 1, verse 1.

We just heard the very last words in the gospel. Let's hear the very first. Matthew 1, verse 1.

[1 : 26] The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. God promised King David, when your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

Son of David. And God promised Father Abraham, I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you will all the families of the earth be blessed.

Son of Abraham. Is it any wonder then, as we come to the end of the gospel, that the last thing Jesus says is, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

He's the son of David. And go therefore and make disciples of all nations. For he is the son of Abraham.

Isn't that what Matthew has been unpacking for us all this time? Friends, he's brought us on a very long but a very circular walk through what he calls the genealogy or genesis beginning of the everlasting ministry and reign of Jesus Christ.

[2 : 47] And so as we come to the end, really there should be no surprises. At uni, my essays always came back with loads of red pen at the bottom saying, don't say anything new in your conclusion.

Matthew would get two big green ticks for his conclusion. Nothing new here. Only one great big implication that presses into so many pressure points of our hearts and lives.

If you're feeling really petty tonight, we could ask, couldn't we, well, what was the point of doing it then? If we finish where we started, right? If I go on a walk, I want to get somewhere.

If I'm just going to end up back where I started, well, what was the point of doing it at all? But that's missing the point, isn't it? That's, we go on a long walk not to arrive to a new destination, but so that we will be changed, exercised, challenged, refreshed, whatever.

Friends, Matthew's message hasn't changed from the beginning to the end of his gospel, but by God's grace, would we have changed as a church family for having worked through it?

[3 : 58] At the end of his gospel, Matthew wants to leave us in no doubt at all that Jesus is a king for the world to bow to.

And we are therefore to bow to him ourselves and gladly go out and make disciples of all nations that all might bow to him as their rightful king.

So as we go, let's take one last look at his risen glory so that we would go with the afterglow of his royal majesty, burned, if you like, into our retinas as we head out into the world.

Firstly then, Jesus is a king. Just think for a moment about the different things that you're responsible for in your life.

How much authority would you say that you have? If you're very young or maybe very old, perhaps you feel that you don't have very much authority.

[4 : 59] There aren't many decisions that you get to make about the way that things work. If you're a parent, you have authority over your children, but you don't need me to tell you that it is challenged on an hourly basis.

We overstretch our authority by losing our temper. We underuse it by giving in to their tantrums. At work, you might have authority over a project or a team.

Even then, not every decision goes your way. Things don't get done on time or the way that you would have wanted. You might have responsibility at church. Have authority even as an office bearer, an elder, or a deacon, and struggle to know how best to do things.

When and how and where do I speak to that person or get involved with their needs or lead this area of service. Most of us have some authority, some of the time, over some things.

And we know how difficult it is even then to use it well. Listen to Jesus back from the dead, verse 18.

[6 : 09] Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

All authority over all things, all of the time. It would be easier to list the things over which Jesus doesn't have authority than the things that he does.

And it would be a very short list because there is nothing at all over which Jesus does not have complete authority. It's worth saying that authority is different to power.

Someone might have lots of power, throw their weight around, be very influential, but have no authority to do that. Power, if you like, is the ability to rule.

Authority is the right to rule. Let's put it a different way. You could take power by force, but you can't take authority. The right to be in charge of something has to be given to you, designated to you.

[7 : 14] What Jesus is saying here is that he is king now of heaven and of earth, not because he has more power than everyone else, though that is true, but because he has been given authority over them.

God has set him on the throne of the cosmos, crowned him with glory and honor, given him an everlasting kingdom of which to be the king.

Friends, that is at the heart of who Jesus is. If we see Jesus hanging on the cross, bearing our sins as a savior, and yet don't see that he died for us as our rightful king, our representative, our head, we have missed the point of the gospels.

Before Matthew ever calls Jesus son of David, son of Abraham, what does he call him? Christ. A title meaning God's one and only chosen king.

He was born a king into the royal line of David. He was anointed a king by the Holy Spirit and proclaimed a king by his father at his baptism. He was crowned a king by the soldiers with a crown of thorns.

[8 : 31] He was lifted up and enthroned as a king on the cross. This is Jesus, king of the Jews. And so he was raised and seated as king on the throne of heaven.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Do you see the purpose of the cross?

