

The Unexpected Arrival

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[0 : 0 0] So today's scripture passage is found in Matthew chapter 1, 18 through chapter 2, 20. Please listen as we read.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us. When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.

[1 : 2 1] He took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son, and he called his name Jesus. Now, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose, and have come to worship him.

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They told him, In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet. And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah.

For from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people, Israel. Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly, and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go, search diligently for the child. And when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.

[2 : 4 2] After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him.

Then opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you.

For Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him. And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod.

[3 : 47] This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, Out of Egypt I will call my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, And he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all the regions who were two years old or under, According to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah. A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children.

She refused to be comforted because they are no more. But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel.

For those who sought the child's life are dead. Good morning, Watermark. My name is Chris.

I oversee the community groups here at Watermark. And if you're new here today, you're just very welcome to join us with our family together.

[5 : 09] We're looking at the moment in a four-part series looking at Advent and the coming of King Jesus. Last week we looked at how the King was predicted in the Old Testament.

This week we're looking at the coming of the King. And in the next couple of weeks we're going to look at how the story, the Christmas story, continues right to the cross and the resurrection.

But today we come to a very familiar passage to most of us. It's the traditional Christmas story. You know, it's the kind of one you see on the Christmas cards. You know, the three wise men sitting on the camels with the starry sky behind.

And they come to this beautiful, clean nativity scene. With the angels are humming Silent Night in the background in four-part harmony.

And it's beautiful. They lay down their Christmas presents to Jesus and it's lovely. That's not the Christmas story. Matthew, who is the writer we're looking at today, he wrote his gospel very specifically to connect the Old Testament to the New Testament.

[6 : 20] That's why Matthew is the first gospel. Because he is linking the promises that God has promised before of someone who's going to come and deliver his people to the birth and the life of Jesus.

That's why there are so many Old Testament quotations in Matthew. Because he's wanting to tell you what you've heard about before. What you've believed and hoped for has now come true.

Jesus has arrived. And he is the king that you were expecting. But if you looked at the title today and the title of this series, it says an inverted kingdom.

Because the way that Jesus comes, the way that God works, turns upside down everything you would ever think a king should do.

Everything you expected that God was going to do, he just overturns it all and blows your mind. And Matthew is desperate to tell his readers, Jesus is a king like no other king.

[7 : 23] But this passage is actually about two kings, not just one. It's about two kingdoms. It's about two ways of operating in the world. It's about two ways of living which are as applicable today as they were 2,000 years ago.

So we're going to kind of run through this. I want to look first of all at one king, King Herod. Then I want to look at the second king, the legitimate king, Jesus the Messiah. Thirdly, I want to look at a clash of kingdoms.

And then finally, I want to look at what it looks like to live under the rule of King Jesus. So four things, Herod, Jesus, clash of kingdoms, and what it looks like to live under the king.

So let's start off with Herod. Herod the Great was called great because he was the kind of king that history is full of.

In 37 BC, historians tell us that Herod managed to get himself declared by the Romans the king of the Jews.

[8 : 26] He did this by sucking up to the Romans. He fought a few battles for them, made a few cities, gave them the names of the emperors, so that everyone would think, Herod, you are truly great.

He even built a temple for the Jews so that the Jews would look at him and say, Wow, you are our king.

The problem was, Herod was not a pure Jew. And so actually, the Jews hated him. They did not see him as their king. But he wanted to be the king.

He was seeking glory for himself. The second thing you need to know about Herod is he's a control freak. Herod, he wants to cling on to power with whatever it takes.

So basically, this leads him to both killing large numbers of his opponents. He even murders one of his wives and his two children because he sees them as a threat to his throne.

[9 : 29] They're more popular than him because they were pure Jews. And so anything that is going to threaten his throne, he wants to get rid of. You can think the tyrants, the dictators of the 20th and 21st century, Herod would have been in one of those categories.

