

Kingship

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[0 : 0 0] This sermon will be on the shorter side, and it's going to be like bam, bam, bam, right? So I need you to focus. Are you with me? It's going to be short, and it's going to be punchy, and I'm going to make a lot of points.

So you need to sort of stay with me the whole time. So context is this. So we're in a series looking at the Psalms, and we're looking at the Psalms that help us understand God's big story, like the meta-narrative of the Bible.

So a couple of weeks ago, we looked at creation. Then we looked at how God speaks to us. Then last week, we looked at a Psalm that talked about the Exodus, a lot of salvation history.

And this week, kingship. And in the gospel stories of Jesus, you'll know this if you've been around churchy circles for a while, that the kingdom of God, this is a big subject. Jesus had authority over creation and sickness and death and exorcism and all that good stuff.

And in doing all that, he was implicitly saying, or the Bible was implicitly saying, that there is this new, perfect, healing leadership over the world, that that's come.

[1 : 0 8] And explicitly, Jesus was saying the kingdom of God has arrived. And this is not a new theme in the Bible. It's always been God's plan for a new humanity with his Messiah King.

And so what we're doing tonight is we're dipping into the Psalms to help us understand this idea of kingship. And in fact, there's a whole sub-genre of Psalms called royal Psalms that deal with kingship.

We've picked one, Psalm 72. It's a cracker. It's fantastic. You're going to love it. So let's dig into it. That sounded a bit Trump-ish, didn't it, when I said that? It's great. It's the best. You're going to love it. It's fantastic.

So Psalm 72. Probably need a few comments to start it off, though. Like, who wrote it? It's slightly confusing because it says right at the start.

If you have your Bibles open, that's going to be really helpful. It says right at the start of Solomon. That could be translated for Solomon as well, though. And then right at the end, it says the prayers of David are ended.

[2 : 1 5] So who wrote it? Solomon or David? Well, here's the best explanation I've got. Well, in Psalm 71, the psalm immediately preceding it, David's pretty old at this point.

So the best guess here is that David is old. Maybe he's going to die soon. So he's writing this poem, this prayer, this psalm for his son Solomon, who's going to take over.

And the prayer, poem, psalm is he's saying, look, here's what good leadership is about. Here's what good leadership looks like. It's my best guess.

Second comment I'll say to introduce it. This is a prayer for his son, but for the future king of Israel. But some of the lines in it are very ambitious.

There's these things like, may all the kings from all the nations bow before you. And you can think, well, if it's David writing for his son Solomon, is he's like a, you know, do you have the phrase tiger mum?

- [3 : 19] Like a tiger mum? Like he wants his kid to achieve, man. I really want you to achieve, achieve, achieve. And he's being super optimistic here.
- Really optimistic because Israel is this small, not very powerful, not particularly clever sort of country. But that's not the case.
- They were small. They weren't very powerful, but they were very, very hopeful people. And they trusted in God's promise that a Messiah king would come because this is what God had promised them long ago.
- This Messiah king would come and he'd rule the world. So, in summary here, for the overview, Psalm 72 is a prayer for a good earthly king.
- And in that sense, it sort of presents us with what good godly leadership looks like, what good godly governance looks like. So that's one level. But there's this whole other level because the expectations are so high for this king, it's pointing past these earthly kings and it's pointing towards the king that God will send, God's chosen king, his Messiah, who will come and make all things right.
- [4 : 37] So, as we go through the text, we'll sort of bounce around those sort of poles, all right? Does that make sense? Is everyone with me? Okay. Well, let's get into it. Let's look at verse 1 by itself.
- It's very important. And then we'll look at a couple of chunks of the text. So, verse 1 by itself. Verse 1. Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son.
- So, it's a prayer. Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son. But do you see what it's not saying here? It's not saying, may the king be just.
- It's, may the king have God's justice. May the king have the Lord's righteousness. This is very important. It's saying that God is the ultimate source for the king's ability to rule rightly.
- Now, what are these things, justice and righteousness? Very quickly, justice, it's God's desired state of affairs. Righteousness is being in sync with God's ways.
- [5 : 48] We could say the whole thing. We want this person. We don't want just a good king, like just some good person. We want somebody who embodies God's will, who's in sync with God's will, who's connected with God.
- And why is that so important? It's really important for us in helping the world today. It's very important for us to understand what's wrong with the world today.
- Mark Sayers is an Australian pastor and academic. I really like him. You should look him up.
- He says this, and I'm going to say some things now, and then I'll connect it back to what I've just said, okay? So if you feel like I'm going over here and you don't understand what the point is, I'll come back to it. So Mark says this.
- He says, Post-Christianity is ultimately the project of the West to move beyond Christianity whilst feasting upon its fruit.
- [6 : 52] Okay? I'll say it again. Post-Christianity, which is where we are now, is ultimately the project of the West to move beyond Christianity whilst feeding on its fruit.
- What does this mean? And just stay with me. So we're in post-Christian culture. This is not a return to pre-Christian culture.
- That's a very different thing. Because the world has been profoundly changed by Christian values, whether people recognize it or not. The world has been profoundly changed by Christian values.