The reason he died was so that we rebels, enemies of God, might enter his everlasting kingdom by turning and trusting in him as the one true king who came to save us.

He died and rose again for God to deliver us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

There is no contradiction, no gap between him being savior and being king. Friends, we love him as our savior, do we not?

Do we love him as our king? Peter said that God's king could never be rejected, never suffer, never die.

[9 : 50] No, Jesus said God's king must be rejected, suffer, die, and rise again. And I wonder, brothers and sisters, do we sometimes do the same as Peter but in reverse?

Do we say to Jesus, maybe not out loud, yes, Jesus, I'll take your sacrifice, your suffering death and resurrection, the forgiveness of my sins, but rule and reign over me?

Have authority in my life? Trust you to run the world? Trust you to run the world. Trust you to run the world. We live in an age, don't we, that is instinctively distrustful of authority.

That's the air that we breathe. Even, I think, as Christians, we say things like, absolute power corrupts absolutely. But the problem actually isn't with power.

It's with the person who has the power. Well, to put it this way, the question isn't whether somebody should have all authority in heaven and on earth, but what kind of person should have that kind of authority?

[11:03] So much of what Matthew's shown us over the last 28 chapters has been to convince us that Jesus is not like a king that the nations have. He is not a leader like anything that we have ever known in our politics or history.

Rather, he is the king after God's own heart. The man who wrote this book, Matthew, he knew that firsthand. Jesus saw him when he was an outcast sitting, collecting taxes as a traitor against God's people, giving their money to fund the occupying power.

And as Jesus walked past him, he said to him, follow me. And Matthew did. And he took Jesus to his house, and we read many tax collectors and sinners came.

And they sit down at the table with him. This is Jesus' state dinner, if you like. This is his banqueting table. Who does he sit down with? The people seen as the scum of the earth.

The absolute, notorious, worst of sinners, traitors, and enemies. When the religious elite saw that, they said, why is he eating with people like that? Brackets, rather than with people like us.

[12:25] Clean, uncomplicated, respectable people. And the king replied, those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice, for I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners. Just one example of many we've seen through our time in the gospel of Jesus being a king like no other before or after him.

Isn't that the kind of king that our hearts long for? Don't we want somebody like that to be in charge?

Do you not wish that you could open your news app tomorrow morning and read, Friends, good news.

Whatever your news app does say tomorrow morning, that headline is still true. The king who came to serve sinners now sits on the throne of the universe.

[13:39] All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. And so we can rejoice for the Lord Jesus is king.

We can safely come under his rule, sit at his table. He is the king that we need and that our hearts long for. And we can do that tonight, whoever we are, because he is a king for the world.

This is our second point. See the king's marching orders in verse 19. What does he say? Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.

See the logical progression. Jesus has been given the right to rule the world. Now he says he wants to assert that right. The king of all the earth wants disciples of all nations.

And we can be thankful in lots of ways that that sounds really obvious to us tonight, but it wasn't as obvious to the very first Christians. We know that because a really big tension in the book of Acts that we heard from earlier, read by William, is who gets to join the church?

[14:51] Remember, if you can, Peter and Cornelius in Acts chapter 10. It took three crazy dreams, an unexpected knock at the door, an unlikely testimony, and the Holy Spirit to come on Cornelius and his family for Peter finally to be convinced that God shows no partiality.

But in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Penny-dropping moments. The very first church council happens in Acts chapter 15.

The great big controversy then was, can somebody be saved if they haven't been circumcised?

There's huge discussion. They finally reach the conclusion based on the Bible, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, what they have seen, that God's rescue is for anyone, anywhere who puts their trust in Jesus.

It took them a while to get there. I think Matthew's first readers were probably still struggling with that themselves. And the church always needs that reminder.

At heart as it is for us to believe, the modern missionary movement is actually relatively new. In 1796, only just over 200 years ago, a proposal was brought to the Assembly of the Church of Scotland that the church send missionaries from Scotland to spread the gospel in places where it hadn't yet reached.

[16:17] But there was massive pushback. Let me quote what was said at that meeting. To spread abroad the knowledge of the gospel amongst barbarous and heathen nations seems to be highly preposterous, insofar as philosophy and learning must in the nature of things take precedence.

