

# The Gospel of the Kingdom #1

by Stephen Kaung

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*Stephen Kaung's sermon emphasizes the necessity of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom as a precursor to Christ's return and the transformative power of discipleship in believers' lives.*

**Duration:** 1:14:27

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:2, Matthew 24:14, Luke 21:34, Luke 21:36, Romans 8:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:9

**Topics:** "Kingdom Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of responding to God's call and living in the reality of the kingdom of the heavens. He highlights that the age of grace was ushered in by the preaching of John the Baptist, who called for repentance. The speaker also warns against being weighed down by worldly concerns and urges believers to watch and pray in order to be accounted worthy to escape the coming tribulations and stand before the Son of Man. The sermon concludes with a reminder that the gospel of the kingdom must be preached throughout the world as a witness before the end comes.

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## Transcript

Will you please turn to the Gospel according to Matthew. Chapter 24, verse 14. Matthew 24, verse 14.

And these glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all the nations, and then shall come the end. The glad tidings of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all the nations, and then shall come the end. Let's have a word of prayer.

Dear Lord, as we gather here in Thy Name, we believe that Thou art here in our midst. As we come to Thy presence, Lord, to open our hearts to Thee, and say, Lord, what hast Thou to say to us? Please speak to our hearts. We are here in Thy presence.

We want to hear Thy Word, and we want to follow Thee. May all glory unto Yourself, in Thy precious Name. Amen.

Recently, I have been exercised before the Lord over one thing. I believe, brothers and sisters, we are all expecting our Lord Jesus to come back. And we have been waiting for His return.

But another year has passed, and the Lord is still in heaven. I wonder, why is it so? Before our Lord Jesus left this world, He told His disciples that He will come back and receive us to Himself. And especially if you read the book of Revelation, when you come to the last chapter, almost the last verse, and the Lord said,

Behold, I come quickly.

But twenty centuries have already passed, and the Lord seems to still linger. So I have been exercised before the Lord. I wonder, why is it so? I feel the Lord has told me there is one thing that He is waiting for us.

Because you find in Matthew 24, verse 14, the Lord said, The great tidings of the kingdom of the heavens shall be preached in the whole habitable earth for a witness to all the nations. And then shall come the end. So I wonder if this is the reason for our Lord's delay.

I believe our Lord Jesus is anxious to come back. Much more anxious than we are. But why is it He delays His return? Probably it is because the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens has not been preached to all the nations.

As a witness, and then the end shall come. So my burden this time with you dear brothers and sisters, is on this matter of the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens. And we know when the Lord said the gospel of the kingdom of heaven shall be preached through the whole habitable world.

And of course, He doesn't mean that it just be preached. He means that there are people who respond to the kingdom of the heavens. And if there is enough response, then the end shall come.

As we go back to history, we find that after Malachi, after his prophecy, for 400 years, God was silent. Even though at that time the Jewish people have returned to Jerusalem. And the temple has been rebuilt.

And temple service had been going on for years. And yet, there was silence. I think it is a terrible thing when God is silent.

Because the Bible said our Lord is one who speaks. He is one who wants to reveal Himself to us. When He is shut up, it is not because He does not want to speak to us.

It is because we do not have the heart and the ears to hear. Think of that. For 400 years, He was silent.

Even though on earth, everything seemed to go on as usual. As if His people were quite religious. And yet, God was silent.

Then suddenly, one day, the voice of John was heard. John the Baptist came. And he began to preach.

He said, repent. For the kingdom of heaven has drawn nigh. Brothers and sisters, we know that the age of grace was ushered in by that preaching.

Before this age, it was the age of the law. But now, God wants to conclude the age of law. And to bring us into the age of grace.

And what is it that introduces the age of grace? It is the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens. Brothers and sisters, we know we are now living in the age of grace. But is it strange to you to see that this age was actually brought in by the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens? We think of grace as something free.

Something quite cheap. But the kingdom of the heavens is a serious subject. If law is a serious subject, then the kingdom should have higher demands upon us.

So how can something that has such a high demand to bring in the age of grace? I think it is because of our misunderstanding. When we think of the kingdom of the heavens, immediately in our mind there is a higher demand upon us. It must be higher than the demand of the law.

So how can it be that it is the kingdom of the heavens that is introduced in the age of grace? So we can see that God's thought is completely different from ours. To Him, the kingdom of the heavens is grace upon grace. And if we can really understand its meaning, that is what it really is.