The problem is, in the last few years of his reign, things are beginning to unravel because a bit like you see with these billionaires and their children and they start fighting over the inheritance, that's what's happening with Herod.

And Herod is desperately trying to cling on to his kingdom while everything else is disintegrating. So it's not surprising when you read the story of him wanting to kill the babies.

It's totally in keeping with the character of his reign. So that's Herod, the kind of nice chap, the kind of guy you want to invite to your Christmas party. But the second king is not an illegitimate king.

He's the illegitimate king. And Matthew wants to tell you he's the king, but a king in a way that you would never expect. He gives two names, Jesus.

[10 : 36] So let's start reading. Matthew 1, verse 18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. Let's stop there. Jesus Christ.

That is a title. It's not a surname. Jesus did not go to parent-teacher evenings and it was Jesus Christ and his parents Mary and Joseph Christ. It's not that.

It's a title. It's a title meaning Messiah, anointed king, chosen one, God's representative who has come to save his people. It's a king.

But he's far more than just a human representative because that's what all the Jews were expecting. They were expecting a human king that God would send to represent him, like King David before him.

But Matthew uses another name. If you look down in verse 23, they shall call his name Emmanuel, Emmanuel, which means God with us.

[11 : 42] Now here is where things begin to blow the reader's mind here because nobody expected that this king to come would be God himself come down.

Now, we sometimes get used to this idea, if you've been in church a while, that Jesus was fully God and fully human. But it can fail to stagger us because actually this is unique in the history of all religion at any time, in any place, in the whole world.

This is unique to Christianity because normally religion does one of two things. Either it says God is so holy, so big, so kind of up there, transcendent, so great that he would never come down to be with sinful, weak, lowly people.

He's too big for that. So if you ask any Muslim or any Orthodox Jew, they will tell you that that very idea that God would come down and be a human being is blasphemous.

In fact, that is one of the reasons why Jesus was killed by the Jews. Because they saw it was blasphemy for him, a human being, to call himself God.

[13 : 02] They couldn't get their head around the idea that God himself would come. So religion either does that. It says God is too great and he's distant from us.

Or it says he's very close, so much so that he's basically just like us or he's just a little bit better than us. But, you know, he's kind of all around.

We're kind of one with the universe. Or in ancient times, there were lots of myths. Some miraculous births took place. But usually, all the myths were about one God fighting another God.

And basically, they would fight each other and then one of them would become the top dog. And it would be like this big family feud. That's the other way religion tends to view God. He's so close that really he's just like a bit of a superhuman.

A bit like one of us, but has got supernatural powers. But the Christian message, what Matthew is trying to say, is that is not what this story is about.

[14 : 01] God, who is so holy, who is so great, who is unrivaled, who sits securely on his throne, far above all other things, the creator of everything. He has come down to be with us.

He is not distant. He is with us. Nobody in the whole history of religion has ever said anything like that.

That's one unexpected thing. The second unexpected thing is, God comes down, but he doesn't come down the way you would think. Right at the outset, this God comes down in Jesus Christ.

And he comes down not in splendor, not in majesty, not in great triumph. But he comes in weakness. He comes in hiddenness.

He comes in suffering. He comes in shame. Let's have a look back at the story. So when his mother, verse 18, When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

[15 : 15] And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Let's start with this. You have Mary and Joseph. Basically, they're engaged. That's very different from engagement today. Basically, it meant you were kind of married, but you didn't live together.

You didn't sleep together until finally you would have a celebration where you would come together. And then that was the official wedding. So it's a binding agreement engagement, and you need a divorce to break it.

So when Joseph hears that his wife is pregnant, he knows he's not the father. Imagine Mary says, it's from the Holy Spirit. And he's thinking, right, yeah.

Now, what's going through his mind? And imagine, just remember that if you have illicit sexual relations in those times, it was either punishable by death or social ostracism.

[16 : 33] You would be shamed by the whole village. Everyone would know the kind of person you were. But Joseph, just as he's beginning to plan, kind of, okay, what are we going to do with this?

