

A Lioness and Her Cubs: Ezekiel 19:1-9

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[0 : 0 0] All right, we're going to jump into Ezekiel chapter 19 this morning if you want to join me. Ezekiel chapter 19. And in this text, I'm going to read it real quick and then we're going to look at a really cool concept that Scripture has for us and has to do with lions.

So today we're going to be talking a lot about lions. So let's go ahead and read Ezekiel 19 verses 1 to 9 together. This is the word of the Lord. And you take up a lamentation for the princes of Israel and say, what was your mother?

A lioness. Among lions she crouched. In the midst of young lions she reared her cubs. And she brought up one of her cubs. He became a young lion. And he learned to catch prey.

He devoured men. The nations heard about him. He was caught in their pit. And they brought him with hooks to the land of Egypt. When she saw that she waited in vain, that her hope was lost, she took.

Another one of her cubs and made him a young lion. He prowled among the lions. He became a young lion. He learned to catch prey. He devoured men and seized their widows. He laid waste to their cities.

[1 : 1 1] And the land was appalled and all who were in it at the sound of his roaring. Then the nations set against him from provinces on every side. They spread their net over him. He was taken in their pit.

With hooks they put him in a cage and brought him to the king of Babylon. And brought him into custody. That his voice should no more be heard on the mountains of Israel.

There's something powerful about the image of a lion. Whether it be watching the lion king as a young child. And seeing Mufasa perched on pride rock and splendor over his kingdom.

Or reading the beloved Chronicles of Narnia. And seeing Aslan roam throughout the kingdom. Watching over the dominion with all sovereignty. Or it'd be like the privilege I have.

Back in 2012. In the country of Kenya. Traveling the Maasai wilderness. Only to see a lioness chasing down a gazelle.

[2 : 1 6] Bringing it to the ground. Ending its life. Perching up and watching for the next hour. As the pack of lions came and devoured this gazelle.

The best part of that scene. As we're watching this happen. Was that the king lion. If you will of the pack. Eventually had his turn to eat.

And he goes to the gazelle. He eats. He perches himself. It was unbelievable. He perches himself on top of the gazelle. And he's got red stained. A mane.

Mouth. Whiskers. And he just perches and looks at us. Almost as if to say. Look at me. And we all of course indulged. Took the pictures.

Wow look at he's perched for us. And then he turned away. And just casually walked off. There's something about lions. That just gives this picture of power.

[3 : 13] And regality. And majesty. So much so. That the symbol of the lion. Has permeated every era of history.

As a symbol of power. Well in the day and age. In which we are looking at this text. Ancient Palestine. The lion symbol actually has.

Tons of weight. Although lions are extinct. From the region of Palestine today. You won't find any. Within a massive radius. Lions were actually once native.

To ancient Palestine. Even Jerusalem. And the wilderness surrounding. So much so. That throughout the Old Testament. You will see lions pop up. All over the place. And the story of David.

And the story of Samson. And beyond. Lions just seem to appear. During this time. The lion was revered. By all nations.

[4 : 10] As the king. Of the animal world. More specifically. The lion was a symbol. Not just in Israel. But in all nations. Of regality. Dominion.

And most importantly. Triumph. The lion symbolizes victory. Triumph. This is why the chief mascot. Of the Babylonian Empire.

Is the. Lion. Still to this day. You can go to the Great British Museum. Or any museum. That holds relics. From the Great Babylonian Empire. And you will see lions. It's imprinted.

Upon every single. Artifact. It seems. The Roman army. Gratefully. Took on the. Image and symbol. Of a lion. And threw it on. All of their stuff.

As well. So what is it. About lions. That sparks. This. Image of majesty. In us. Well.

[5 : 05] I would argue. That the symbol. Of a triumphant lion. Goes far beyond. A foreign nation. Or power. Symbolizing. How strong they are.

The symbol. Of the lion. Is actually. Associated. First and foremost. In God's word. As a symbol. Of kingship. Rule. And triumph. Yes. But also.

As we're going to see. The lion. Is a symbol. Of the Messiah. All the way back. In Genesis. There's a man named Jacob. Who has 12 sons.

And to his 12 sons. He speaks. And he speaks. To one of his sons. In particular. A man named. Judah. And to Judah. This father. Says.

