

Repent

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Preacher: Rev Alan Murray

[0 : 0 0] Matthew chapter 4 and in verse 17 from that time Jesus began to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand particularly the words repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand it is a command but it is also a warning two things which we do not like to hear indeed if we need any proof of our own sinnership it is our natural dislike of the commands and the warnings of the gospel of God this is a disturbing text to those who are still without the knowledge of God it is a disturbing text especially I suppose to those who know that there is a judgment coming many of us even although we have never bowed our knee we are convinced in our own hearts that there is a judgment coming that there is a day of accounting coming and to search as those this text must be indeed very very disturbing

I can remember it myself usually it would be in one of the major cities and one would find in the very middle of all the hustle and bustle perhaps a hoarding for the words to repent repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand or else sometimes one would see in the center of Glasgow a man with sandwich boards and various texts on it among these would be the words repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand I always found it so disturbing because even in my darkness and ignorance I knew for sure that there was a day of accounting and I knew that I was not ready for that day I knew that I had not closed in with God's offer of salvation it was disturbing it is a text which disturbs what I call the peace of the sinner now you might think well that's a very strange term to use surely peace belongs to the people of God surely they are the ones that have the peace which passes understanding that is very true yet the sinner has his own peace he is quite happy to go on the way he is going perhaps in those who have some knowledge there may be some rumblings or disturbance in their minds but they want to subdue these things they don't want anything to stir these things up they want to continue in their peace

I suppose we could say that there are probably two kinds of peace even in this room today there is the peace which passes knowledge the peace of God the peace which is founded on the work of Jesus Christ that he died in the place of sinners and that those who have this peace are convinced that they have an interest a passion of saving interest in that world there will also be the peace of a sinner that peace which doesn't like to be disturbed doesn't like texts like this to be brought up before them but would rather go on from day to day perhaps living a day at a time facing the problems of each day as they come all the time just hoping that their peace will not be disturbed

I come today with the gospel I come with this text and I know that it is disturbing but that doesn't mean that I am going to hold back it is my calling to disturb the peace of a sinner you may just say to me well I really don't want to be disturbed I came here this morning because I want to be away from here feeling better you know setting out to make me feel washed you are disturbing my peace all my thoughts were quite rested I was quite at peace with myself and the rest of the world when I left the house this morning I know you are bringing in this note of disturbance you are disturbing my peace I am disturbing the peace of the sinner I am saying that now for you it is time to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand now there are three things which add particular weight to this text firstly he says that it is the same as the key text in the preaching of John the Baptist repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand it is the text with which Jesus here begins his ministry and that itself must have a tremendously strong appeal it must carry a great deal of weight but he chose these words to begin his ministry this public preaching repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand he didn't come to ensure that people were understood and were just simply encouraged or simply told that God loves them or simply told there is good news coming to them with these words repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand and the thirdly this is an important text because it goes to the very heart of what God requires of man

God requires of man indeed he commands man and this is a command if you disobey this you are disobeying God's command God commands all men everywhere to repent not only that but he anticipates your question you say to me why should I repent?

[7 : 08] why should I repent today? the answer very simply because the kingdom of heaven is at hand this is a special time something is near there is an opportunity to be gasped and the sense of it is that it is at hand now that it will not always be there the Messiah says to us seek ye the Lord while he may be found call ye upon him while he is near and the inference clearly is that there is a time when he is to be found and a time when he is near and there is a time when he will not be found and a time when he will not be in the temple once your day of opportunity passes whether that day will be with death or perhaps with a heart that's grown hard and I am called to the gospel that day he is no longer near

Isaiah goes on to say let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his paths and let him return unto the Lord and the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his paths and let him return unto the Lord that he will have mercy upon him and to over God for he will abundantly part repent for the kingdom of heaven is a time now today I want to look at just two questions what is repentance?

and secondly why repent? what then is repentance? the fundamental to repentance is a turning it means a change of direction and that is probably the thing that we like least about repentance but it means a change of pattern in our lives we love our patterns we love our routines we are creators of patterns and yet here is a command to change these patterns oh you say to me the pattern of my life doesn't really need to be changed why unless you have closed with Jesus Christ that is nonsense don't be fooled into thinking that you can become a Christian without a change of pattern without a change of direction in your life in your life in your life it is one of the main reasons why we describe repentance so much but it means a change many people would say

I would like to be a Christian but they would say well I don't know how to do it people say that to me sometimes and I begin to ask them well you want to be a Christian but do you want to be saved they are not so sure of the answer and then I might say but are you willing to repent?