And while there remains at home a single individual every year without the means of religious knowledge, to propagate it abroad would be improper and absurd.

There's a quote that hasn't aged well. The story goes that then one of the ministers there, John Erskine, said, Moderator, reach me that Bible.

He opened it up and read these words. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

Christians. The king has spoken. Disciples of all nations. The opposition folded. And the world has never been the same.

[17 : 26] We speak a lot, I think, as a church in Scotland about spiritual decline. Do you know, in the 20th century, more people became Christians than in any other century prior to that.

There are tens of millions more Christians in China than there are people in the UK today. I found this out, about 100 million Christians in China, about 70 million people in Britain.

We see decline in our nation, but the church of Jesus makes disciples of all nations. I wonder, how do we need reminding of that today, brothers and sisters?

Who do we see as a good candidate to be a disciple of Jesus? We're not Jewish believers avoiding Gentile pagans, are we? Neither, I trust, are we Scots ignoring the wider world or people of other nationalities.

But, are we polite, respectable people not as interested in talking to people with tougher upbringings and backgrounds to ours in our city?

[18 : 37] Are we shy, reserved people avoiding speaking to people who we fear might give us a hard time for our faith? Are we professional people not wanting to make the workplace too awkward by bringing Jesus into conversation?

Are we friendly people who don't want to push it too far with somebody who we might offend because of their beliefs or their lifestyle? Who are we a church for?

I wonder, if somebody came and spent a few months with us, who might they think at the end of that time that we didn't want coming in? It's so wonderful to gather together like this and to be able to look out on a church that is so full of people from different backgrounds, different ages and stages, different nationalities and upbringings.

We're a very welcoming church, but we always have to ask the question, don't we? Whatever kind of people we are, do we avoid reaching out to people not like us?

That becomes a problem, doesn't it, if you're a Christian? Because you end up not wanting to make disciples of people who are not already a Christian. we retreat into our bubble, don't we?

[20 : 02] Here's the Lord Jesus shoving us back out. Look at our king in the Gospels. Is there any kind of person that he did not spend time with, show grace to, and speak to about the kingdom of God?

Jews, Gentiles, servants, professionals, prostitutes, rich men, religious leaders, widows, children, sick people, disabled people, people with demons, all of them sinners.

Our king made disciples of them all. He has all authority, and so he wants his church to make disciples of all nations.

That's still true today, so brothers and sisters, let's keep being super, super generous with the Gospel and not giving up from reaching across those boundaries, whatever they are, to make disciples for Jesus.

But the question maybe you're asking is how? How do we do that? Indulge me for a minute getting a bit technical. If you want to know kind of how, go to Life Group, okay?

[21 : 10] Passion for Life, that's why we're doing it. How in Matthew chapter 28. Often the key word we pick out of these verses is go. Go to the ends of the earth.

Some of you have done that to be here. That's wonderful. Thank you. Maybe for some of us that is the call to go, go out to somewhere else, to be a minister, to be a missionary.

Maybe that's you. But that is actually not the key word in the sentence. It's what's called a participle. So as you're going, or we could say on your way, the going is just what is happening when the main action takes place, which is make disciples.

It's what we call an indicative or an imperative. Should have checked that. Baptizing and teaching are also participle.

So they fill out or describe what the main verb involves. So how do we make disciples of all nations? Jesus says we make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them.

[22 : 18] We'll touch on the teaching in our next point, but just to flesh out baptizing, there's lots that could be said, but the stress that Jesus puts here is on the name into which disciples are baptized.

The Aberdeen-based theologian Sinclair Ferguson makes the point that baptism is in one sense a naming or a renaming ceremony. family. It's where Jesus' people take the name of the triune God. We receive the family name. Think of a bride taking her husband's name in marriage. What does it say? I belong to a new family.

I'm taking on a new identity. I and my husband are one. So in baptism, it's as if we're brought into a new family, into the covenant family of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Like the priests did in the Old Testament using the Aaronic blessing, they put the name, the Lord's threefold name on his people. So in baptism, the church puts the threefold name of God on Christ's disciples.

[23 : 34] Some of them very little. Others of them much bigger. I think Jesus' emphasis on the name who is really striking given what he's just said, who he's just said, he wants this to happen to.