And he's a, Joseph is amazing in this story. Even though he must feel incredibly hurt and betrayed at this point, because he doesn't know what's going on, he still wants to care and protect Mary.

So he plans to divorce her quietly. But then an angel comes and assures him that this is no ordinary baby. This is a special child. And then what does Joseph do next?

Verse 24, it says, Now, think about this for a moment.

Joseph is not the father. Remember, when Joseph chooses to marry Mary, he is choosing to adopt Jesus as his own.

[17 : 42] Remember, the Messiah was meant to come from the line of David. Mary is not from the line of David. Only Joseph is a son of David. The child is not Joseph's natural child.

What does that mean? And Joseph, when he marries Mary, he chooses to adopt Jesus, and he names him Jesus. What does that mean?

Think about this. God has chosen to come into the world, and he chooses the adoption route. But he doesn't just choose the adoption route. He chooses the adoption route to a poor peasant family in an obscure town in the midst of potential shame and disgrace.

Joseph will be identified with the disgrace that should have been just Mary's, naturally. But that's not all. If you're going to come as a king, you would have thought you'd do a bit of publicity.

You marketing guys out there, you would have been right on the case. But the marketing is pretty poor. When Jesus the king arrives, Luke tells us some smelly outcast shepherds come, and Matthew tells us some hated foreign advisors, astrologers, magicians come.

[19 : 04] That's it. Imagine you're having the baby shower, and all that come are drunks and outcasts. Great plan, God. But if that's not enough, then what does God do?

Look what happens next. Herod plans to take and kill this king. And so Jesus, the rightful king, has to flee as a refugee into Egypt, a place that the Israelites would have associated with slavery and suffering.

That is God's plan for his king. That is God's plan for his king to come into the world. That should tell us something about the way God does kingship.

It's not the way that anybody else would ever have planned. Imagine as a man goes on a journey because he wants help from the king.

So he goes up to the palace of the king, and he goes up to the guards and says, I really need to talk to the king. The guards say to him, if you want to see the king, you've got to go over there.

[20 : 15] He points over there to this kind of run-down slum of a village about a mile off. The traveler says, okay. Walks down towards the village thinking that maybe this king is doing a kind of meet and greet of his subjects.

You know, the Bentley or the Rolls Royces outside. The bodyguards will be around somewhere. And he goes and walks into the village, and he can't see the king anywhere. So he kind of walks around for a little while and sees some people in the corner.

And then he sees a man helping an old lady, an old man dressed in rags, helping an old lady out of a wheelchair. And he goes up to him and says, have you seen the king?

And he says, yeah, he's around here. He thinks, okay. So he carries on looking, keeps looking around the different parts of the village, still can't see the king anywhere. Then just as he's kind of giving up hope, he sees the same guy again.

But this time, he's carrying a sick child, and he is covered in the vomit of this sick child. And as he carries the sick child through, and he's taking him to the doctor, the other children around are mocking him because he smells so bad.

[21 : 25] And they laugh at him, and they throw things at him. And they say, who are you? What a waster you are. The traveler keeps looking around the village, eventually gives up, goes back to the guards, and says to the guards, hey, I couldn't find the king anywhere.

But all I saw was this one guy in there, covered in vomit, helping people. And the guards said to him, that's the king.

At that moment, the traveler is gobsmacked. I don't know a king who would do that. Every other king that I know tries to cling on to power for himself.

Every other king that I know tries to get strength and power and wealth for their kingdom. I don't know any king who would lay down his reputation, who would lay down his status, who would lay down his rights for the lowest of the low and be identified with them in that way.

Because you see, the way this king comes is the pattern of his kingdom.

[22 : 42] It takes him all the way to the cross. And his kingdom is a hidden kingdom. Jesus' kingdom is power in weakness. It's glory in suffering.

