

Throne of Promise

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[0 : 0 0] and pull all our energy together. And if we have good will, we have the ability to engineer the kind of future and the kind of society that we want and deserve.

If we can all band up together and think hard enough and be gracious to one another and love our enemies and forget all of our problems and disarm all those with nuclear weapons, this world is going to be the kingdom of utopia that we've all wanted to have since the time of Babel.

Whether it is in politics or technology or the economy, of course this is the consensus that we can create a comfortable and stable and terror-free future, a place where there will be no problems or evil whatsoever.

And of course the Christian faith has its own version of this kind of utopia. We do believe that if we walk harder and if we pray a lot and if we do all the things that we are supposed to do as Christians or if we do all the things that we are supposed to do as religious people, surely we will usher in the kingdom of God.

It all depends on what we do and how we do it. And I think as we hear the prognosis of the following year and all that we ought to do in order to bring in the kingdom of God, the kingdom of utopia, I think it is providential that we should be looking at Psalm 132.

[1 : 4 6] Because Psalm 132, the writer of this psalm, does not for a moment share the same sentiment that you find in our modern culture.

It is the opinion of the writer of this psalm that the future and the security and the stability of the monarchy of Israel, the future and the security and the stability of the people of God does not depend on what they do.

It depends on God himself. God is the most important person. God is the only hope that you and I have.

It is the only hope that this world has. And the writer of this psalm is very cognizant of that. This was a psalm that was used as the people of Israel walked their way to Jerusalem.

As they ascended to Jerusalem, the psalms of ascent. So literally, the psalm is a psalm in which the pilgrimage is used as they ascended up to Jerusalem.

[3 : 0 2] And also metaphorically, as a metaphor, as you read the psalm, there is a sense of ascent, there is a sense of movement from the lesser to the greater.

And so the psalmist begins with what it means to actually be dependent on God from the lesser to the greatest as a metaphor of ascent.

And so he notes for us here that one of the signs of dependence upon God, one of the signs of depending upon God for the future and stability and hope of the monarchy and for the people of Israel is to pray to God.

In verse 1 he says, Remember, O Lord, in David's favor all the hardships he endured. In verse 10 he says, For thy servant David's sake, do not turn away the face of thy anointed one.

Here the psalmist is thinking about the future and the security of the monarchy. And what he does is to call upon God to remember the house of David, remember the dynasty of David, and do not turn your face away from him.

[4 : 23] He was not under any illusion that the power of the monarchy and the wisdom of the monarchy and the diplomacy of the monarchy would ensure the security of the dynasty of Israel.

But he was under the right belief that the only way that the monarchy of Israel will be established and will be guaranteed is if God himself shows favor to the house of Israel.

Today it is our common belief that if we have all the diplomatic cards in place and if we have all the wisdom and the power and probably if we have efforts one and two we will achieve utopia.

But the psalmist and the people of Israel as they sang this psalm reminded themselves and reminded God that their total dependence and their hope for the future absolutely lies in God himself.

And they prayed unto him. And I'm looking forward to the day when I hear on television that this actually is the only hope that we have. That it is the dependence on God that brings life and health and security and future for God's people and for all the nations of the world.

[5 : 45] The second thing that the second movement he moves from prayer to the ark of the covenant. In verse 6 he says Lo we heard of it in Ephrathah and we found it in the fields of Jair.

Let us go to his dwelling place. Let us worship at his footstool. Israel especially the writer of this psalm showed their dependence on God by moving the ark of the covenant from Ephrathah from the fields of Jair to the place of its residence.

in the heart of the nation of Israel in Zion. And if you've spent some time reading the history of the ark you know that the ark of the covenant was a symbol of God's presence.

It was a symbol of God's power. It was a symbol of God's covenant with Israel. The ark was a place where God was supremely worshipped and where God was supremely encountered.

And the thinking behind this is this. Because the people of Israel depended on God it was necessary to have the ark of the covenant which is representative of God's presence and God's power and God's covenant be situated in the very center of the political and religious life of the people.

[7 : 17] Here again is one more evidence that the people of Israel totally depend upon God for their future for their stability. And so they brought the ark to its resting place and in verse 8 they said unto God Arise O Lord and go to thy resting place thou and the ark of thy might let thy priests be clothed with righteousness and let the saints shout for joy.

What is the center of our hope for our lives? And what is the center of our hope?

What is the ground of our hope for the nations of this world? Is it having God in the very center of the political and religious life? Or is it having more power and more intelligence and being more technologically wonderful?

This psalmist says Israel depended on God and showed their dependence on God by moving the sign of God's presence into the very midst of their lives.

But the psalmist is not ignorant. He's a man who is fully aware that while prayer to God for the security of the monarchy is important.

[8 : 41] And while worship of God is important while having the ark which is a sign of God's presence is important amongst God's people none of these things will guarantee the security of God's people.

Neither the prayers of the people of Israel nor the ark of the covenant nor having worship at the center of the life of God's people would bring the needed security and stability that they desire.

And that's why in the third movement the psalmist moves the attention of the people away from their prayers away from their worship to the promise of God.

