

God's Promised King

The Christ of Christmas

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The story is, of course, so familiar to most of us, many of us anyway, that it's sometimes, I fear, easy to take it for granted and to assume as familiar that which is the captivation of nations and is the grandest, most wondrous theme that anyone could ever consider throughout a thousand lifetimes, let alone for a particular Sunday morning. Matthew's Gospel tells the story of the life of Christ and does so from the perspective of showing us that the life of Christ, the person of Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament in dramatic detail, and Matthew is writing to show us that Jesus Christ is the King that God had been promising to his people for centuries and centuries and centuries, saying that, "There is a King that is coming. There is a King that is coming," and there was this great anticipation among the Jewish people looking for the arrival of their king. It is said that Jewish women lived with the hope that they might be the one who would bear birth to the Messiah, and so this was a colossal matter of importance to them, and as you read through Matthew's Gospel as we're going to see over the next couple of weeks or so, he is repeatedly tying the life of Christ to fulfilled prophecy and that's important not only in the details that he shows but the overall picture that he says is that this one, Jesus Christ about whom he writes, is God's promised King and that has implications for us who are believers today, it also has implications for those of you that are here but have never knelt down in your heart before Christ; there are implications for all of the world that the message of Matthew communicates for us and so we're going to look at that over the next couple of weeks here.

First of all, I just want to show you, if you're taking notes today I think there's two points here, the fulfilled prophecies in the person of Christ and in the youth of Christ is going to be what we talk about this morning and then draw out some application from elsewhere in the Scriptures, but let me just remind you in a general sense that in the Old Testament God promised blessing to his servant, Abraham. God promised that he would bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth through the seed of Abraham. You can read about that in Genesis 12 and Genesis 17 and other places. We won't take time to turn there this morning. Later on, a thousand years later on, God raised up David to be king of Israel and in the Davidic covenant, he promised David that he would always have a son to sit on his throne. You can read about that in 2 Samuel 7, and all of the prophets and all of the historical narratives are all supporting this unfolding progressive theme that is given to us in revelation, it's a wonderful thing to trace through Scripture. For today, we approach

Matthew, as it were, with a sense of fresh eyes and we ask this question: how do we know that Jesus Christ is the promised king? How do we know, stated differently, how do we know that Jesus Christ is the one whom alone we can depend upon for the forgiveness of our sins and the promise of eternal life? How can we know? This is a matter of most urgent eternal application. How can we know that our faith in Christ is well-placed? That we have not simply believed in silly fables? That we have not believed in the wrong person? How can we sort all of this out in the age of religious pluralism where every religion is held up as equal to one another, that there are many paths to God? How can we know that we've believed in the right one? Well, this is a matter of often urgent questions for those that are born into a Christian home. How do I know that I'm not just believing what my parents have believed, for example? How can you know as a young person born into a Christian home that Christ is, indeed, the one who has the rightful claim on your heart? Well, Matthew shows this and answers all of those questions by showing that Jesus Christ is the one who fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, that in Jesus Christ we are looking at God's promised king.

So we're just going to trace a few of these prophecies in the first two chapters here this morning and I invite you to turn to Isaiah 9 as we begin. Isaiah 9 in that familiar prophecy of the coming of Christ in Isaiah 9:6 and 7. Notice the language of prediction, the language of promise, the language of prophecy that is given here in Isaiah 9 beginning in verse 6. The prophet says,

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Now last week in our public reading of Scripture we read through the genealogy found in Matthew 1, and I realize and I say it with a bit of grief in my heart, that to some the genealogies in Scripture become a matter of sport, why are those included? It is so boring to read about this. What does that have to do with anything? And it's just a horrible way to talk about God's holy, precious, inerrant word. First of all, we should never talk about Scripture in such disparaging tones, that's just as a general matter, but the genealogies are important because God's promised king had to be a lineal descendant of David. He had to be a lineal descendant of Abraham in order to be the true Messiah. So that genealogy is not a matter of disinterest or a strange quirk of ancient writing, it is central to the entire message of Scripture, that Christ is in the line of Abraham and in the line of David, and for anyone that respects the Bible and anyone that respects the inspiration of Scripture, that point hardly needs to be reinforced or proven. But when you come to the Gospel of Matthew, turn now to Matthew 1, if you will, so central is the genealogy of Christ that Matthew starts his Gospel on that very point to establish that Jesus Christ is in the line of David, he is in the line of Abraham, and therefore he has the genealogical pedigree to be the promised king.