When you look for him in the palace, you see him in the slum. When you seek him at the banquet, you see him in the elderly home. That's our king. And the thing is, it's a hidden glory.

But if you open your eyes to see it, it's a breathtaking glory. Because nobody does it like King Jesus. Everybody else clings to their own reputation and kingdom.

He lays down his rights for the weak and the vulnerable. So those are two kingdoms, two kings, Herod and Jesus.

Two different ways of operating. Let's come to point three. A clash of kingdoms. We have seen that there are these two kings in the scene. And now I want you to think, what happens when the true king comes?

[23 : 51] The true king of the Jews. So I want you to notice the progression of Herod's reaction. Okay? So let's look at chapter 2, verse 1 to 4. Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, the wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?

For we saw his star when it rose, and have come to worship him. When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

I want you to notice what happens. When Herod hears that there's another king in town, he is troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. That word troubled means disturbed, frightened.

Fear grips Herod's heart, and all the advisors, all the people who are kind of clinging on to Herod for their perks, their benefits, their status, their reputation, they're all afraid.

That's the first thing, fear. Secondly, what happens next? Herod creates a plan, a plan to defend and reestablish his kingdom. So he puts up a veneer of worship.

[25 : 16] And so verse 7, Then Herod summons the wise men secretly, and ascertains from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, Go and search diligently for the child.

And when you have found him, Bring me word that I too may come and worship. You see, it looks like he's going to go and worship. Actually, he's just wanting to make sure that he is the number one, that he's the only one in power, and he wants to remove any rivals from the throne.

So fear. Plan to defend his kingdom. Thirdly, when his plan doesn't work, look at verse 16. Then Herod, when he saw that he'd been tricked by the wise men, became furious.

And he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and all that region who were under two years old. See, what happens next?

Fear leading to planning to defend, leading to anger. When his plan doesn't work, he gets angry, and his anger leads to destruction and murder.

[26 : 28] Okay? Now, why is Herod so afraid? He's so afraid because he's so wrapped up in his kingdom. He's so wrapped up with maintaining control of his life that he sees the arrival of the true king as a threat rather than a chance and a call to worship.

He's so consumed with preserving himself, his status, his standing, his reputation, his comfort, that he doesn't see Jesus, the true king, calling him to worship and submit to him.

Why? Because he's a tyrant. He's a tyrant who wants control of his kingdom at all costs. Now, think about this for a moment. And I'm going to offend some of you now.

But in this room, there is probably about 250 people like Herod, including me.

Tyrants. Every one of us wants to rule our own kingdoms naturally in a way to keep ourselves in power, to keep our standing intact, to keep our reputation.

[27 : 46] And we want to cling on to our little kingdoms. Let me show you how this might work. Imagine I come home from work and I am starving. And I remember that there is a nice dessert in the fridge.

And as I'm walking back home, and I'm dreaming of my food kingdom, and this land flowing with chocolate sauce and honey.

And I get in, and I go to the fridge, I open the fridge, and at that moment, I am troubled. And all my stomach with me. Because someone has started a revolution against my kingdom.

Someone has taken the dessert. So I plan to reestablish my kingdom. I look in the freezer for ice cream. It's gone. At that moment, realizing that I have been tricked by my spouse, and seeing, seeing the evidence of the attempted coup all around her mouth, I get angry.

And then my anger leads to destruction. Now I can do that in two different ways. I can do it through active aggression or passive aggression. My active aggression usually comes in kind of snide comments, sarcastic comments like, So, didn't you know that somebody else lived in this flat?

[29 : 26] Didn't you realize I'd be hungry? Now I failed to tell my spouse that actually, that dessert was part of my kingdom, not hers. But that doesn't matter at this point.

Because, it's all about my kingdom. And, or I can, so I can do active aggression, I can do passive aggression, I go and sulk in the corner.

She says, Are you okay? I say, Fine, thank you. I didn't want it anyway. You see, that moment was a kingdom moment.