A prayer of blessing. And he says to Judah. You will be like a lion. Who will subdue. All the enemies. And will reign and rule. Forevermore.

[5 : 58] That. Is the symbol of the lion. As God meant it. And it was all pointing to somebody. Before we. Jump to that somebody.

That Messiah. That we'll get to. And we'll build to. I want to. Work through this parable. For a minute. Because what we see here. Is God is using. The image of lion. In the minds of the hearers.

And the people. To conjure up a lesson. And so let's just. Overview our context here. We're in the book of Ezekiel. We're in a series.

Working through parables together. Of the Old Testament. Which parables. A story of a heavenly. A heavenly. Earthly story. With a heavenly meaning. And in Ezekiel 19.

What happens in the context is. God is warning. The nation of Judah. The southern kingdom. Of their sin. And its consequences. And the nation of Babylon.

[6 : 55] Maybe a irony here. Babylon. Has expanded its empire. At the time of Ezekiel. And conquered Judah. And in their conquering of Judah. Here's what they did. They took a group of exiles.

From Judah. And they deported them out. To a foreign city. And who's part of that? It's a massive part of Judah. But who's part of that? Ezekiel the prophet. And as exiles.

Judged by God. In the rebellion. God gives the prophet Ezekiel. In chapter 19. A parable. To share with Judah. The exiled nation. In that context.

We find ourselves. In this parable. And we're going to see. That this parable. Is about God tearing down. Judah's abusive rulers. Who prey on their own citizens.

And live for their own glory. So this parable is a unique one. In that it serves two purposes. First. We see in verse one. Read with me. And you take up a lamentation. For the princes of Israel.

[7 : 51] The first purpose. That this parable is going to serve. Is that it's a lamentation. What's a lamentation? A lamentation is a song of mourning. To lament. In the biblical sense. Means to.

To grieve. With great sorrow. The situation. That one finds themselves in. And in this context. The Lord is wanting Judah. To lament.

The situation they're in. Exiled. Away from their homeland. Exiled. Even away from their God. And experiencing the weight of their sin. So this parable is meant to. Induce that grieving.

That holy grieving. Of their sin. But the other purpose. That this parable serves. Is to teach a lesson. About where we should be putting our hope.

The Lord is going to teach Judah. You need to learn this lesson. Who do you hope in? Judah. Well I'm going to tell you a story. That will hopefully help you figure it out.

[8 : 49] So we see in verse one. It starts out. Here's the parable. What was your mother? A lioness. Among lions she crouched. In the midst of young lions.

She reared her cubs. So first. Right off the bat. In the parable. We have a lioness. Who's said to be a mother. Who is this lioness?

That Ezekiel is talking about. Crouching among the rest of the lions. There's a pack of them. A pride of lions. And there's one mother in particular. That's crouched down and looking around.

What does this symbolize? Well it symbolizes the nation of Judah. The exilic people. The rebellious people of Judah. In this time. That have turned away from God.

Who have forsaken his reign and rule. Over their lives. That nation. Is symbolized here as the lioness. Sheepishly hiding. Sheepishly looking around.

[9 : 47] In worry and anxiety. And in their pride. Raising up their own king. To solve their problems.

The lioness. Who raises up a king. After a king. After a king. Hoping and praying for deliverance. And the road to riches. And ever since that rebellion.

Back in the garden of Eden. Where man and woman. Took of the apple. Took of the fruit. And first rebelled against God. Mankind has excelled.

In rejecting God. As king. And as ruler. Who can lead us to joy. And to life. And we see in this parable. Early on. It's no different for Judah. In this time. So let's move on.

To verse 3 and 4. So what does the lioness do? She brought up one of her cubs. Which is another way to say. She raised up. Or reared. And he became a young lion.

[10 : 45] And he learned to catch prey. He devoured men. The nations heard about him. He was caught in their pit. And they brought him with hooks. To the land of Egypt. Kind of an interesting little.

First segment. To the parable. Okay. So she raises up. A young lion cub. In order that the lion cub. Might one day. Lead the pride of lions. And lead Judah.

Metaphorically. To wealth. And riches. And prosperity. And goodness. But here's what happens. First I want us to notice. This is very important.

