

The Son of David

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Date: 30 November 2025

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[0 : 00] Come back. Come back. Next. I want you to start by imagining with me that something has gone terribly wrong.

You find yourself in the dark, in a lifeboat, in the middle of the big and ferocious ocean. It's a big inflatable thing, and you're lying there in the dark, just coming back to consciousness in the morning after your first night being tossed by the waves because you hear something.

It's a new kind of noise. Of course, there's been plenty of noise through the night, but now there's a new noise. It's barely audible, but it's the wrong kind of noise altogether, and so suddenly you spring awake as you realize what it is as it goes pshh like that.

In your panic, a moment of lucidity comes, and you remember there was a little packet. In the little packet, there was like a whistle and a flashing light, and you think maybe there was a patch, so you jump to the corner of the boat, dig through the patch, and with deep relief and joy washing over you, you find the patch.

You read the instructions rather quickly, but as carefully as you possibly can, and follow them to the T. You apply the patch after finding the leak because it was spurting little bubbles in the corner of the boat.

[1 : 45] You hold the patch on for twice as long as the instructions said to do, and then you do that again just for good measure, and you slowly release your hand and hear nothing.

In sweet relief, you collapse, fall back in the boat. When you open your eyes, the instructions catch your eye just out of the corner of your vision, and you see a line that makes your blood run cold, which is, patch is good for eight to 12 hours, and you realize you've not fixed the problem, you've postponed the problem.

Now, this little parable is, I think, a good summary of the history of human politics in society. Human society, our political structures, are, in fact, a good gift from God, given to us so that we can flourish as best as we can in this world.

They offer us some measure of security on a sea of trouble and turmoil, all related, of course, to human sin and the fall. The problem is, none of the systems that we create as humans can be trusted to not spring a leak.

We never get it set quite right. The other problem is, you've perhaps noticed, we're a rather pointy bunch of creatures who tend to poke holes in things as we sit in them.

[3 : 14] And so our systems spring leaks. Even if we ever do get a really good system and get a really good leader, a really good politician, they can only do so much in the system.

The system itself has leaks. And even if they're the best they can possibly be, they only last for so long. Even the best of politicians can only do so much and can only do it for so long.

But of course, this isn't just about politics. This is about human life. How often does your life go? Or what's the last period of your life? How long was it before you felt like things had sprung a leak yet again?

Or something had gone wrong? Something financially had gone haywire? A health thing came up. A relationship got tense or started falling apart. The car broke down.

Whatever it is, it doesn't seem that our lives get to go uninterrupted for very long without springing a leak. So how can all of this be set right for good?

[4 : 15] How can we find a fix for all this that is going to really last? Because you don't have to look very hard in your own life or in the world around us to see that there are all kinds of problems.

And even we know when things are going really well, there's tensions eating away at the undercarriage, slowly eroding things so that again the leak will show up.

To take just one of our world's current situations, if a peace plan for the Ukraine comes through, will it be good for everybody who will be happy with this solution?

How long will it last for? Things in human life spring leaks. And the best we can often do, perhaps the best we can ever do, is postpone the problem.

In the midst of this human life, God set his people to look for a king. You can see that in 2 Samuel 7, which we heard read a few minutes ago.

[5 : 14] We find God speaking to King David in this passage through a prophet named Nathan. Now, coming up to this moment in 2 Samuel 7, God's promises have been working and winding their way throughout human history.

God had come to Abraham and said, Abraham, I'm going to make you a family. And that family is going to become a big nation, and that nation will become a blessing to the whole earth.

So those promises had been working and winding their way through human lives. And so here God's people are in the place where God said he would set them. And here they are becoming a nation under this king, David.

David's journey to this moment has been complicated. But now at this moment, in 2 Samuel, he stands ready to really begin to rule properly. And in this critical moment, David sends him the prophet Nathan with this marvelous promise.

God says to David, David, I took you from the pasture. Remember what you were? You were a shepherd, and there I found you, and I brought you, and called you, I made you a prince over my people, and now I am giving you a great name.

[6 : 28] But the point of this promise isn't just, oh boy, God likes David. The point is, David is a good thing for God's people. And these promises to David that are coming are meant to be a good thing for God's people.

God says, I will provide a place for my people Israel with you as king and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore.

And then he goes on to tell David that his line will continue to rule. The prophet Nathan says, the Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you.

When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

I will be his father and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I'll punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands, but my love will never be taken away from him.

[7 : 37] As I took it away from Saul, whom I'm removed from before you, your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me. Your throne will be established forever.

You may remember a while back in the first part of the summer, we were looking at 1 Samuel and we saw this happen. We saw that Saul was the king, but that Saul did wrong and did very wrong in the ways that he shouldn't have done wrong.