So post-Christian culture, what does it want? It wants the fruit of faith without the source. And to do that, there is this rejection of the idea of ultimate truth, and it's replaced with the idea of what is good.

What's a good thing? So caring for the poor, that's a good thing. Caring for the vulnerable, the orphan, these are good things. So our post-Christian faith says, yes, these are good things.

[8 : 04] But actually, this is the socio-political view of Jesus, isn't it? This is like justice and peace and equity, etc. But post-Christian culture doesn't want to come under the authority of an ultimate truth.

It wants the kingdom values without the king. And that doesn't work. And we know it doesn't work. We have lots of evidence that it doesn't work.

Because the world, post-Christian world, despite the values, is filled with massive injustice and racism and human trafficking and just the rise of anxiety.

Why is it not working? Well, a couple of reasons here. Post-Christian culture, first, it has no single source of authority.

So the masses decide what's right and what's wrong. And that's a moving target. So that's a problem right there. Second problem is people talk about right and wrong a lot. We want transformation, but we ignore the source of transformation.

[9 : 08] We ignore the king. That's why it doesn't work. We need good governance connected to the king in sync with God's values, in sync with God, not just good politicians.

That's why it doesn't work. Okay, let's move on to a couple of big chunks of this psalm, and I'll unpackage some of this stuff a little bit more. If you sort of have your Bibles open there and you just slide your eyes down a couple of chunks there, verses 2 and 4 and 12 to 14, and I'll read them to you.

And the point of these things is this. If we have a godly leader, if we have the right king, what will that look like? And it gives us all these examples of it.

So I'll read it to you. May he judge your poor with righteousness and your poor with justice. Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people and the hills in righteousness. Isn't that interesting, right?

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor. 12 to 14. So what does godly rule look like?

[10 : 31] A godly ruler... So here's a litmus test for godly ruler. A godly ruler values the life of the least in society. What does that look like?

Well, it gives us some details here. I'll mention a couple of ways. First, he will judge the poor with justice. What's that saying?

Think about what it's saying there. He will judge the poor with justice. It's not saying he won't judge the poor. But when he judges the poor, when a godly leader has to make a call on whether a poor person has done right or wrong, goes free or is imprisoned, that happens in a just way.

Why is this important? Well, I mean, the justice system is supposed to be blind. Of course, it's supposed to be blind to things like wealth and race and stuff.

It just doesn't seem to work like that, though. Let me give you a few examples. This week, I did some reading on discrimination in the justice system. Would it be okay if I gave you a couple of examples?

[11 : 41] So in Canada, the indigenous people make up 4% of the general population, but 25% of the prison population. This is a very complex issue.

How do you explain this? Well, the reading I did this week, they said, in part, the problem is connected to poverty. People often just don't have the financial resources to defend themselves as well as wealthier people.

Of course we know this, right? Now, if you cast the net a bit wider to the states, there's a few stats here. I think this was, I was reading a paper in Florida.

So residents of the three poorest zip codes in this city were six times more likely to get pedestrian citation tickets. Now, here's a really telling stat.

The next one's very, very telling. This is from the Washington Post article I read last year. This is about the death penalty. Who gets the death penalty? Prosecutors, and this is a quote from the Washington Post, prosecutors don't seem to seek the death penalty more for black people than white people.

[12 : 50] So, if you're the person doing the crime, whether you're black and white, it doesn't seem to make a difference. Instead, the real racial bias when it comes to the death penalty pertains to the race of the victim.

And so they listed all these stats. Here's a summary. Killers of black people rarely get the death sentence. White killers of black people get the death sentence even less frequently.

And far and away, the type of murder most likely to bring a death sentence is a black man who kills a white woman. Again, the system's supposed to be just.

It's supposed to be completely fair. It appears as not. So this is why this verse 2 is very important. This is what godly leadership looks like. May he judge your poor with righteousness and your poor with justice.

Wouldn't that be amazing? Wouldn't that be awesome? This is what good governance looks like. This is how Jesus will rule. Okay, what else does godly leadership do?

[14 : 04] Well, not only does it defend the poor in terms of the justice system, a good king. David's praying for this king that David's praying for.

He defends the poor in general. He looks out for them. He punishes those who oppress the poor. And in particular, it says here, he will give deliverance to the children of the needy.

Again, there's a specific example. It's not just the poor. It says, who's the poorest of the poor? Who's the most vulnerable of the most vulnerable? And it's the children of the poor.

Doubly needy and the most vulnerable. And, you know, at the risk of causing a drama, you know, this business of separating their children from their parents at border detention centers. This is not what a godly government would do.