This lion cub. Stays. A young lion cub. The parable is very, very, very intentional. To ensure that the young lion.

Causes the destruction. Causes the carnage. While still immature. And in its youth. There is no maturing. To the great king.

[11 : 45] That would one day be over the pride. The mature lion. It is a young cub. Immature in its ways. Full of ambition.

And pride. But here's what's teaching. Here's what the Lord is teaching Judah. In verses 3 and 4. He's actually paralleling this young lion.

With a specific king. The identity of the first lion cub. Is a king named Jehoahaz. Now we know very little of this king. He was a king of Judah.

Other than he was evil. And quickly judged by God. His reign lasted for three months. That's how wicked he was. The Lord tore him down. In only three months of rule.

His account in 2 Kings 23. Is brief and tragic. Here's what we're told of Jehoahaz. The first lion cub king. He was evil in the sight of the Lord.

[12 : 43] And as we find out from this parable. He was bloodthirsty and violent. Even to his own people. Here's the suggestion in verse 3. He became a young lion and learned to catch prey.

What does a young lion catch prey for? In order to eat. In order to satisfy its own appetites. But it says this. He devoured men. And the context that we're seeing throughout this parable.

Is that the carnage that's being caused by these young lion cubs. Are actually in their own pride. Their own herd of lions. In other words.

Jehoahaz caused violence and evil. Amongst his own people. The very king that Judah raised up. To deliver them. And to lead them to prosperity.

Wealth and goodness. Ends up being the very king that persecutes them. But not only that. Jehoahaz was so evil and repulsive.

[13 : 42] As a distant king. That here's what we know from his account. Pharaoh Necho of Egypt at this time. Saw the deeds of Jehoahaz from afar.

And was so appalled by his bloodthirsty. And violent reign amongst his own people. That he decided to send men to subdue this wicked king.

And so here's what we're told in 2 Kings 23. The king of Egypt sends mercenaries to Judah. And they capture. Literally capture Jehoahaz.

Deport him back to Egypt. And here's what King Pharaoh does. He puts him in captivity. Just like the parable says. And he dies in captivity in Egypt.

What a tragic story. For this first lion cub king. After this. Here's what the Pharaoh does.

[14 : 40] He installs a new king. In his place. But why is this important? Why is verse 3 and 4. So integral to this parable? Well first of all.

Here's what it teaches us. That when we raise up kings. And we put our hope in somebody. Who was never meant to be a king.

Who was never meant to rule. We find ourselves quickly oppressed. But secondly. We're going to see this as well in the second lion cub.

The Lord judges the haughty. And he judges the wicked. Even to the point of using someone like a Pharaoh. Of a godless foreign nation.

A Pharaoh who saw the evil. And was able to say that's wrong. And I'm going to take that king down. God will use means. To bring down evil rulers.

[15 : 39] But in verse 5. I want us to notice this. Here's the transition in between these two lion cubs. When she saw Judah. The lioness. Saw that she waited in vain. And her hope was lost.

Hope is a big word here. Circle that word. Her hope was lost. She took another of her cubs. And made him a young lion. Has the lioness learned?

No. And the word hope here is integral. To understanding this parable. How quick we are to pivot strategies. When our first plans don't work. No matter how much Judah plots or plans.

They will always end up in despair. If God is not in the picture. And so to us. What will it take to teach us. That God is our only true hope.

This is a harrowing verse. If we understand it in the right sense. That when we look to people. Or things. Or money.

[16 : 38] Or possessions. Or popularity. Or whatever it may be. That tempts you. To put your hope in it. When we do that. And we give in. And we say. I put my hope in this to fulfill me. We will find ourselves in despair.

And it is in that moment. That the Lord wants our hearts. And he sometimes will do things. Like bringing us down in our pride. To a low place. In order to teach us this lesson.

And he does this for Judah. But unfortunately for Judah. The hard heart prevails. So what does Judah do? It makes another young lion. So let's talk about this second young lion cub king.

Verse 6. He prowled among the lions. And he became a young lion. Just like the first. And he learned to catch prey. He devoured men. He seized their widows. He laid waste their cities.