And so God took the kingship, took the rule from Saul and gave it to David. And now in this promise, God says to David, your descendants aren't going to be perfect. They're going to get it wrong, but my steadfast love will remain with you and your line and there will be a line of kings coming behind you.

The problem is, if you keep reading from 2 Samuel 7 and follow the story on, it gets tricky to see how exactly this works.

David has a son named Solomon and Solomon does become the next king and according to promise, he is the one who builds the temple, the house of the Lord, so the people can commune best with God.

[8 : 51] We heard about Solomon at our weekend away at home not that long ago, how he was incredibly wise, how his rule was incredibly prosperous, that he was a good thing in those ways for the people, but he also went astray and got things very wrong again.

His son, still in the line of David, Rehoboam, takes over as king after Solomon, but he's a fool and things go even worse and so the kingdom, which was one, is now two.

There is the northern tribes and there are the southern tribes and there are two kings and things are split up and there is tension and fighting between them and the story seems to keep unraveling from here.

There are a few good kings in north and south, but most of them are not very good. The north is crushed by a foreign power a few hundred years after. The southern kingdom has their turn not that long after and they're crushed and the kingdom is no longer there.

Where are the heirs of David? Where's the king? What about this promise of David's throne being established forever? This is a good moment to remind ourselves how this works.

[10:06] The promises of God are not like the campaign slogans of even our most earnest and most trusted politicians. The promises of God are not like our New Year's resolutions which wither away like an unwatered poinsettia in January.

God's promises have a momentum which absolutely cannot be held back. And so the promise has not withered away and died. It has not trickled and dried up in a stagnant pool into nothing. This promise has a momentum that cannot be held back. And what it's doing at this moment is it is surging. It is like an underground river giving water to the fields above even while it remains invisible for a time.

And so you find prophets like Ezekiel and Jeremiah looking forward to the future in times of distress saying God will bring us another David. God made a promise about this and so something's coming.

God will do this well. He will fulfill the promise. There's another one like David coming. But as we look in Isaiah 9 you can see this river of promise rise to the surface again.

[11:23] The people walking in darkness have seen a great light Isaiah says. On those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. You've enlarged the nation and increased their joy.

They rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest. As warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat you have shattered the yoke that burdens them. The bar across their shoulders the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning and will be fuel for the fire.

Why? From this period of deep darkness and distress of foreign rule over them and trouble and anguish why are things going to happen?

Why are things going to happen better? What's coming? For unto us a child is born. To us a son is given and the government will be on his shoulders and he will be called Wonderful Counselor Mighty God Everlasting Father Prince of Peace.

[12:28] Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. Isaiah writes this in the midst of things going terribly wrong and he recognizes that people are living in darkness even deep darkness but he says there is a light coming in this child who will be born.

This son who will be given. He will be the answer to the promises that God had made to David. This is the one who is going to come with justice and righteousness to see that things are not just set right for now but set right for good.

From that time on and forever he will rule. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end as he sits on the throne of David because God had promised that this is what was going to come.

You can look at the catalog of his names and feel again the surge of this great promise. This one who is coming will be the wonderful counselor.

[13:50] He will know what ought to be done. He will see with wisdom what is most needed, what is best, what is true and what is right. This one who will be born will be mighty God.

He will be strong enough not just to see what ought to be done but to bring it to pass himself. Everlasting Father he will be one who cares for his people deeply, who stands in unwavering commitment to them and never turns away.

He will be the Prince of Peace. He will bring peace. His coming will sound forth the end of war and of conflict and not only will he be all of this but he will be all of this for all eternity from that time on and forever he will rule.

This is better than a patch that never comes loose. The promise is that someone is coming who will set solid ground below our feet so we can get out of these boats that spring leaks and live as we were called and created to live.

This is the one coming who is absolutely going to set things right and is going to set them right for good. as our family has lived here in Cambridge for about six years every summer in August we await an email we've had awaited an email from our landlords which told us whether or not they were going to renew our rental for another year.

[15 : 24] Now we never had reason to think the email would come and say it's been a slice hope you have a good luck finding a new place. We always thought when it comes it would just say would you like to renew we're happy to renew but we always had to wonder what's the email actually going to say this time and so there was always a little bit of tension waiting for it to come.

The beauty of these promises is that the cycles are over. Is that this one isn't going to set things right for a year and then there'll be an email and we'll see how it goes from there.

This one isn't going to set things right for a long and healthy human rule of let's say 30-40 years but then will pass away and be gone and hopefully the next one lives up to it.

This one is the eternal king who will set things right and who will keep things right for good who will bring real deep renewal of all things.

No expiry date nothing needing adjustment nothing needing to be set right no pieces falling off as you go along that need to be tacked on as you go barreling down the highway of human history this is the one who will set things right and who will set things right for good.

[16 : 43] But now again just like in 2 Samuel 7 we have to recognize that in Isaiah's time as he's writing this prophecy receiving these words from God no child like this was born.