are you willing to change? are you willing to forsake certain things and embrace certain other things? the answer is not so sure at all because naturally man does not want to change his habits he doesn't want to change his company he doesn't want to forsake his idols but without salvation without repentance there is no salvation firstly repentance means a change of mind about sin a change of mind about sin a recognition that sin is not good that it offends a holy God before him we must all stand that it defiles that it corrupts and that it poisons and that it pollutes that it enslaves that it paralyzes and that it terrorizes and that however attractive it may be however alive even of what you might say partial sin or limited sin or limited sin might be and that's very often the way we try to live our lives however attractive these things may appear in the presentation nevertheless it remains a fact that sin is a deceiver and a destroyer in order to repent there has to be that change of mind about sin that it is all these no good things that sin is not in any way good no matter how beautifully it is presented that it stands as a barrier between us and the one who is our greatest good and that it will eventually bring upon us the eternal wrath and the condemnation of the judge of all the earth we have to come to these conclusions about sin in our mind we have to change our mind about sin that there is no way at all in which sin can even be slightly good that there is no way at all so that we can brush against sin and not be spoiled and not be tainted that sin is the spoiler and the destroyer of our lives the spoiler and the destroyer of our very souls and passions the destroyer eventually of us body, mind and spirit it will rot it will decay the whole lot you have to come to that kind of conclusion you have to have a change of mind about sin which sees sin in its reality as being all these horrible things this is in many ways a very calm and a very sober conclusion to come to in this part of repentance there is rationality there is understanding there is calmness of thought irrationality has no place in us you come to this conclusion about sin

[14 : 27] as certainly as you do about any other thing of which you are given rational truth it is a calm and sober assessment of sin a calm and sober and determined change of mind of upper sin your opinion upper sin must be changed then secondly repentance means a change of feelings of a sin although making these separations there is a sense in which we are all paired up with one another and yet it helps us so much when we analyze the various aspects firstly firstly it is this change of mind of sin secondly it is a change of feelings about sin but instead of enjoying sin and gladly indulging in sin instead of that we regret our sin we are pained about our sin we suffer not just because of the consequences of our sin but we suffer because we have actually sinned because we have done it yet again because we have defiled ourselves yet again we regret we are filled with grief about our sins our consciences smites us we are filled with inner hands we have a change of mind above sin and this part of repentance this aspect of repentance is altogether different from the first in this particular way but whereas the first aspect the change of mind is very sober and rational this aspect of repentance is something which throws us into a tremendous emotional turmoil we are torn one way by one thing we are torn another way by another we are went asunder as it were because on the one hand there is in us this which wants to sin and there is the other thing which hates it and regrets every time we touch it our feelings about sin have changed for us not to know we were peaceably and peacefully into sin went in and we enjoyed it we might have said well it was not a very clever thing to do but oh it was nice it was enjoyable it was good we go in and we realize that we just don't feel the same at all about it that our feelings are different we begin to wish that we did not have the tendency towards sin and we grapple and grapple with the question which every sinner must grapple with us that sometime or another why is it so with me?

why am I like this? why is my tendency always towards the bad? why is my tendency always towards the lie and towards the deceit?

why is it so with me? why is it that even my good always seems to be tainted with sin have you experienced that?

how have you experienced that? you are doing something good for a moment you felt so good about it perhaps so self-righteous perhaps so proud and then all of a sudden you are scattered for the whole thing still on yourself because you realize that all your motives were wrong that even your good was tainted and spoiled with sin repentance repentance it involves a change of mind about sin which is in many ways called calm and rational it involves also a change of feelings about sin something which is anything but calm and rational it involves emotional it involves emotional turmoil and emotional rending then early repentance means a purposeful and a resolute turning away from sin turning away from it and all its attractions and turning towards God now it is at this point that faith and repentance are bound up together in a way that we cannot separate them the reason for that is that it is utterly pointless for a sinner to turn away from his sin and leave it at that it is utterly pointless because his sin will draw back like a magnet very very quickly but the turning away from sin must always be a turning away from sin and a turning towards God in the shorter catechism we have it but very very very very very very very succinctly and accurately and briefly that the sinner out of a sense of hatred a sense of his sin and an apprehension of the mercy of God the sinner is repenting who turns from his sin with some kind of grasp with some kind of hold on this one thing that God is merciful that God will receive him that when he turns from his sin that there is a home for him to go to right in the heart of God that he will find a welcome that this God is a God who welcomes the penitent sinner and that no matter what he tears himself from no matter how comfortable the nest he was in that there is a better place for him when he turns to God and finds mercy finds pity finds love finds healing finds covering you see there has to be the resolute turning the change of direction which we spoke of earlier

but it has to be away from a certain direction but it also must be directly in another it must be away from sin and towards God oh but how can the sinner how can he turn to the God who is his judge to the God whose wrath is upon him to the God who burns in his fury against his sin how can the sinner turn from his sin to his God because this God is merciful this God provides for sinners this God has planned for sinners this God has prepared for sinners but above all things this God has executed for sinners he has gone ahead with a plan and he has done it he has finished it he has done it for every sinner who comes to him what has he done?

