

A new King reigning over a perfect kingdom

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[0 : 0 0] As we stand, we pray together. God our Father, we pray that you will speak into our lives now and each day that we will come closer to you and know all your blessings in our lives, we pray.

Speak now in Jesus' name. Amen. And do please be seated. I can ask you, when do you feel joy, gladness, exultation, even rapture?

Well, I can say I felt something like this on Wednesday evening. When as a lifelong Tottenham supporter, I watched with Jenny and other family members as Tottenham beat Manchester United to win the Europa League.

What elation. And I've got to say, the glow lives on. Probably until this afternoon when Spurs go back to their league form and lose at home to Brighton.

Joy based on things of this life will always be ephemeral. Here today and gone tomorrow. And certainly in football, one supporter's joy is generally another's misery.

[1 : 1 1] I'm sorry that Tom isn't here today. I can give my consolations to him as a Man United fan. It is a very different sort of joy that Isaiah brims over with, proclaiming in today's reading.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Shout aloud and sing for joy. We've been seeing, haven't we, in this sermon series on Isaiah over these last weeks, there's been much gloom and despondency.

Isaiah has laid out all the bitter consequences of not following God and his way. Isaiah knows his society. And he knows God. And therefore he makes this commentary.

But Isaiah has always seen hope in God's utter grace and mercy. And now, in these readings today, he spills over with utter joy in his sure hope in God.

So wouldn't it be great if this afternoon, today, this morning, tomorrow, when you wake up and through the week, if you were a person of joy, regardless of circumstance, a person of delight, freedom, confidence, sure hope and more, even people with a sense of ecstasy are being taken beyond ourselves, Well, we'll follow Isaiah's words and see the fulfilment in our faith in Christ Jesus.

[2 : 3 2] And you can be. You can be a person brimming over with joy. And from that sense of exaltation, you can find all the strength and delight you need to live this life well, serving our God who loves you through and through.

If you want to follow on page 697 of the Pew Bibles, and again, Dave recommends and I would say the same, it's good to have the Bible in front of you that you can follow what is being said.

So it's page 697. So Isaiah knows his society. He knows his God. He knows the promises of God. And his joy comes from his sure hope in a coming king.

See verse 1 of chapter 11. Isaiah repeats the idea that there will be a shoot arise from the stump of Jesse. From his root, a branch will bear fruit.

And of course, I'm sure you know that Jesse is the father of David, the greatest king of the Israelites. And those promises that have been given to David by God, your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me.

[3 : 3 7] Your throne will be established forever. But by Isaiah's time, this must have seemed to be an empty promise. And probably most people in Isaiah's time in the Israelites, rather like maybe today, people have just given up hope.

The northern kingdom of Israel had fallen to the Assyrians in 722 BC. Chapter 10 of Isaiah prophesied the destruction of Assyria. But nonetheless, the southern kingdom, Judah, was under constant threat, and it would fall in 587 BC to the Babylonians.

And over the following centuries to come, the people of Israel would be reduced to a remnant. And the royal house of David seemed utterly finished. No power, no authority, gone.

Reduced to a mere stump, apparently dead, no life. But Isaiah proclaims that God is faithful to his promises. In spite of all the judgment and turmoil that will fall on the people of Israel, there will come one from the royal line of David, Isaiah foresees.

The one, as we were here last week, if you saw in chapter 9, will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He who will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, God's anointed, the Messiah.

[4 : 59] And the powers of this world, the Assyrians of their day and the powers today, all the earthly powers, their boast is in their military strength. The coming king prophesied by Isaiah will be equipped for his work by the Spirit of the Lord.

He will bring a kingdom that resounds with the love, justice and integrity of our God. Do you remember a few weeks ago in this series, we saw in Isaiah chapter 5, the prophet bemoaned the state of his people with seven woes.

Woe to those who build up their property hoard. Woe to those who spend a life of drink and cruising. Woe to those who live a life of indulgence with no regard or respect for the Lord. Woe to those whose sin are deceitful and wicked.

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, who think themselves clever. Woe to those who take bribes and deny justice. It could be a commentary on today, couldn't it?

All of those woes we see in our society around the world. Isaiah draws a great contrast with the coming king, the Messiah. See verses 3 to 5.

[6 : 08] With the Spirit, this king will have wisdom and understanding, counsel, the right use of power. He will have knowledge, absolute comprehension. Crucially, in contrast to Solomon and the other failed kings of Israel, he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

The coming king will have deep respect for God and his ways. In those following verses of Isaiah, he's proclaimed that this king will rule and judge with utter uprightness.

He sees beyond the surface and knows the inner character. And all through the Old Testament, there have been a refrain, when will there be justice for the poor? For example, in Psalm 82, Isaiah sees that when the Messiah comes, the plaintive cry will be answered.

With justice, he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. Verse 4. And how the world then needs this king prophesied by Isaiah. He will be girded in righteousness, faithfulness will be his apparel. Verse 5. And the coming king, says Isaiah, will accomplish all this by word, his words, the rod of his mouth. Not false or coercion, but by his teaching, the power of his life.

[7 : 25] That is the word. In verses 10 to the end of chapter 11, Isaiah celebrates that will be end times. In that day, there will be restoration with the nations rallying to this king of kings, the root of Jesse.

As God's wonderful providence have been seen before in the Exodus and generally in the history of Israel, so he will work through the nations to bring his kingdom. And Isaiah sees that this coming kingdom of God will be for all creation.