So you remember in the gospel according to John. Chapter 1, I think it is in verse 17 or 18. For the law was given by Moses.

Grace and truth subsist through Jesus Christ. We know the law of God came through Moses. But the Bible tells us grace and truth subsist in Christ Jesus.

The word subsist here simply means that grace and truth were not known before the coming of our Lord Jesus. It is through Jesus Christ that grace and truth were introduced to us. Because He is the only one who came to declare His Father.

He is a representation of God the Father. It is through Him that we begin to know what grace is. And what truth is.

So brothers and sisters, I hope from the very outset we need to change our mentality. Instead of seeing the kingdom of the heavens as something that has higher demands. It is true that it does demand higher.

But we must remember the answer to the demand is grace. So when we see that it is grace upon grace, we must remember I believe it will give us incentive to press on. We know when John the Baptist came, he said repent for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh.

I think this is a very strange statement. Because to us, for us to repent, it means because we have sinned. Because we have done something wrong before God.

And that's the reason why we need to repent. But here you'll find the message is repent for the kingdom of heavens has drawn nigh. The reason for repentance is positive.

It is for the reason that the kingdom of heavens is coming. And therefore we need to repent. You know at that time the Jewish people have already returned to the promised land.

And they have their temple service going on. It seems that they were a very pious nation. And they seemed to be waiting for the Messiah to come.

But the reality is not that. Because when they heard that Christ has come, they were worried. That proves that they were not ready for the Messiah.

So that's the reason why they need to repent. Their lives do not fit with the kingdom of the heavens. Because the kingdom of heavens has drawn nigh.

So they need to be prepared for it. And the only way to prepare for it is to repent. So you remember how all the sinners they came and be baptized.

Because the baptism of John is the baptism of repentance. As a preparation for the kingdom of the heavens. So that was the situation at that time.

And then you find our Lord Jesus came. He came to be baptized of John the Baptist. And John the Baptist says within him that here is a man who needs no repentance.

He, the Baptist, needs to repent. He needs to be baptized by Jesus. Because he can sense there is something great in that man.

And yet the Lord says the Lord asked him to do it. To fulfill all righteousness. In other words, when our Lord began to appear to the public to begin his public work he began it by being baptized by John.

It is not because he needs to repent. But it is because to fulfill all righteousness. Because at that time that was the demand of God.

So he stood in our place to fulfill the righteousness of God and receive that baptism. And then you remember after John the Baptist was taken into prison our Lord Jesus himself began his public ministry of preaching. And when he began to preach he said the same thing as John the Baptist.

Repent! For the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. Brothers and sisters, why is it so? For John to preach that message was correct. Because Christ hasn't been shown publicly yet.

But for Christ himself who has come and he still preached the same word. Repent! For the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh. For the kingdom of the heavens has already come.

Now why does he say that the kingdom of the heavens has drawn nigh? It is because he has no people. A king without a people does not have a kingdom. So you find our Lord Jesus came to find his people.

But what did he find on earth? I think when you read the gospel you will be surprised. Why is it that our Lord always met these crippled people? Blind, deaf, even dead. They were the people that our Lord came to save.

But there wasn't anyone who fit to be in the kingdom of heaven. No one was qualified to be a citizen of that kingdom. So you find the Lord has to rescue some people until some people believe in him.

But just believing in him doesn't mean that they are in the kingdom of heaven. So you find immediately after some people believe in him what did he do afterwards? He called for disciples. Only disciples that follow the Lord can be really in the kingdom of the heavens.

Now when you read the word of God you come to Colossians chapter 1. I think it's verse 13. Who has delivered us from the authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of God? He has delivered us from the authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of God. You know when we come to the Lord Jesus and we believe in him what happens? Not only individually we are saved.

Individually we receive his life in us. And individually we receive the Holy Spirit dwell in us. But we find that together positionally there is a position that he has given to us.

Formerly when we were in sin we were under the power of doctors. Brothers and sisters the people in this world think that they are free. They think they can do whatever they like.

They are their own masters. But the Bible tells us very clearly in Ephesians chapter 2 you find they are under the authority of darkness. Not only they sin but they sin because they are under the authority of darkness.

Because they belong to the evil one. They cannot but sin. They were under the authority of darkness.