Isaiah saw a few kings in his lifetime and none of them lived up to this. And so this river of promise continued to surge underground until God gives us Jesus as the eternal king.

How often in the last few years have you just felt world weary? That the tension of so many things going so wrong in so many different places as well as the things that are going wrong in your own life and in your own country how often has that just ground you down?

The uncertainty of it the frustration of going I see these problems and I don't even know how we're going to fix them. I don't know who like who would I trust to fix this?

Who has a solution that will actually last? This cycle of our lives going well things have been clipping along decently now for a month or so and then something else goes wrong.

[17 : 55] A new in your life another leak sprung in things. With these great promises in mind and with the recognition of what human life is like see then that God gives us Jesus as the eternal king.

In Luke chapter 1 and starting in verse 26 this great river of life comes surging up into a spring above ground.

Luke 1 and starting in verse 26 we find that God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth a town in Galilee to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph a descendant of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said greetings you who are highly favored the Lord is with you. Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

But the angel said to her do not be afraid Mary you have found favor with God you will conceive and give birth to a son and you are to call him Jesus.

[19 : 06] He will be great and he will be called the son of the most high the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever his kingdom will never end.

after all these hundreds of years of waiting and after all these years of watching things go a little better and a lot worse the king arrives.

The child has been born he will take the throne and he will rule and his kingdom will never come to an end. The angel says he will be called the son of the most high and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.

The promises to David through the prophet Nathan are echoing here. Isaiah saying a light has shone in great darkness is echoing all through this passage because the child has been born.

This river of promise gushes forth in an unending spring of living water and if you read through these first few chapters of Luke you can watch people recognize it.

[20 : 16] They're standing there looking at this promise having been fulfilled in their time and they say things like God has filled the hungry with good things. He has helped his servant as he spoke and his offspring forever.

They say things like God has visited and redeemed his people. He has raised salvation in the house of David. The shepherds are told by the angels behold great joy a savior is born in the city of David.

The city of David is the fulfillment of the promise to David. All those who were waiting for the redemption of Israel rejoice as they meet this child who was born because Jesus is the promised son of David who would set things right and set them right for good.

As Jesus' ministry begins he stands up in a synagogue and reads these words from Isaiah. He says the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

[21 : 31] And then Jesus sits down looking around the room and essentially says that's me. That's what I'm here for. The king is born and he announces himself saying the spirit of the Lord is upon me.

I am here to preach good news to the poor. I will proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind. I am here to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

To proclaim that light has shone upon those in darkness. To proclaim that God is keeping his promises and setting all things right. And as we watch Jesus this is exactly what we see him do. He is the wonderful counselor who speaks the truth and shows people the way that they should live and what the world is really like. We watch Jesus and see so clearly that he is the mighty God who casts out evil spirits and not one of them can resist his call.

Who heals disease and no disease lingers after his presence is there. We watch Jesus and see that he is the everlasting father who has compassion on those who are downtrodden and on the outcast who loves his own and never turns from them even in their unbelief he is faithful to them.

[22 : 52] We watch Jesus and find he is the prince of peace who did not raise up a political revolution when he could have when even his own disciple draws a sword to defend him but instead chooses to die in our place because he is our peace reconciling all to God through the cross.

And part of the reason why Jesus is the one who sets things right for good is because Jesus can change us. One of the reasons like I said things keep going wrong is that we're pointy people who put leaks in whatever boat we're sitting in.

The reason none of our solutions can fix things for good is that our arm is too short. Our best solutions fall short because we're still limited people limited even further by our own sin and self-interest and selfishness and will continue to do awful things.

But as we come to Jesus in faith we are made new so we can actually live different. The only true hope for the end of these conflicts that we see around the world, the ultimate hope, is that enough people in these places come to Christ as king and are changed and learn to turn the other cheek, learn to be makers of peace.

That is the only real hope for this world. Some of you will know the Pixar movie called The Incredibles. There is a scene at the beginning which is sort of archival interview footage and the lead character's name is unsurprisingly Mr. Incredible and he's being interviewed and in the interview he says something incredibly insightful.

[24 : 37] He says no matter how many times you save the world it always manages to get back in jeopardy again. Sometimes I just want it to stay saved you know just for a little bit. I feel like the maid.

I just cleaned up this mess. Could you keep it clean for 10 minutes? There really really is something to that. Even if we did get a hero things will continue to fall back in jeopardy and even if we had a hero who could preserve things our heroes would only die.

But it's not like that with Jesus because he is the promised king and his reign will never come to an end. So for those among us who are considering Jesus we say to you that he is the only one you can really trust with this world and that he calls you to himself.

And so we as a church continue to join together to say come to him. His word to you is come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest.

And you can trust that because he's the king who will reign eternally in justice and truth. There is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.