That moment was a moment of worship. I could choose to cling to my kingdom, if you like, or I could choose to see that in that moment, though I am disappointed, I could live and submit myself to the reign of the king who calls me to be gracious, who calls me to be patient, who calls me to be kind, who calls me to be loving.

And we can do this in a hundred ways. You know, you get home from work, you're tired, you just want comfort, that's not a wrong thing, that's an okay thing. You want a break, you want to sit in front of the TV, and you get home and you're dreaming that your kids will be there worshipping you, just saying, It's okay, you sit on the sofa, we'll take care of dinner.

[30 : 55] But they come back, and what happens? The kids are screaming. Your spouse tells you, I have 15 things I want for you to do now.

That moment is a moment of worship. It's a kingdom moment. How are you going to respond? We'll tell you. Are you going to cling to your own kingdom, or are you going to humbly submit to see Jesus in that moment and worship him?

You see, in every marriage, in every family, in every workplace, in every school, in every university, there is a battleground of kings trying to cling to their own kingdoms.

You know this very well. You look in your offices. People trying to cling to the kingdoms of respect, status, power, control, or getting your own way.

And it's peaceful as long as there's no one or nothing standing in your way. But the moment there is a threat to your kingdom, maybe it's threatened by others criticizing you. Your kingdom of respect then begins to crumble.

[32 : 03] Maybe it's annoying people who just are driving you crazy, and your kingdom of comfort is then looking under threat. At those points, we often end up murdering people in our thoughts, through our words, through our criticisms, through our complaining, just like Herod.

So think back just this last week. When were you stressed this last week? When were you angry, frustrated, impatient in this last week? Who were you critical of?

Who did you use your words to cut down or to complain about this week? Because maybe that's a sign that you're clinging to your kingdom.

Maybe God is calling you to worship Him. So my final point, and we've looked at the two different types of kingdom.

One where we cling to it. One where there's a king who lays down his rights. We've looked at the clash of kingdoms. Final point, living for the king.

[33 : 13] What does it look like to live under the rule of the king? How do we live for the king? You will only live for King Jesus and His kingdom when you stop seeing how much you have to lose by submitting to His rule and start seeing how much you have to gain.

You need to realize that every other king in this universe, including you and including me, is a tyrant at some point or other when our kingdom is threatened.

We may try and defend that, say, no, no, no, it's not me, but if I was to ask the people around you, I'm sure they would tell me just like if you asked people around me. At times when my kingdom is threatened, I can be very like Herod.

But there's only one king who at every single point in life is not a tyrant. One king who rules through suffering, who pours himself out for his people rather than exploiting people.

Only one king would leave his glory to enter the slum of humanity to be ignored, persecuted, ridiculed, mistreated for you and for me.

[34 : 36] That's the only king worth worshipping. So you need to realise that. But secondly, you need to recognise. Recognise that God brings moments in your life, those little moments throughout your week, little moments of frustration, moments of annoyance, moments of things where you just, your plans are not working out, people are not responding the way you want them to.

God brings moments because those are moments that he's calling you to see him in the moment. To not be so wrapped up with your kingdom like Herod was, that he doesn't see that Jesus is calling him to worship.

He calls us to worship in those moments. and life is made up of a thousand little moments of worship.

This week, you are going to be worshipping. Which king are you going to worship? And the thing I learned to remember, because by the time tomorrow, I've forgotten this.

So what I've started to do for myself is to speak to myself. In those moments, when I'm running around my list of why I am right at that particular moment, running around in my mind the list of frustrations why everybody else is the problem, at that moment, I'm beginning to learn to say to myself, it's not my kingdom and I'm not the king.

[36 : 09] Maybe everyone, say that now after me. It's not my kingdom and I'm not the king. It's not my kingdom.

Jesus is the only king who is worth following. Not even you are worth following. He's the only one. So just realize that he's so good.

Recognize that he's calling you to worship even this week in the little moments and finally, rejoice. You notice there are people in this story who do submit themselves to Jesus, who bow down and worship him.