To thank God. When our Lord Jesus came and saved us he has delivered us from the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of the love of God's Son. So brothers and sisters do you realize that when you believe in the Lord Jesus there is a wonderful position that you have entered in.

Because he has delivered you out of the authority of darkness. And has translated you into the kingdom of God's Son. But remember this is just a position.

Our position does not mean that we really possess it. Position is objective. Possession is subjective.

So positionally brothers and sisters we do not belong to this world. We are out of the power of darkness. Thank God we are in the kingdom of God's Son.

But brothers and sisters experientially we are not so. We do not really possess the kingdom. Not until we really possess the kingdom then we become the people of the kingdom.

So that's the reason why you find discipleship is so important in the scripture. Today we tend to divide believers from disciples. But in the sight of God these two things go together.

Now it is very true that practically they can be divided. But from the same point of truth they are together. It is important therefore for us believers as soon as we are saved the call of discipleship comes to us.

When you believe in the Lord Jesus you accept Him as your Savior. But when you really accept Him as your Lord then you begin to be in the kingdom of Heaven. So unfortunately most people divide these two things.

Because when we are saved we are so happy. We think this is the greatest thing in the world. We think this is enough.

But God is not enough. Because He has something more glorious for us. So the call of discipleship is to all believers.

The call of discipleship does not come to unbelievers. It is only to the believers. Then we are all called to be disciples of Christ.

So you find that after Peter Andrew and John and James they believe in the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of John chapter 1 you find how they came to the Lord. And then you find when our Lord began to preach then He called those who have believed Him to be His disciples. He said, follow Me.

And I will make you fishers of men. And immediately they left everything and followed the Lord. So discipleship is the secret to the kingdom of the Heavens.

Now what is the kingdom of the Heavens? You find the kingdom of the Heavens or the heavenly kingdoms is mentioned mostly in the Gospel of Matthew. The only two places you can find one in the Old Testament one in the New Testament and in the Old Testament is Daniel chapter 4 when Daniel said the Heavens do

rule. That is referring to the kingdom of the Heavens.

And the other thing is in 2 Timothy. And when Paul said God is preparing him for the heavenly kingdom. But mostly you find in the Gospel according to Matthew.

So if we want to know what the kingdom of the Heavens is I think we need to concentrate more upon the Gospel of Matthew. The kingdom of the Heavens simply means the Heavens rule. And the Heavens is not just an abstract term.

Because the Heavens here refers to a person. It refers to our Lord Jesus. In other words His kingdom takes its character from the King.

We know in this world when you have a kingdom and the king rules over his people. In other words his idea, his character rules over his domain. Everything in his kingdom follows after him.

So the kingdom of Heavens simply means that Christ is the King. And everything is to fit to his character. Now brothers and sisters when we are thinking of this you know what a great work the Lord has to do in our lives.

Because so far as we are concerned we have already developed a character. And he has to come in and change as it were our character. I think there is nothing more difficult than changing a character.

And this is what the Lord is doing with us. So this is what the kingdom of the Heavens is. Now brothers and sisters you know when our Lord Jesus came to preach what is the gospel that he is preaching? The gospel that he is preaching is the gospel of the kingdom of the Heavens.

And what did these apostles preach? They preached the kingdom of the Heavens. Because you find on the day of Pentecost when Peter and the eleven stood up and preached he said this is to tell you that God has made him Christ and Lord. This is the peak of his message.

So it is the gospel of the kingdom. And when you read the book of Acts to the end of the book of Acts you find Paul in Rome. In his rented house and he was there preaching the kingdom and talk about the Lord.

That is what apostles preached. But unfortunately in church history you find how the church began to fall. Even at the end of the first century you read Revelation chapters 2 and 3 these seven churches in Asia Minor they were representing the church during the end of the first century.

Thank God there is the church in Philadelphia that is still faithful to the Lord. Thank God that there is the church of Smyrna they are willing to suffer for the Lord. But so far as the general condition of the churches is concerned we find how all these depressions among them and God has to use persecution to revive them.

So that is the reason why in church history you find ten times Roman Empire how they tried to wipe out Christianity. But thank God you find in the beginning of the fourth century when Constantine seemed to believe in God. And he encouraged his soldiers to be baptized.

If a soldier will be baptized he will be rewarded with money and also clothes. So who among his soldiers will not be baptized? And when this happened you find most people in the so-called church is not saved at all. Now how can you expect them to serve God? So environment forced them to train some special people to take care of the church so called church.