And the land was appalled. And all who were in it. The sound of his roaring. Then the nations set against him. From provinces on every side. They spread their net over him. He was taken in their pit.

[17 : 40] With hooks. They put him in a cage. And they brought him to the king of Babylon. And they brought him into custody. That his voice should be no more heard. On the mountains of Israel. The identity of the second lion cub king.

Is debated by many. But I believe it to be King Jehoiakim. Who came just after Jehoahaz. The first lion cub king. King Jehoiakim was the one put on the throne.

By Pharaoh Necho. To succeed the first evil lion cub king. But here's what we know of Jehoiakim. He is accused of the same faults by God.

Doing evil in the sight of the Lord. However we have a lot more recorded about this evil king. Let me indulge us here a little bit. In the book of Jeremiah.

We learn that King Jehoiakim had the word of God written on a scroll. At the behest of prophet Jeremiah. And as Jeremiah took the words of the Lord on a literal scroll.

[18 : 39] An ancient day equivalent of the word of God you have in your hand right now. Jeremiah began to read. This is all recorded in his book. Began to read the word of the Lord. And here's what it says Jehoiakim did.

He took the scroll out of his hand. Cut it into pieces. And threw it into a fire pot. Literally. King Jehoiakim.

Is responsible. For taking God's holy word. And destroying it. But not only this. Soon after he is told to have taken a prophet named Uriah.

Who is a colleague of Jeremiah. And another godly man. And he had him murdered in the king's court. And then we're told he inflicted violence and death upon his own people.

Judah. Treating them as slaves. And oppressing them with the sword. But then not only this. He rebels against the great nation of Babylon.

[19 : 38] Which is in power at this time. And tells them we're good. We don't need to follow you. And here's what happens. Babylon doesn't like that. And here's what they do. They bring about oppression to Judah from all surrounding nations.

They get the Chaldeans. The Syrians. The Moabites. And the Ammonites. All under the same roof. And say let's go take them down. And because of Jehoiakim's pride.

King Nebuchadnezzar comes. Subdues Judah. Takes them into captivity and slavery. And literally carries off Jehoiakim into Babylon.

Just like Ezekiel's parable states. But notice what it says in the parable. First, what did this lion do? He devoured men. He seized widows.

Laid waste cities. The land was appalled. And all who were in it. The sound of his roaring. Literally, Jehoiakim. Caused violence and carnage in Judah.

[20 : 40] But not only this. We see in verse 8. That the nations were set against him on every side. They took him like a subdued lion. Caged. Put into a pit.

And carried off like a wild animal. Into Babylon. And then I finally want us to notice the end of verse 9. That his voice should no more be heard on the mountains of what?

Israel. Here's what's so staggering about this parable. Here's what the Lord has chosen to do. These wicked, evil kings that think they are the rulers.

That think that they can shepherd my people. That rule not with selflessness. Not with the type of kingly character that I require. Goodness.

Righteousness. Righteousness. And selflessness. They rule with pride. And they rule with a strong arm that oppresses the people.

[21 : 44] Because that is the case. Here's what the Lord does. I'm going to use foreign nations to cleanse my land. How horrific is it? When a foreign nation comes into Judah to remove their king for them.

So that Israel no longer has violence. The mountains of Israel finally are quiet again. This is a tragic thing. And it teaches us this. That only one king is ever truly qualified to reign over God's people.

Join me painfully in recounting the legacy of Judah's lion cub kings. Oppressive violence against God's people. Destruction of God's literal word. And ultimately, self-exaltation through exploitative means.

Here's the legacy of these two lion cub kings. Exploitation. Oh, I've got authority? You've given me authority? I'm the king? I've got power? I've got everything? Oh, great. I'm going to use that to try and make a name for myself.

To bring myself higher at your expense. Literally exploiting God's people in order that they might serve themselves. And here's what's so amazing.

[22 : 59] I believe that the word of God teaches us that all positions of authority are a call to servanthood. Not exploitation.

All positions of authority, first and foremost, are given by God. And God is the one who is ultimately in authority over all things.

The earth that we live in. The cosmic universe that we look and wonder and see. That God who is in authority over all things. He himself does not exploit that power and authority.