They are people from a foreign land, from a pagan religion, who live in the courts of the kings, giving advice based on the stars, who've been following a different kingdom and yet when they see the star and they see that there's another king, they go on a journey for at least a year, possibly two years to bow down and worship this king.

And you see in verse 10, their response when they see the star is they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

[37 : 36] Matthew, he's kind of like, I don't have enough vocabulary to be able to say how joyful they are. It's like, I'm in a shopping mall and I'm desperate for the bathroom and you go on this five minute journey around the bathroom, around the mall to find the bathroom and then you see in the sky the sign a little man or a little woman and you rejoice with great joy.

But imagine after a year of travelling they don't just rejoice with great joy, they rejoice exceedingly with great joy because they were looking for the true king and they wanted to worship him.

You see, just concluding, they shall call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins.

Jesus, the true king, comes to save you from your kingdom. He comes to save you from you. That's what sins are.

It's you trying to cling on to your own kingdom. He's come to save you from your rule, to save you from being so wrapped up in your kingdom, save you not just in the past but every day this week he wants to save you and bring you more and more under his rule, under his reign so you worship him and the result is that even in the frustration and the hardships of life, you can have joy, exceedingly great joy because you're living under the prince of peace, the one who brings joy.

[39 : 23] that is the Christmas story. Let's pray. Maybe if you'd just like to think for a moment over this last week, think about some of those questions I raised.

Where have you this week been critical of others, been annoyed, angry, impatient? What is it in your kingdom that you try and cling on to?

Maybe just here's a moment where you can just confess those things and say, Jesus, I want you to be the true king of my life.

I want to live a life in the little moments this week of worship to you. Father, thank you that you're a God who is like no other, who has a kingdom like no other, who calls us to lay down our own kingdoms but doesn't do that in a vacuum.

You laid down your rights, your status, your comfort, your reputation for us because you are God who wants to be with us, who wants to bring us peace and joy, who wants to save us from ourselves.

[41 : 05] Please help us to see you this week in those little moments and to realize that our kingdom is not one that's worth clinging on to. but yours is.

Thank you that you're amazing. Amen. Thanks, Chris. When you came in, we've been talking the last three weeks about worshiping and what it looked like for us to worship as a church and as a church family and a community.

And when you came in, you should have received a couple things. One was on your chair. This is some of the initiatives that we've been praying about as a church family to celebrate and worship in their act of giving this Sunday, today.

So there's three things on there. And in your envelope, or in your bulletin, you should have got a special offering envelope. And so today, everything that's given in the church, as a church family, we're going to give to these ministries that are working around here.

We said from the very beginning as we started the church three years ago that we were looking for how God is working on this part of Hong Kong Island. And as a family, you guys have identified a lot of these things and you're a part of serving in these things and the community groups are a part of these things.

[42 : 24] Now the third thing on here that we are going to give to and want to be praying about is at the very bottom of your list, it's sons and daughters. And so I've asked Julie to come up here and we're going to do a quick interview.

I wanted her to share a little bit about what God has been doing in her heart and then what this ministry is all about so you know and you can be praying about these things.

And by the way, don't be worried about your kids. Your kids are going to be brought up here so you don't have to rush down there because we have a book table out back and some food and we want to have a time of fellowship after this time. So don't rush off.

Your kids are going to be brought up here. But Julie, or as you're known to my family, Miss Borth, because she's our littlest teacher at ICA.

So why don't you share a little bit about who you are and how you came here. My name's Julie and I came with ELIC in 2009, which Mike and Katie had up.

[43 : 22] And I loved it so much that I came back in 2011 and went back to the States for a couple years and taught and realized this is where I wanted to be. So found a teaching job and about a year and a half ago came here.

Okay. And I look on this little bulletin that we had in everybody's chairs and there's this thing called Sons and Daughters and I think probably a lot of us have never even heard about that but it's captured your heart and the hearts of other people in our community and so maybe can you share a little bit about what is Sons and Daughters?

