

Palm Sunday: A Righteous God and a Savior

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[0:00] There is no other God besides me, a righteous God and a Savior. There is none besides me.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. So who is like the true and living God?

Is there anyone like Him? As we enter into Holy Week, we're getting a fresh reminder that there is no other God, and there is no God like our God.

So we consider what He has done for our salvation. We'll remember the unique, incomparable, incredible hope that is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and is found nowhere else.

Our Isaiah reading for this morning, from chapter 45. It reminds us that the only true and living God is unique. That He and He alone is a righteous God and a Savior.

[1:08] I think it's safe to say we need a righteous God and a Savior. We need a God who is so much more than a dumb idol, who is more than all of the false gods.

And we have one. And if we're tempted to forget, or if we've never really known the one true God, the events that we remember during Holy Week will remind us.

Now, in our Old Testament passage for this morning, it comes in the context of a stretch in which the prophet Isaiah is highlighting the uniqueness of the true God.

Earlier in chapter 45, we read that the Lord is going to work through the Persian king Cyrus to accomplish His goals for His people Israel.

To restore them from exile, to rebuild the temple. In other words, we read that God is sovereign over all the kings and the rulers of the earth. And then, as we go on in chapter 45, we read that all the nations will acknowledge the one true God.

[2:27] And then, our verse is appointed. Issue a call to the nations. Calling them, calling us to turn to the true God and be saved.

See that in verse 20. Assemble yourselves and come, draw near together, you survivors of the nations.

They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols. And keep on praying to a God that cannot save. Why should we turn to the true God?

Well, one thing should be obvious. Idols that can be carried around from place to place aren't going to do anything to help us.

Those who carry them and commend them to others don't know what they're talking about. And it has to be said that false gods cannot hear prayers and cannot save anyone.

[3:31] But the living God is different. And this morning, I want us to consider how the living God is different.

And what we should do about it. And what that all means in light of the week ahead of us. And as we think on why the living God is different, I want us to key in on the latter portion of verse 21.

And there is no other God besides me. A righteous God and a Savior. There is none besides me. Righteous God and a Savior.

Now to stop and consider what a righteous God means, what that looks like, perhaps we should consider what an unrighteous God might look like. Now we don't have to think very hard to pull up examples.

We, for example, can think of the gods of the nations in the Old Testament who do things like demanding child sacrifice.

[4:40] Or has anyone ever read Greek mythology? Anyone? See all kinds of examples of the gods of Greek mythology using human beings like playthings. Using people like toys for their own satisfaction.

Now there is one example of what an unrighteous God might look like. Or, we could look at a more contemporary example and look at the image of a cruel, unrighteous God who directs his followers

to commit suicide bombings against innocent people.

An unrighteous God might look like that. Now on the one hand, we could say that an unrighteous God might look unpredictably cruel.

You never know what to expect from a God like that. Now on the other hand, an unrighteous God might take on a completely different form. How about the false God who tells us that anything goes, that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as it's sincere, and that the most important thing is to be nice?

Have you heard of that God? 21st century Americans really like that false God. That's probably our favorite.

[6:00] If we can be said to have a state religion, it is probably the worship of that God. But let's ask for a second, is that the kind of God that we want to see on the throne?

Think about it this way. In a world where tyrants murder children with chemical weapons, is that going to cut it? Could a God like that triumph over evil merely by being nice and sending positive vibes our way?

I don't think so. If we don't want evil and the suffering that it causes to have the last word, we don't want that kind of false, unrighteous God on the throne.

But the living God is righteous. He is unchangingly opposed to all evil, unfailingly good.

His righteousness is part of His character. His faithfulness and His goodness are everlasting. It never changes. And He rules all things in righteousness. So what does that mean for us, to have a God who is like that?

[7:16] Means that He will always act in a manner that is consistent with His character. And it means that He will always do what is right. We don't have to wonder about that.

And it also means that because He is righteous and also sovereign, that goodness will prevail, that justice will win, that sin and evil will be defeated forever. We might now be living in a world in which tyrants can murder children with chemical weapons, but it won't always be that way and they will not get away with it.