And that's his expectation of earthly leaders who have authority. The call to all leaders with authority is servanthood. Presidents and kings.

They're obligated to serve their citizens. We have an inauguration happening tomorrow. I don't care what your view is on the incoming president. Here's what I'm going to call us to.

[24 : 04] Let's pray that he, along with all the other leaders in his cabinet, all of the other people in this country that are in positions of power, would do what? That they would use the power and authority they have to serve the people.

Let's pray that of our country, but let's also pray that of other nations that are undergoing massive turmoil right now. That their leaders would use the authority that God has given them to serve and not to exploit.

For Jehoahaz and Jehoikim were exploitative leaders. And look where it led the nation. Elders and deacons are called to use their authority to serve the flock.

To lay down their lives that the flock might grow and be nourished and fed. Parents with their children.

Parents, you have been given authority by God. Will you use it to exploit your children? Will you use it to cause them pain?

[25 : 07] Or will you use the authority God has given you to serve your children? Husbands with their wives. Husbands, we've been given authority.

What will we do with it? Here's what Jesus did with the authority he had over his bride. He laid down his life and served her. All positions of authority are called to servanthood, not exploitation.

But secondly, here's what we need to take away right out of this parable. That the Lord is clearly, specifically teaching Judah. God will judge wicked leaders who abuse their authority.

That's a guarantee. The judge of all the earth will have his judgment. His righting of the wrongs of wicked leaders.

Him who has been given authority must use it to serve. Jehoahaz and Jehoakim are both swiftly captured, deported, and killed by foreign nations.

[26 : 09] And here's what we need to take away from this church. God will use any means necessary to discipline us. He will bring us low when we exalt ourselves against his rule. And he will correct those who abuse power.

And God will judge the leaders of the world, the church, the home, for their exploitative rule. He will judge the proud. But we also know this, he will exalt the humble.

The kings of the world will be judged, Isaiah 10 says. Woe to those who decree iniquitous degrees. And the rioters who keep writing oppression to turn aside from needy, from justice, and to rob the poor, the people of their right.

That widows may be their spoil. That they may make the fatherless their prey. The word prey, there it is. What will you do to the day on the day of punishment? In the ruin that will come to you from afar.

To whom you will flee from help. And where will you leave your wealth? Nothing remains but to crouch among the prisoners or fall among the slain. For all this is anger. The Lord's anger has not turned away and his hand is stretched out still towards the haughty.

[27 : 12] God will judge the evil rulers of the world who exploit their citizens and others with their authority. But let's also look at this. How about the shepherds over God's flock?

Ezekiel 34. Ezekiel 34. Same prophet. The Lord gives a word to Ezekiel to speak to the very elders of the nation that were supposed to be leading and serving and feeding Judah.

And here's what he says. This is harrowing. Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds. And I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to feeding.

No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves. I will rescue my sheep from their mouths that they may not be food for them. That's a warning to me.

It's a warning to the elders of this church. To Josh. To David. To Wit. And by extension to all those who are looking to serve and love the sheep.

[28 : 20] How about this? Verse 4. For husbands. 1 Peter 3.7. Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel. Since they are heirs with you in the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

We don't like verses like this. I'm the chief among them. I don't like to hear God's word say, if you don't love your wife sacrificially and selflessly, God may stop listening to your prayers, Eric.

Abusive power is a serious offense to God. The one who holds all power and all authority and never once abuses it has no tolerance for those who do abuse their power.

Exploitation of any form is fundamentally contrary to the nature of God. That's what the parable is teaching and showing and revealing to Judah.

But here's where the turn is. It's been heavy so far. This is a heavy parable. But here's where I want to encourage us. What was the Lord really trying to get Judah to understand through this parable?

[29 : 36] That they misplaced their hope in kings who would only ever exploit them. This parable is actually a call for God's people to realize we need to hope in a better king.

We need to repent of installing our own lion cub that we think is ready to rule when in fact they're immature juveniles that don't know what they're doing.

Hope for a better king. That's the real message that God is sending. Not just any king. A king from the line of David who is a fully matured lion of Judah.

Noble. Regal. King. Not a lion cub. Violent. Untamed. And self-serving. But how would they know?