Sure. So when I arrived actually to Hong Kong with all of my luggage, I pulled up and the taxi driver said, oh, here, here, look at low. And I looked up and I saw Club Bunny and I thought, this is my new apartment and, you know, saw, you know, where I was living and there was very explicit adult stores and, you know, I was just completely in a new world and throughout my year that I lived on the street, I went through a lot of anger.

I thought, why is this happening? What's going on? And then the Lord really started to change my heart and he, you know, I wanted to help but then I thought, who am I to do anything? You know, I'm just, I'm from Missouri and the States.

So I had a lot of fear and I would pass the girls and the mamas and, you know, start to like wave hi and there was one afternoon after church, I went home and I watched this documentary and I saw a red light district in Thailand and it was there that I heard verbatim some things that the girls were saying that I had heard on the street as I was going home every night and the Lord really convicted my heart.

[44 : 55] He said, you know what's going on, so what are you going to do about it? And it was that same week that I got in touch with sons and daughters who had heard about it before and haven't stopped since. So what we do, we go out on Monday nights to pray just for our group, for direction and also for the government, for the police force, for the people on the street and then on Thursday nights we go out and we actually talk to the girls primarily and the mamasans and anybody else who we run into.

We talk to them and we want to share whatever we can, any hope that we can with them. And through this whole process, what would you say is some of the things God's been teaching you in this process about yourself?

It's hard to narrow down. Every time I go, my faith is refined and challenged in a new way. I've seen the importance of prayer first and foremost.

The Lord has really just redefined what prayer is to me. that it is the first resort, that the first thing we need to do is pray together, believe that the Lord can change, you know, the nature of the street and the hearts of the people on the street.

Through prayer, we've seen transactions with girls that we know with a man standing there and he's about to hand over his money and we'll just stop and pray and we've seen him take his money back and say not tonight.

[46 : 14] We've seen girls that we've built relationships with have the courage to run away, to get away from it and thus break their contracts where they can't come back. We've seen just amazing things happen and that's not us, you know, who are we?

It's the Lord through us. So prayer number one and number two, when we go out, it can be overwhelming. You can look at the situation as a whole and think, where is this ever going to end? How can this change?

And I used to go and my primary resort was to pray, you know, what programs can we put in place? What can we do? Which those are good. There's a time and a place for that. But the Lord has taught me that He's the answer first.

When I go out and when I talk to the mamas and the girls, He's the first answer. Their salvation, their, to be open to redemption and grace, that's the first answer.

So that's maybe the biggest thing that I've learned recently. Okay, good. And as a church family, because we go, like, I've gone down there, not for that type of thing, but this, actually one of our favorite restaurants is there.

[47 : 18] So I don't know how to say this, but Christy and I go on date night every Thursday night and our favorite restaurant is Coyotes on Lockhart Road and they're usually trying to grab me even as she's holding on to me in that sense.

But as we think about what you're doing and what's going on there, what are, what should we be doing? What do you want us to do? What can we do about these things? How can we pray for these things?

And I think even more specifically is people have a heart for the brokenness around them as they hear you share. Because that's some of our prayers as we share these things. We're praying as a church family that other people will see the same amount of brokenness and see that Christ is the answer like you shared.

So how can we pray for that and how can we get involved? There's a, after Jesus preaches a parable in Mark, he says, he who has ears let him hear.

As almost to say that there's more to the story, there's more that's going on. That would be my first prayer and that's what the process Lord has brought me and several others that are on the team through to open our eyes to see how the, to see what's going on as how the Lord really sees it.

[48 : 23] To see your neighbors and our neighbors as to what's really happening we need prayer. We need more to stand behind us. It's just, it makes the biggest difference.

To love the people for where they're at. To, we can't really expect those, you know, people to come to us but rather we're called to go out to them and to meet them where they're at, share what we can with them.