Who does he want to be made a disciple and baptized? People from every family. People from every family baptized into his one family.

No longer to be a mainly biological or ethnic Jewish family, but a new family made up of people from all nations. People created in God's image, broken by sin, but now called by his name and restored into the family likeness.

There's a saying, isn't there, blood is thicker than water. Where you come from, the family that you're part of, is what matters most about you, what defines you.

Brothers and sisters, when it comes to the church, it is much more true that water is thicker than blood. Our one baptism into Christ defines us far more than the blood in our veins or the color of our skin or the language that we speak or the family we were brought up in.

[24 : 57] Because our baptism is a sign and a seal of God's promises to us as his family to save us as a people of his very own in and through his king, Jesus Christ.

That is how a disciple, in one sense, is made, being called after the name of the triune God to follow Jesus.

It's striking how different that is from the way that human ideologies and religions spread. And we see in the book of Acts over and over, people from all over the world hear the gospel, trust in Jesus, they and their households are what?

Baptized. By contrast, here's an expert opinion on the early spread of Islam from a Muslim scholar, which secular historians would certainly agree with.

He says this, Islam spread by means of proof and evidence to those who listened to the message and responded to it, and it spread by means of force and the sword to those who were stubborn and arrogant until they were overwhelmed and, I love this, became no longer stubborn and submitted to that reality.

[26 : 10] In short, if you didn't want to convert, you were made to convert. Friends, the reality of the message that Jesus is Lord is that people of all nations bowed willingly when they heard of his love for them.

They were bathed not with blood, but with water. they did not face force, but were welcomed into a new family. Jesus was and still is a king for all the world.

Whoever you are tonight, wherever you come from, whatever kind of family that you are brought up in, and wherever you are here, know for sure that Jesus is a king for you because he is the king for all the world.

Whoever you are, you can join his family tonight and come under his good and loving rule forever.

We do that, finally, by bowing to him, a king for the world to bow to.

Remember, there are two things that happen to make a disciple, baptizing them, and, verse 20, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded ye. Now, whether you are a Christian or not, that sounds quite overwhelming, doesn't it?

[27 : 27] Whether we are being told to teach or to learn all that Jesus commanded, the question is, how do I know if I have? And what happens if I miss something?

Doesn't that make us nervous? Where do we go to find everything Jesus wants every disciple to know and to do? Well, I don't think that Matthew wants us to be worried about that.

That's why he wrote his gospel. Remember, if you can, that it is built around five blocks of what? Five blocks of Jesus' teaching.

Five blocks, just like the five books of the Torah or the teaching of Moses that we find at the beginning of the Bible, so our New Testament begins with five blocks of the teaching of the prophet like Moses, the greater Moses, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Sermon on the Mount, surely the most famous, best sermon ever preached, the sending out of the Twelve in chapter 10, the parables of the Kingdom in chapter 13, the marks of a genuine church in chapter 18, being ready for the end, chapters 24 and 25, which means that when we hear in the very last verse of this gospel teaching them all that I've commanded you, I think we're supposed to smile and think, that's what I've just read, the collected teachings of the Lord Jesus, all that a disciple needs to know in order to be a disciple and make disciples.

So if there's one really practical application from all of this then, it's this. Tomorrow or this week, open up your Bible to Matthew chapter 1, verse 1, and start again.

[29 : 25] The series is finished, but we're not, are we? Go back and have a look. Have I understood? Do I know it? Am I doing it? Can I teach it? All the sermons are up on the website to go and listen to, but you can just read it in your Bible.

What's Jesus commanded us, his learners, his disciples, to learn, do, and teach? It's all in your hands. Isn't that reassuring, brothers and sisters, when we feel there's too much to remember, too much to know, too much to do?

Matthew, under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, has done us a great service by writing his gospel. Let's make really good use of it. It's our training manual for disciple-making disciples.

As we come to a close, not just of our time now, but of our series, here are three bigger applications as we go. Number one, bowing to King Jesus is the most wonderful thing that you could do, but it is not for those who want an easy life.

Brothers and sisters, evangelism, according to Jesus, is not telling people that he will fix all their problems if only they trust in him. At least in part, it's teaching people to do everything he's commanded.