It's a song of ascent. It's a movement moving from what is lesser to that which is central. And this is the central factor that brings hope and stability for God's people.

Let me say this to us as God's people. What is the hope? And what is the basis of your hope? As believers we hope and we trust that at the end of the day we shall inherit the fullness of God's blessing.

[10 : 03] We hope and believe that at the time that we die and leave this world we shall enter into the new Jerusalem which God has made.

But here is a question. What is the basis of your hope? Is it your prayers? Is it your worship? Is it your faithfulness?

Is it having the Ark of the Covenant for Anglicans the altar or the temple maybe the Ark of the Covenant? Is that the basis of our hope? Is the basis of our hope preaching?

What is the basis of our hope? On what grounds would God fulfill your hope? I think the ground on which God will fulfill your hope and my hope of an eternal dwelling with him is not on the basis of what we do.

it's not on the basis of our prayer it's not on the basis of our vows it is on the basis of his promise. And that's why the psalmist moves the people in this ascending order from prayer and worship to that which is most dependable the promise of God.

[11 : 16] And he says to them your hope your future your stability depends on these promises.

And what are the promises? The Lord himself verse 11 swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back.

God has spoken to David God has sworn to David and this swearing is a sure oath that God himself will not turn back.

see in other words the security of the monarchy is neither dependent on the prayer that is prayed for the monarchy in verses 1 and 10 nor is it dependent on the vow that David himself makes unto God.

Verse 2 says remember remember oh Lord how he swore to the Lord and vowed to the mighty one of Jacob I will not enter my house or get into my bed I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids until I find a place for the Lord a dwelling place for the mighty one of Jacob.

[12 : 30] It is not on the basis of his vow that the monarchy will be secure it is on the basis of the sure oath that God himself has won. Now if you have time to read 2 Samuel chapter 6 and 7 you get the background of this particular oath that David makes here.

David don't go to it now David swore unto God this particular oath that he will find God a dwelling place and David called Nathan the prophet thank you Jim for bringing that up David called Nathan the prophet and said this is what I'm planning to do for God and Nathan the prophet said to David go ahead it's a wonderful plan and Nathan goes home and God speaks to him and said go back to David and say to him I do not need your house I do not need you to build me a house I have never dwelt in a house I have never asked anybody for a house thanks very much keep it to yourself I myself will build a house unto myself and that is what the psalmist is saying here that it's not on the basis of the oath of David that God is going to do what he's going to do

God has sworn God has decided that he will build a house for himself and that he will build the house of David so it is on the basis of God's oath God's promise that one of the sons of your body that is the body of David will I set on your throne the future of the monarchy of Israel depends upon God's promise and all through the Old Testament we see God making promises to the house of David that he will set a son upon his throne and as you read verse 12 you get the impression that this is a conditional covenant this is a conditional promise and in a sense it is conditional from a human perspective that when the kings of Israel failed God God put them out but the particular covenant that God is speaking about here is a covenant that is unconditional it is the covenant that God spoke about in 2 Samuel chapter 7 and that covenant or that promise is that

God will set upon the throne of David a son that will perpetuate the dynasty of David what is the second promise of God God's second promise is found in verse 13 for the Lord has chosen Zion he has desired it for his habitation verse 14 this is my resting place forever here I will dwell for I have desired it once it is a reiteration that it is not David that will build God a house it is God himself that has chosen a place of residence for himself and so it is on the basis of God's promise and God's choice of Zion that Israel has a future and that the monarchy has a future and within this dwelling place of God God will raise for himself a horn to sprout for David and he has prepared a lamp for his anointed and his enemies the enemies of David's son

God will clothe with shame and he will make his son be glorious and victorious you see what the psalmist is doing here is of crucial importance for us as God's people your future and my future the guarantee of your salvation and my salvation has nothing to do with you it has to do fully with the promise of God God promised the nation Israel that he will bring forth upon the throne of David his son and God fulfilled that promise and that's what Christmas is all about in the next few days we are going to celebrate the fulfillment of God's promise to the house of David and God has not fulfilled this promise because of the faithfulness of the house of David God has not fulfilled this promise because of the faithfulness of Israel neither because of their prayers nor because of their worship because they were not faithful they were not faithful in their prayers nor in their worship neither were they faithful in their obedience but God has fulfilled his promise and of course the promise of dwelling in Zion is being fulfilled and will finally be fulfilled in the heavenly

[17 : 35] Jerusalem in Revelation chapter 21 verse 3 John said behold I heard a voice I heard a voice from the throne saying my dwelling is going to be with my people I will be their God and they will be my people God's fulfillment of the promise to Zion is in the new Jerusalem and God himself will be the temple thereof and God himself will fully clothe us with his righteousness and salvation and the people will rejoice on that day God is a promise keeper he fulfills his promise he has fulfilled his promise to Israel and he will fulfill his promise to us and what I want to invite you to do this morning is to take the eyes off yourself take your eyes off yourself and put them on God himself it is God who keeps his promise who has kept his promise that will indeed keep all the promises that he has made to the people of God and it is guaranteed because God has won and he will never turn back

Amen