What signs should they be looking for? Okay. That's the king we're looking for. How do we know when he's here? Excuse me. Well, about a hundred years earlier, the prophet Isaiah prophesied to both nations, Judah, or both kingdoms, Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel.

[30 : 44] And here's what Isaiah prophesied that they should be looking for. Here are the signs of the right lion of Judah. Isaiah 42.1.

Behold, my servant. Behold, my servant whom I uphold, my chosen in whom I stole the lights. I have put my spirit upon him. He will bring forth justice to the nations.

My servant is Isaiah 42. And then again in Isaiah 53, a few chapters later, a servant king has promised to come humbly among God's people, to bear their burdens, and suffer on their behalf like a lamb to the slaughter.

Listen to this. Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, there it is again, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

How do we know what this lion king looks like? Well, here's what the Lord says. You will know him because he will serve. He will do the opposite of every king who has ever existed, who abuses their power and takes authority into their own hands.

[31 : 57] Instead of coming and lording authority over you, he's going to come, lay his authority down, and serve you. What a radical concept that the Lord teaches them a hundred years earlier through Isaiah.

Judah knew this. They had this prophecy. Israel was to await the true king who would not oppress them or exploit them or advance himself above them, but instead would serve them humbly.

And church, this is our call today too. Who are you waiting for today? Are we like the lioness, Judah, who hopes in vain in verse 5?

Are we hoping in the wrong king? One of my favorite fictional works is the Chronicles of Narnia, as I alluded to earlier. And my mother is actually here today.

This is unplanned. But my mom used to read to us the Chronicles of Narnia as little kids. And every night, we'd work through a little bit more of each book. And I remember, every time we would cycle back through the great book, The Lion, Witch, and the Wardrobe, she would get to the part where, okay, spoilers, book's been out for 75 years.

[33 : 12] Not my problem if you haven't read it. Here we go. We would get to the part of the book where Aslan, the great king lion, who no one dares confront, willingly walks into the clutches of the evil white king, white witch, excuse me, in order to sacrifice himself to free the foolish Edmund who has given himself over to death and destruction.

And she would read the story how the lion would walk in there submissively, ready to lay down his life, and they would kill the lion, and he lies dead.

And every time we get to this point, I would always ask as a little kid, why? He could take that white witch down in one move. He could conquer all of them. He's Aslan. He's the great, mighty lion.

I would always object, but now I know why. Because what was C.S. Lewis communicating in that image? Well, he was communicating the same thing that the Bible communicates. He didn't create this story.

Using your power and authority to serve others is the most noble, regal, and lion-like decision there could possibly be. Because Jesus had all the authority in the world and laid it down in order that we, his people, would be served by his death.

[34 : 44] Turn with me quickly to Revelation 5. The image of the lion of Judah actually flows all through Scripture.

It starts in the book of Genesis and the lion of Judah finishes in the book of Revelation. Read with me the first six verses of chapter 5. Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back sealed with seven seals.

And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or look into it.

And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and to look into it. And one of the elders said to me, Weep no more. Behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

And between the throne and four living creatures and among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

[36 : 08] We'll stop there. Why are we reading this passage? Well, I want us to notice that there's only one person who is worthy to open the scroll and the scroll is a symbol of all of the prophecies of God, all of the purposes of God, all of the plans of God and his kingdom finally, fully coming to fruition once and for all.

That's what the scroll symbolizes. Who opens it? And we have two pictures, two images that seem extremely contradictory. Jesus is referred to as the lion of the tribe of Judah and simultaneously in the very following verse the slain lamb.

Here's what it's teaching us. Jesus took on the title of lion of Judah by first becoming the slain lamb. You cannot get a more contrastive dichotomy than a fierce triumphant lion and a meek slain lamb.

What is going on here? Here's what Revelation is teaching us. The slain lamb is a picture of Jesus' sacrificial death on behalf of his people. The slain lamb is the suffering servant.

The triumphant lion is a picture of Jesus' victorious resurrection and the defeat of earthly and spiritual powers. The lion of Judah is the conquering king.

[37 : 42] These dual images are not contradictory but work in harmony. Jacob's blessing of the tribe of Judah in Genesis 49. What does the image of the lion of Judah convey?