The righteousness of the living God guarantees that. Now that is very much a good thing. But if we look at it from another angle, we see that it leaves us in a little bit of a bind.

What does the righteousness of a God who judges righteously mean for me when I have messed up, when I haven't done what I'm supposed to do, and when I have fallen short? What happens when I've tried my very best and I just become more keenly aware of all the ways that I've messed up?

As C.S. Lewis put it, no man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good. Yep. Yep. And where does that knowledge leave us?

[8:44] Doesn't it bring us to the classic question, how can I, a sinner, stand before a righteous God? Now, I think that a lot of false religion gets tripped up on this precise point.

It will affirm that God is righteous and judges righteously, and in light of that knowledge, really falls short and just instructs us to do our best and hope for the best.

What if you've done your best and you know in your heart that your best isn't good enough? What if you're stuck in the dilemma of wondering if you've done your best? How can you be sure you've done your best?

You try and try harder, and if you're thinking of God's righteousness rightly, you keep coming back to the stark reality of His perfection and your imperfection.

What then? Well, the answer is that the living God is also a Savior.

[9:49] The righteous God is a Savior. Now, in the context of our passage, in Isaiah's context, we see that God is able to save His people from wicked nations.

He is able to save His people from exile. But let's take that a step further and look at the reality that God is able to save us from anything that would stand in the way of our salvation.

Even our sins and even our guilt. Certainly, righteousness and justice would demand that the debt for sin, the debt for disobedience, must be paid.

And if we were condemned for our sins, it would be just. God, in His holiness and in His perfect justice, will not look the other way and pretend that sin is not sin.

If He did that, again, we would be living in a world where evil will continue indefinitely. The debt must be paid and justice must be satisfied.

[11:01] So, the righteous God who is also a Savior, what does He do? He takes on human flesh. He lives a life of perfect obedience for us.

He dies to pay the debt of sin for all who put their trust in Him. And He rises again in victory. This whole week is about what a righteous God and a Savior does to save His people.

This isn't some dry and dusty abstraction. perfection. We are meant to love and to praise Him for who He is and what He's done because to us it has made the difference between life and death, has it not?

A righteous God and a Savior. Isn't that what we see revealed in our Lord Jesus? That's what we see in the living God.

There is no other who is a righteous God and a Savior. So what do we do? Turn to me and be saved all the ends of the earth for I am God.

[12:10] There is no other. If there is one true God, there is only one God who is a righteous God and a Savior. Where else is there to turn?

Reminded of what Peter said of Jesus in Acts chapter 4. There is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Each one of us is commanded to turn to Him and be saved because there is only one righteous God. Only one who can save.

There is no other. Apart from Him there are only idols. That's really what this upcoming week is about.

Proclaiming to the world and reminding ourselves that the true and living God has demonstrated His righteousness and His power to save in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

[13:18] So, have you turned to Him and found salvation? Have you known it to be true in your own life that He is God?

That there is no other? And if you have, that's wonderful, but don't stop there. think about all those in our neighborhoods, in our city, in our nation, and to the ends of the earth who have not turned to Him for salvation, who don't believe that He is God and that there is no other.

Think of them. Pray for them. And especially, pray for opportunities to tell them about Him. And it's likely that opportunities will arise in the upcoming week.

If you remember the Easter challenge I issued a couple weeks ago in the newsletter, anyone?

Alright, I see at least one hand.

Well, I challenged each one of us to invite someone to church for Easter. There's one opportunity. People are more open to come into church on holidays.

[14:33] holidays. But that's not all. People are often more open to the message of the gospel around holidays because they're curious about why we're doing all this stuff and what it really means.

So this week, will you pray for and look for opportunities to tell others about the death and resurrection of Jesus and why it all matters so much?

Now my brothers and my sisters, brace yourselves for the week ahead. We're about to remember our Lord Jesus being betrayed, beaten, arrested, crucified, and we are about to encounter the awe-inspiring reality of him in the tomb and his resurrection from the dead.

All of these things will take our breath away if we stop for a moment to really consider them. We'll remember what Jesus has done and we'll remember that those things are what a righteous God and a Savior does.

So to the only true God, to our righteous God, to our Savior, be glory and honor now and forever. Amen.