And you find gradually Christianity has fallen lower and lower. Even salvation by grace was unknown. The Bible was changed.

People were not allowed to read the scripture. So they can only be explained by those priests. And gradually you find how the church has fallen.

Not to say the gospel of the kingdom was unknown. Even the gospel of pure grace was unknown. Gradually people in Christianity thought they had to be tried to be saved by accumulating merit.

And of course most people could not accumulate enough merit to go to heaven when they died. Only a few so-called saints they had enough merit. And not only enough merit but too much merit.

So you can pray to these saints and they will share some of the extra merit to you. And get you quicker out of purgatory. Now that's the situation in Europe until the 16th century.

And thank God. In the 16th century God began to do his work of recovery. And you find how God raised people like Martin Luther John Calvin.

A group of people. And they began to preach salvation by faith. And also they began to emphasize an open Bible.

And the Bible began to be translated from the original language to the local language. But brothers and sisters even though there was such a wonderful recovery but the gospel of the kingdom of heaven was unknown. Not until the 19th century.

So you can think of that. How the enemy had worked in the church. He tried to keep it from being known.

Because he knew that when the kingdom of heaven had been preached to all the nations then the end will come. It will be his end. So brothers and sisters when you realize for how many centuries God's people were in darkness.

But thank God in the 19th century God raised a people like Pamper like Gavette like Panton. And these people began to preach the kingdom of the heaven. But even today among God's people even though among God's same people they hardly heard of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven.

As a matter of fact this was resisted. When you try to preach the gospel of the kingdom of the heaven they think you are teaching a false gospel. But brothers and sisters if you read the Bible you will find this is the gospel.

Of course there is only one gospel. That gospel is comprehensive. But the kingdom is the most important part.

So it has to be preached to all the habitable world as a witness to all the nations. That is to say God will raise up a people who are really living in the kingdom of heaven today. And they become a testimony to the nation that Jesus is Lord.

Not only Savior but Jesus is Lord. And it is not a theory. It is a life experience and that has such a spiritual effect upon the world.

And he will bring in the king again. So dear brothers and sisters let us see how important this is. And now the kingdom of the heavens is the gospel that brings in the age of grace.

And it is also the kingdom of the heavens that bring in the kingdom age. Now I hope you can see this. How does God change the age of grace? From the age of law to the age of grace.

It's a big change. And how did he do it? He did it by the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens. Because this really shows us what grace is.

The more you know the kingdom of the heavens the more you begin to know what God's grace is. So this is the kingdom of heavens that make that change. And this is to bring in the king in the first place.

Now in the same way how will God change this age of grace to the age of the kingdom? Because the kingdom today is hidden. So far as the world is concerned they do not know it. But it is there.

And it has its great effect. But it is hidden. But one day it will be publicly appear upon this earth.

When Christ shall return the second time. Christ shall return for the second time. He will establish his kingdom upon this earth.

Now how does God make that change? You find it is also related to the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens. Because there in Matthew 24, 14 the Lord said the gospel of the kingdom of heavens shall be preached to all the habitable world. As a witness to the nations.

And then the end will come. So brothers and sisters the more you study the scripture the more you realize how important is the gospel of the kingdom of the heavens. But today even today it is still neglected.

Now let us return to the first coming of the Lord. We find when during the first coming of the Lord what was the condition at that time? We have already mentioned that the condition at that time was they were religious. But that was a facade.

There is no reality there. And for the coming of the Messiah even though the whole nation was waiting for the coming of the Messiah. We know that every day in the temple when a priest will offer incense in the holy place all the people will be standing outside waiting.

And that priest will pray a national prayer. May thy kingdom come. Brothers and sisters they seem to wait for the Messiah to come.

But reality is not true. But then God God did prepare some people who were prepared for his coming. Now if you read the gospel according to Luke you find in chapter 1 how God prepared Zechariah and Elizabeth.

You know God's way is always higher than man's way. Because in the Old Testament time when you are pious towards God God will bless you. And the greatest blessing is you will have many sons and daughters.

So in the Old Testament time when a woman could not conceive no children that was a sign that he was hated by God. Something must be wrong with her. And that happened to Elizabeth.

Both Elizabeth and Zechariah they loved the Lord. They lived piously before the Lord. And yet God shed the womb of Elizabeth.