Triumph. He will triumph. But here's what's so amazing about the gospel. Jesus is the lion of Judah but his ascension to this lion throne is not a traditional one.

See, Jesus takes on this title not by force, not by exploitation, not by violence. He shows himself Judah's long-awaited lion king through servanthood.

By becoming a sacrificial lamb who is offered up as a propitiation for the sins of God's people. An object of divine wrath of which a holy God, a sovereign judge of all mankind was pleased to crush, we are told.

That we, his children, might be forgiven and free. That's the gospel. This lion of Judah is not a lion-cub king.

[38 : 48] He is unlike Jehoiakim and Jehoahaz in every way. All authority given to him he lays down in order that we might be served.

Dear sinner, me included, you are not in need of power or authority, wealth or prosperity, or exploitative, abusive leadership.

You are in need of having your feet washed by the servant king. you are in need of having your heart cleansed from the stain of sin by the precious blood of the suffering servant.

His blood which flowed over that cross on that terrible day. But you are also in need of a conquering king who will never be trapped with hooks, cages, or carried away by the powers and rulers of the world, but he who himself broke the very bonds and chains of death and judged all earthly and spiritual powers by rising from the tomb in glorious, glorious victory.

That's who we need. And that's who Jesus promises to be. Judah's hope would one day finally return.

[40 : 15] And it would return in the amazing, humble form of a baby. Another picture of a servant king. We need a king who rules in love, not in terror.

Lion cub Jehoahaz and lion cub Jehoiakim exploited God's people and God brought them low. The lion of Judah, Jesus, served God's people and God has exalted him to the highest place.

So here's my call for us this morning. Hope in the lion of Judah, the servant king. We do this by turning away from any hope that speaks to us and tempts us to put our faith in it.

To repent of you and ourselves is that false lion cub king that thinks they can rule. instead we turn from that sin, that desire to find fulfillment in a earthly ruler and we believe in Jesus Christ.

He has served us with the greatest of acts. His very life given is a ransom for us. Acknowledge your king this morning, church.

[41 : 28] Hope in him continually. For he does not just lead us out of death and into life. He leads us every step of every day. He is the conquering triumphant lion.

But secondly, I want us to respond to Jesus' servanthood by being a servant ourselves. This text is, and this parable is also about authority. What authority have you been given?

Consider that today. Use your authority to serve others. Be Jesus in every setting. In our workplaces, maybe you get a promotion, you've just been given a little bit more authority.

How will you use that authority? To lord over others or to serve them? In our homes, parents, again, we have authority over our children. We are to use that authority to serve them.

To give up of our time, maybe even our hobbies and the things we love to do in order that we might read that extra book to our child. We might say that extra prayer to them. We might model for them what it means to be a Christ follower and in the church.

[42 : 34] As elders and deacons and as ministry leaders, if you've been given any sort of authority in the church, use it to serve the body. But lastly, I want to end with this.

Maybe you're in here today and you're like, I'm not an elder. I'm not a deacon. I'm not a ministry leader. I'm just a behind-the-scenes servant. Here's what the scripture gets to tell us and encourage us all with. Members.

Ephesians 5.21, here's what Paul says to us. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Which means, in that verse, here's what Paul's doing.

Every single member of the church has a little slice of authority over each and every one. You, fellow brother or sister in this church, you have a semblance of authority over me.

And I have a semblance of authority over you. And the authority that we've been given over one another, it says, is out of reverence for Christ. Let's hold each other accountable.

[43 : 38] Let's serve one another. Let's follow in the footsteps of Jesus, our great servant, by washing each other's feet, by drawing one another near, to follow this lion king, king of Judah, closer each day.

Lord, I pray this morning, you teach us this way. Lord, choosing to be a servant is oftentimes difficult. Lord, it goes against our very carnal, sinful desires, Lord, to obtain power, to have influence, to control others, Lord.

Those are wrong, fleshly, evil desires. Lord, I pray that we would see the love of Jesus, that we'd marvel at the fact that he is unlike every other king.

Lord, teach us to fall in love over and over again with the great, humble servant, King Jesus, with the slain lamb who has also become the lion of Judah, triumphant over all powers.

Empower us in this gospel truth this morning, Jesus, I pray. In your name we pray. Amen.