There's a quote from one of my personal heroines, Molly Mom, who is a Cambodian woman who's trafficked. She says, now she has a center in Cambodia. She says, I can't change the world.

I don't even want to try. But what I can do is share with the girl who's right in front of me. And I've really taken that to heart. You know, I can't change the world. But what I can do is pray for those spiritual eyes to see what's really happening and for even that one girl, that one person, just to go consistently and share the news with her.

So, we can all do something. We can become aware of what's going on. We can actively see what's happening in Hong Kong. We can do something about it.

[49 : 30] It doesn't mean that you have to go week after week, but you can pray. You can find out more. You can talk about it more. You can spread what's happening because a lot of it is just kept in the darkness.

We want to bring that to light and we want to bring those girls out of a really horrible situation that they're in. Okay. And so, if you want to hear more or learn more about what we're doing with the sons and daughters or want to become a part of that, you can contact the church or we can contact you directly.

Is that right? And I think that's something as we've been praying about, God continues to bring this brokenness in front of us. And so, I think it's what Julie said. The question is, what are we going to do about that?

And I know that some of us have other burdens here in our prayers that as we continue on this journey as a family, these burdens would come out and we'd understand and ask questions like, why are we here as a church?

And what are we supposed to do about those things, right? For God's glory and His kingdom. So, on your bulletin, we're talking about St. Barnabas, we're talking about the inner city ministries, we're talking about sons and daughters, and we're talking about church planning.

[50 : 36] And so, we just ask for you as you think and move towards worshiping as we give our finances this Sunday and this week to pray about those things. And I'm going to pray for us and pray for you.

Share one more thing. One thing that we actually need, we're doing a Christmas outreach on Christmas. And we have a lot of other churches and places donating makeup items and other things that the girls would want.

Something that I would maybe ask if you could help with, we want to, again, meet the girls where they're at. They're not going to be home for Christmas. We want to give them calling cards where they can call to their home.

So, if that's something that you'd like to help out with, we could really actually use that donation. So, either just money or an actual just calling card. Okay, good. Let's pray for us. By the way, thank you for this day.

We thank you for Julie and just what you're doing in her heart, in her life. Thank you just for her as a teacher. I just think of her loving on our kids and just the future generations of Hong Kong. and I think even as she meets the brokenness and is continually changed by your son, that you just continue to distill that passion in her.

[51 : 42] And I pray for those of us in here who have that same passion. I pray for some of us who have no passion, that we need to have a passion as we look at how amazing you are and how wonderful your kingdom is.

Help us to be convicted of that, Lord. Help us to ask questions of which kingdom we're living for and who really is the king in our kingdom. And we pray for these outreaches that are happening. We pray for the ICM kids that are here in front of us as we love on them and care for them.

We pray for St. Barnabas as we build a new facility to house people, to feed people every week, to train up little kids, to reach out to those 7,000 households that make \$10,000 or less a month in Hong Kong.

We pray for church planners. We pray for the amazing work you have been going on. We're praying for the 200 churches we're praying and trusting the Lord to plant in the next five years and for the thousands of church planners and people who have a burden to reach lost people by planting churches that are gospel-centered and love you.

And Lord, we pray for our offering. We pray, Lord, that we don't talk about offering a lot. We know that it's an amazing act, a massive act of worship to you. And you know our hearts.

[52 : 54] And so we pray for these offerings that are coming in today and this week, that you would use them to your glory. That whatever comes in, that you would multiply it and use it in amazing ways to free people from darkness, to free people from bondage, and to point people to your Son, Jesus, who we deeply love.

And so we pray for your mercy and grace in our life. And we thank you that we even have the privilege to worship you here in this facility and to take an offering. all these things we give back to you right now and pray that your kingdom would be done and your will be done and your name will be made great.

So Father, we love you and we worship you and we pray these things in your Son, Jesus' name. Amen. Thanks.