See in verses 6 to 9, it's wonderful poetry, wonderful pictures of nature at peace. And if you read it, apparently all of nature has become vegetarian.

Something for you to think about, you meat eaters. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion together. A little child will lead them.

It is Eden restored. Eden restored. The enmity between nature and man has gone. The young child will even put his hand into the viper's nest and come to no harm.

[8 : 36] In this coming kingdom seen by Isaiah, there will be no harm or destruction. For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord. Verse 9. And again, it is word, knowledge that brings transformation.

Not false or coercion. The kingdom will come by the teaching of the king, the power of his life. That is the word. Of course, Christians believe that this coming king, prophesied by Isaiah, has come. Jesus, God incarnate. So many ways that he fulfills these words of Isaiah. He of whom the gospel writers recall, the spirit descended at his baptism.

He who fulfills all of those excellent characteristics described by Isaiah. He of whom the writer of Revelation recorded, his name is the word of God.

He who is the word, whose teaching is unsurpassed, who brings the kingdom of God, not by false or coercion, but by his teaching. The power of his life, that is the word.

[9 : 46] Recall that on the night of his birth, the angels proclaimed good news of great joy. In the town of David, a saviour has been born to you.

He is Christ the Lord. The royal line did not die out. Here is the new king born to the line of David. In the gospel reading today of John chapter 7, Jesus emphasises the words of prophecy again fulfilled in him.

The words from Isaiah, whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from him. Those wells of salvation spoken of by Isaiah in chapter 12.

Truly Jesus, the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, a shoot that came from the apparently finished royal life, line of Jesse, of David. And then throughout chapter 12 of Isaiah, the prophet rings out in exultation, utter joy.

Verse 2, Surely God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord is my strength and my song. In verses 4 to 5, Isaiah tells us to give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, sing to the Lord, shout aloud and sing for joy.

[11 : 05] And we are to make known among the nations of the world, these truths of how the Lord brings his kingdom in Christ Jesus. We are to proclaim that his name is exalted.

Joy to strengthen us, to take away our fear. I hope it is clear that there is nothing glib about this joy. On a personal level, all of us can be prone to gloom, despondency, even the depths of depression. Any of us may need professional help with mental health. And when we see all of the world's problems, there is nothing glib about the joy that can be found in the king and his kingdom, prophesied by Isaiah.

This joy that we draw from the wells of salvation is to give us power to go into God's fallen world, to serve him and tell of his kingdom. Nonetheless, whatever our personal challenges, whatever the state of the world, joy is the promise to you.

It is the promise to all Christians, to be lived in, to know. Jesus said, I've told you this, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

[12 : 18] John 15, verse 11. So how? How are we to receive this joy? First, simply believe. Everyone has belief systems.

The atheist, for example, believes that we're random, meaningless accidents with no purpose. Think about it. They have to believe that, don't they? If there's no God, that is what we are. I find it much easier to believe that God and his love came to us in the man Jesus, to be king, to bring his kingdom.

When we believe this to be true, when we accept and receive, the witness of billions of Christians through the ages tells us that there is a deep experience of joy. St. Peter summed it up in his first letter.

You believe in him, and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. So believe. And then live. Live in the knowledge of God and his kingdom, his promises.

Center your life, your focus on God, his character. Make praise integral to your life. Rejoicing in God for who he is, regardless of what's going on in your life, regardless of the circumstance.

[13 : 29] To have the perception and maturity of the prophets, like Isaiah, and like Habakkuk, who wrote about the same time, these remarkable words. Think about it.

It's hundreds of years. It's an agricultural society that Habakkuk was living in. He writes this. The fig tree does not blossom. There's no grapes on the vines. The olive crop fails.

The fields produce no food. There are no sheep in the pen. No cattle in the stalls. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

Whatever is going on this afternoon, Tottenham lose to Brighton. Oh well. Rejoice again in the Lord. When you wake up tomorrow morning and you've got problems are pounding upon you, praise the Lord and rejoice because God is God.

He is King. His kingdom is here and it will come in its fulfillment. Of course, all of this means learning how to pray, to make prayer essential to your life, turning to God through the day, having set times of prayer.

[14 : 32] Then whatever the circumstance, encountering God, there is joy. Anatoly Levin was a prisoner of conscience in the 1930s under Soviet Russia. And if you can just think back to those times and how awful those conditions would have been.

But he wrote this, the greatest miracle of all is prayer. I have only to turn my thoughts to God and I suddenly feel a force bursting in me. There is new strength in my soul, in my entire being.

There is joy. Believe. Believe. Turn to God. Rejoice in him. Allow his presence to seep through your whole being.

The monk and writer, he's a great writer, Timothy Radcliffe. He's a cardinal at the recent election of Pope Leo XIV. He wrote this, So with joy, draw water from the wells of salvation.

Shout aloud and sing for joy. A shoot appeared from the stump of Jesse. From his roots, a branch appeared that is Jesus the King. His kingdom has come and will be fulfilled.

[15 : 54] Joy is the promise to you. If you're not experiencing it in Christ, talk to somebody, because it is the promise to you. Delight, freedom, confidence, sure hope and more, even ecstasy.

So believe, rejoice, pray, let joy become the deep-centered essence of who you are. And then you, God's church, will have power and strength to serve the King and his kingdom.

Amen. Amen. Amen.