[30 : 49] If we trust in him, we have the assurance that he's dealt with the mother of all our problems. He's dealt with our sins. They are forgiven. Praise the Lord.

But we are not to pretend to people that we can trust him as a savior without bowing to him as a king. Jesus has said, love your enemies.

You will have enemies. Progress will be painstaking. People will wrong you. And judgment is coming. There are probably other and better ways to do it, but that, I think, is a fair summary of Jesus' fivefold teaching in Matthew.

That is not an easy message for a pain-free life. Notice that Jesus doesn't say, make converts of all nations, but make disciples of all nations.

We are not about people praying the sinner's prayer and going on their merry way. We are about teaching and showing people what all of life, lifelong discipleship, looks like.

[31 : 54] Jesus didn't do small print in his evangelism, and neither should we. Secondly, we are in it together. Remember, Jesus has taken us from all families and made us one family.

Our baptism teaches us that. It also teaches us implicitly that this is, first and foremost, not an individual task. Let me illustrate that with a question.

How many people have you personally baptized? I hope that unless you are a duly ordained minister, the answer is none.

Does that not therefore mean that you are failing to keep the Great Commission? Make disciples of all nations baptizing them. No.

Because this is the mission of the church. The church baptizes and welcomes Christians into the family on Christ's behalf. The church teaches them to observe all that he's commanded.

[32 : 57] The church is us, brothers and sisters. You and me together. And so, we should all, in some sense, be about that, reaching out to people we know, friends, family members, colleagues, who are lost with the good news of Jesus.

But the church is all of us. It's not you individually. We witness together. We reach out together. We welcome people together. Let me encourage you that Jesus' parting words in Matthew are an incredibly exciting thing to be part of.

So as we finish, please let me encourage you not to go feeling guilt-ridden and anxious about your own personal evangelism, but to enthusiastically play the part that God has given you in this mission to the very best of your ability and strength.

Whatever kind of gifts and service he's given you to do that serves the end of making disciples and seeing them baptized and taught, do that with all your heart.

That is our mission together. Let us joyfully get stuck into it. Whether you are so gifted at speaking to people about Jesus that it just comes as naturally to you as breathing.

[34 : 18] Whether you excel at being generous with your money to give to the cause of Jesus. Whether you are fantastic at hospitality and just introducing people to other Christians that you know.

however it is, however it is, do it with all your heart that people might be made disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. And finally, we can only do any of this with the Lord Jesus with us.

He lets us know that by telling us, I will be with you always to the very end of the age. People point out sometimes Jesus gives this great commission to the apostles, the very first people who were to spread the message.

That's true. But Jesus clearly has a longer term view than the eleven guys standing in front of him because he says, I'll be with you to the end of the age. Unless these guys were going to live for the next two thousand plus years, who's the you?

It's you. It's you. It's us, isn't it? That's Jesus' promise to his church throughout the age.

[35 : 31] I will be with you. We, who have devoted ourselves to the apostles' teaching, we who believe and teach the apostolic gospel, until the end of the age, until his return, says Jesus, he will be with his church on earth as we carry out his mission.

What a wonderful encouragement, friends, to end with, that we have the son of David and the son of Abraham, the king, to rule over and bless every family of the earth with us as we go in his name to live for him and to make disciples.

Truly, he is a king for our world to bow to, trust in, love, and serve with all our hearts for all of time. Let's bow to him in prayer and ask that he would make that true of us. Lord Jesus, you said, heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

And as we hear them now, Lord Jesus, we pray that you would work that faith in our hearts by your spirit that believes that these things are true, the most true, truly, truly, you say to us.

[37 : 05] Help us, Father, therefore, to give ourselves wholeheartedly to Jesus and his words, to live by them, to walk with him each day, to be his follower, his learner.

Help us, Lord, we pray, to be so glad, so thankful for that to be us, that we would have others to join us. Lord, forgive our temerity at sharing Jesus with others.

Fill our hearts with gospel generosity and gospel gratitude such that we would want others, Lord, to follow you. We pray, Lord, that as a church family that you would make disciples among us, that we would see many baptized in the triune name of God and many taught all that you have commanded.

By your spirit, we pray, make this true of us, build your church, for we ask in your name, Lord Jesus, Amen. As we respond, let's stand together and sing, hear the...