[23 : 43] he has paid the price of sin he has sent his son to be made sin for us for us in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in him that amazing sinner being made the righteousness of God he offered himself a sacrifice for sin in the place of sinners no one of the sinner changes direction when he turns away from his sin and he turns towards God he doesn't see everything clearly and perhaps doesn't see even these things that I have spoken but he has some grasp some apprehension that God is merciful that God will receive him if he doesn't have that then he might as well stay where he is because very soon he is going to be back what he was there has to be this change of direction not just a change of mind not just a change of feelings about sin that is going to be no use to you because in the very heart of repentance there is change of direction a turning away from sin a turning towards God not just an act of mind not just a change of feelings but an act of will how can the sinner do it?

same way as every other sinner has ever done it having been made willing by his grace oh God make me willing have you ever prayed that prayer?

where do I remember praying it? I knew that I needed to change I knew which direction I needed to go and I wasn't willing to change pray Lord make me willing because it is only he who can change the will he is the only one who can do that because as we are our wills are tyrannized by our sins he must set the will free or turn or repent or you say to me you are asking such a lot you are asking me to enter a fierce battle answer yes yes this does involve a fierce battle because it brings you to the very gate of heaven if you remember Bunyan's picture of the wicked gate where all the arrows of evil were particularly aimed then at the one who was contemplating entry through these gates yes at the very gate of heaven the arrows of Satan will be upon you and I am

I am sure of this that there are many in hell today who went there from the very gates of heaven thinking about repentance struggling with repentance unwilling to believe in the mercy of God unwilling to believe in God's power to do for them what they couldn't do for themselves command is to repent why repent that brings us to our second main point why repent answer because the kingdom of heaven is at hand well you say to me well you've given me plenty of bad news today yes

I always have to bring bad news before I bring good news but here is the good news here is the reason here is the motivation here is the tremendous push why you should repent but this day this very morning this very moment the kingdom of heaven is at hand that was an urgency in these words when they were first spoken I believe that urgency is still in these words there is no certainty that this kingdom will be at hand tomorrow or even later today there is no certainty of that the only thing that you and I can be sure of is that at this very moment the kingdom of heaven is at hand maybe that even now

[29 : 37] Jesus Christ is passing by while on others they were calling please remember me remember me that may be the position you are in today just when he is passing by call on him call on him while he is near make sure that your cry is heard by him because he may be nearer today than he will never be again what do we mean when we say the kingdom of heaven is at hand we mean that the kingdom in which Jesus Christ rules in which he reigns as triumphant Lord and King that kingdom is today open the doors of it are flung open wide wide wide wide wide wide as they can be the kingdom of heaven is at hand is at hand when he realized when he realized the truth of the gospel that the just would live by faith he says the gates of paradise were flung open to me they are flung open to you they are open wide as wide as they can be the kingdom of heaven is at hand the very door the very door of that kingdom open wide and they call to you to enter in they call to you to turn away from your sin to turn towards God and to enter into this glorious kingdom this kingdom which is unspeakably glorious which is unspeakably blessed which is unspeakably blessed the kingdom in which

Jesus Christ reigns now there is a sense in which you will never enter into the full blessing of that kingdom until you pass out of this life into the next until in fact your body is reunited with your soul at the resurrection but even today you can know that you are a subject in this glorious kingdom even now you can know that you are a son of God even now you can know that you have passed through these gates and that you will never ever ever go back out of them some of you will have heard of a great evangelist of the past by the name of Billy Bray you know what his great cry was wherever he went he was praising God

I am the son of a king you know what he said he said that even underground he was a miner as he buried himself 250 below grass that meant 250 fathoms below the surface the dust and the damp the cold and the grime he just couldn't help it he would say I am a son of a king and he would leap and dance and sing because he grasped the wonder of this oh how inhabited we are how we should be singing and dancing because we are sons of the king

I don't mean singing and dancing in order to demonstrate our spirituality to other people I don't mean that I don't mean that the singing and dancing is surely done in private as much as if not more in public when we are alone with the Lord why not sing and dance shouting in our hearts I am the son of a king the libre grasp the wonder of what it meant to be in this kingdom to be a subject in the kingdom of Jesus Christ because if you don't repent if you don't repent while you are in this life while you have the opportunity which might be only today if you don't then you will wake up in hell in that place where the fire is not quenched and the worm dieth not as repentance is painful but oh it is nothing like what the torments of hell will be in sin listen to me the pleasure passeth the sorrow remains in repentance the pain passes the pleasure remains forever does that mean that repentance alone saves us no no as we touched on earlier repentance is never alone it is never alone it is always accompanied with its inseparable partner and that is faith in Jesus Christ that he died to pay the penalty that he died to pay the debt that he died in order that it might be possible for me to repent and to turn to God in order that it will be possible for a just and righteous God who cannot dwell in the presence of iniquity in order that it may be possible for him to receive me to receive to receive a sinner repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand turn from your sin because the very door of heaven is swung wide and it is near at hand for sinners for penitent sinners turn from your sin turn from your idols whatever they may be break free from the chains that bind you to your present pattern of life turn away from it it will one day be bitter to you if you don't turn away from all these things and turn toward the center and social fountain of all your good

turn towards God he will receive he will not cast out any that come to him he will receive you he will embrace you his door is open and the invitation is there to come in all repent repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand let us pray grant us the help of thy spirit make us willing by thy grace cause us oh Lord to be disturbed cause us to flee from the wrath to come and to flee into Christ bless us, keep us forgive our sins in Jesus name, Amen thank you