One more thing. Do you see in verse 3, it talks about the mountains bearing prosperity. And this connects to Vacation Bible School this week rather well.

[15 : 06] So the prosperity word is shalom. It means peace. And later on in the psalm, it talks about an abundance of grain and things like that. It's like it's saying this. There's God and there's godly leadership and there's creation and this is good and when this is good, this should be good too.

It's saying that creation and rule are linked. So ruling rightly affects creation. So the natural world should flourish under godly rule.

And the natural world will suffer under ungodly rule. Now, at this point, I thought, I want to, because it's like, you know, I thought, I need to throw in like a quote here or something.

And I thought, you know, it would be easy to quote some super hipster modern Christian on this or quote Arosha, who's a fantastic organization author, but that's just too easy.

So I thought, I'm going to try and find, I thought, who is the oldest, in fact, the dead, old, most conservative evangelical I can find, who has talked about creation care.

[16 : 21] Just so you know, this is like a fair quote from somebody who just believes in the Bible, loves the Bible, preaches the Bible, preach the Bible, right? You know. So, I looked up John Stott, who died just a few years ago.

So he is, if you don't know who he is, he was a friend of St. John's. He was an English theological giant. Very, very, very conservative. He wrote a book.

The last book he wrote, at age 88, was called, The Radical Disciple, Some Neglected Aspects of Our Calling. And in it, this is the last book he wrote, at age 88, in it he said, we don't have the right to pick and choose the areas in which we all submit to his authority.

And he wrote a chapter on creation care. And he said he wrote that chapter because it gets, you know, sort of no airtime in sort of contemporary, in the contemporary evangelical dialogue, outside of places like Regent College, which is an anomaly, I think.

And in it he says that, he says that caring for God's good creation is nothing to do with the deification of nature. It's cooperating with God and conserving and nurturing the creation.

[17 : 28] And to quote him now, and this is a great quote, he says, God has deliberately humbled himself to make a divine human partnership necessary.

He planted a garden, put Adam and Eve in it, to work it and take care of it. It's Genesis 2.15. And then, to my great surprise, he makes special note of climate change here.

And I know people have different ideas, but I'm just going to read it and you do with it whatever you want. This is John Stott. Dared argue with him. He says this. Of all the global threats that face our planet, this is the most serious.

One cannot help but see that our whole planet is in jeopardy. Crisis is not too dramatic a word to use. And he goes on. He says, The world as it reflects and praises God, he who created it, to sully the world is to sully his reflection.

To harm the natural world is to disable its ability to praise and reflect God. Okay, in summary here. Of these two sections that we've looked at, what's the summary here?

[18 : 34] When there is a lack of godly leadership, who loses? It tends to be the poor and creation. Godly leadership, on the other hand.

Who wins? The poor punishes the oppression and creation should flourish under that. It should be a system that works for everybody and everything. And this is what David is praying for.

He says, I want the next king to be like this. Sounds amazing, doesn't it? I mean, life under this king would be incredible. It would be wonderful.

But it was never realized in Israel's time. It's still not realized. David, if he was praying for his son, Solomon, Solomon had a pretty good start.

You know, read the whole book. It didn't end so well. Let's have another look at one more chunk very quickly and then we'll summarize here. Verses 5 to 11 and 15 to 17, if you slide your eyes over this, it talks about the scope of this rule.

[19 : 48] So he's been praying. He's talked about the character of the rule, what it's going to look like. And now he's going to go, how big is this rule going to be? In verse 5 and 7, it says the kingdom's going to outlive the sun.

It's going to outlive the moon. And all nations are going to serve this king. In verse 11, and again, this has never happened. And that's because it's looking further than the king.

It's looking further than earthly governance. Although it's very relevant to us. It's actually pointing us to Jesus. Jesus who is completely good and completely just and completely righteous.

And God made him king of all. And we know this from the New Testament. Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 28. All authority in heaven has been given to me.

That's how this prayer came true, right? John 13, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands. Ephesians 1, speaking about Jesus.

[20 : 56] The plan is to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. And 1 Corinthians 15, God has put all things in subjection under his feet.

This king David prayed for is Jesus. So let me finish up quickly here. This is a great psalm. This is great stuff, isn't it?

And as I said, on one level, it's just helpful for us. It's what good God leadership looks like. It's what good governance looks like. So remember these things when you vote.

Most importantly though, it points us to Jesus. It tells us what Jesus has come to do in the world, what Jesus will do when he returns. It's what life will look like under Jesus.

And now we get to experience part of this now, don't we? It's wonderful, but man, it's going to be brilliant. Christ will return and he will make all things right and good.

[22 : 00] In the meantime, we try our best to fulfill what the psalm calls us to do. Here we go. The prayer of David.

Was it great?