No doubt they must be praying much about it. But I do wonder when Zechariah in his old age get into the temple to offer incense you know among the priests to have the privilege of burning incense at the altar is a one time privilege. And in Zechariah's old age he got that privilege.

Of course you cannot expect him at that time praying for his own son. Because he represents the whole nation. He must be praying more Messiah God.

And the Lord answered him. God will through him prepare a forerunner for the Messiah. So here you find that godly couple.

They go through situations that could not be explained. Because they will be looked upon as someone who displays God. And yet they continue to be faithful.

And it is through them that God prepare the forerunner of the Messiah. And then you find Joseph and Mary. They were all godly people.

And yet you find God chose Mary. Before they were married the Holy Spirit will come upon her womb. And the Holy One will be born.

Now so far as Mary was concerned that was the most difficult decision in her life. Because the people won't understand. They will consider her as a terrorist.

And they will be stoning her to death. So it was not an easy decision for her. But when the news came to her she said, how could it be? Because I wasn't married yet.

Brothers and sisters God's way is one mysterious. Not only Mary. Joseph.

Do you think it's easy for Joseph to take Mary as his wife? Being a righteous person. He knew he has to divorce Mary. But he didn't want to do it publicly.

He was thinking of doing it privately. Until the angel came and told her, told him what happened. And he had the faith to believe.

Brothers and sisters you see how they went through? They went through the serious discipline. They had to lay down their own lives for the God's purpose to be fulfilled. So they were also among those who are prepared for the coming of the Lord.

And you have Simeon and Anna. How Simeon served God. And he got the revelation.

Before he died he will see the Messiah. And when he saw the Messiah he said, let me go. That's enough.

Nothing better than that. And Anna served the Lord faithfully. And she also got the revelation to tell the people of the coming of the Messiah.

And then you find these shepherds. We were told they were not ordinary shepherds. They were temple shepherds.

Because you need a temple you have to offer these lambs. And they were taking care of these lambs. So they were very pious shepherds.

And when the Messiah come they saw the Messiah the first. So brothers and sisters as you read the Scripture at the coming of the Lord Jesus it was not the nations that was preparing His coming. God chose a few to prepare for His Son to come.

This principle will be carried to the second coming of the Lord. Not just awkwardly we seem all to be waiting for the coming of the Lord. Actually we are hoping He will deliver us to delay His coming.

But thank God. God is preparing a people. Hidden ones.

Here and there. There were people whose heart was pure towards God. They were willing to give their lives to the Lord.

Allow the Lord to have His way. And these will be the people who were really prepared for the coming of the Lord Jesus. So in the New Testament we find the principle of the overcomers.

Because the church is supposed to prepare for the coming of the Lord. But when the church failed then God called for overcomers among His people. They were willing to give themselves to the Lord.

And live for the Lord. And testify for the Lord. And with these people they will bring in the King.

But how can we be such people if we only know the so-called gospel of grace? Because the gospel of grace that people know today is cheap grace. Everything is for me. Save me.

Give me. So we find that we are still living a self-centered life. We have not been fully delivered.

Because God's purpose is whom He has called. He wants them to be conformed to the image of His Son. Whom He has called He will justify.

And whom He has justified He will glorify. So brothers and sisters we need to see that God has a higher purpose for us. And are we willing to respond to God's call? So you find in Luke chapter 21 Luke chapter 21 The Lord Jesus said in verse 36 Watch therefore praying at every season that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which are about to come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.

And go back to 34 But take heed to yourselves lest possibly your hearts be laden with the feeding and drinking and care of life and that they come upon you suddenly unaware. For as a snare shall they come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. This is negative.

How we need to be saved from this world. And then verse 36 is positive. Watch therefore praying at every season that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which are about to come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.

So may the Lord have mercy upon us. We need to know what the kingdom of the heavens is. How can we today live in the reality of that kingdom? Because only those who today live in the reality of the kingdom then when the kingdom shall be appeared publicly upon this earth then you will be reigning with Christ for a thousand years.

So may we be encouraged. I believe this gives us some incentive for our life today that we cannot just live casually having no difference with the people of this world that we may be a separated people and live for God alone. May we pray.

Dear Lord we do present this important message to Thy people. We pray that it will prepare us for Thy return. That we may not live carelessly thinking that we are saved at all.

But Thou has something much nobler and higher for us. We want to live for Thee and for those who are bringing in the King. We ask in Thy precious name.

Amen.

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