Look at Matthew 1:1 and then we'll look at verse 17 also. Matthew 1:1,

1 The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham:

"Son" being used as a term to say he is a descendant of Abraham. He is in the direct lineal heritage of David. He is in the bloodline of David and he is in the bloodline of Abraham. Well, for a Jew trained on those Old Testament prophecies of which we just used Isaiah 9 as a representative text, as soon you see he is a son of David, son of Abraham, this immediately focuses attention like a laser, "This is a matter of great significance. For someone to be a son of David, a son of Abraham means that there is prophetic significance to Him. He is in the right line. I need to pay attention to what is said here." And after reciting the generations, in verse 17, Matthew concludes his summary of the genealogy in verse 17 with this,

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations [this is verse 17]; from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

So there are dozens and dozens of lines of the genealogy established by the records that would have existed in the temple at that time, this was a matter of public record at the time and so Matthew is writing on records that were extant, that were in existence at the time, and laying forth how Jesus follows the line that is required to be the Messiah. So the very person of Christ is fitting. He has established the genealogy that is necessary for Jesus to be the promised king in the very person of Christ, by who he was by human birth. Now of course, we know and it's important to emphasize here, that Jesus was not a physical descendant of Joseph. Because of the virgin birth, he received his human nature from Mary but the Holy Spirit gave birth, as it were, created Christ, formed Christ in the womb of his mother, maybe is the best way to put it, and so it's not that Jesus was a physical descendant of Joseph himself but rather comes from the line through whom Joseph would have received the right to the throne of Israel, and therefore his son, his firstborn son by legal considerations was entitled to the throne of Israel. He had what it took to be the promised king.

Now secondly, let's look at the youth of Christ and go back to Isaiah 7:14 for just a moment. Isaiah 7:14. These passages of which we speak here, Isaiah 7, Isaiah 9, Matthew 1, these are passages that every Christian should know and be able to turn to easily and have a good familiarity with these passages because they are so essential to establishing who Christ is. Isaiah 7:14,

14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Now with that prophecy in mind, let's go back to Matthew 1 and look at verse 18. We're just going to see how Matthew treats those prophetic texts and how he assigns such significance to them. In verse 18, Matthew 1:18 he says,

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

Do you see how carefully Matthew protects the virgin birth in that opening statement and how he says before they came together, indicating that the birth of Christ was miraculous, that there was no sin involved in his conception between Joseph and Mary, it was not like that, her child that was in her womb was a child formed by the Holy Spirit. This was miraculous.

Now in verse 19, he recognizes that from human appearances this had the appearance of scandal, and so in verse 19,

19 ... Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly.

There would have been shame and scandal on this birth under the assumptions that men looking at it would have thought. They would have only known to interpret that through the sin of fornication. So Joseph wants to protect her from the shame and scandal of that but in verse 20 we see,

20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

So watch what follows now and why that is significant. Matthew says in verse 22,

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

Verse 23, he now quotes from Isaiah 7:14 and in Isaiah 9,

23. "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

Now beloved, here's what I want you to see as we look at this, is that Matthew highlights the fact that what he is writing about Christ is in fulfillment of prophecy. Verse 22, look at it again with me, "all of this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet." Matthew is saying that the Christ had to be in fulfillment of prophecy. This

was not a random occurrence. This wasn't suddenly injected into the world. This was the fulfillment of the plan that God had been unfolding and prophesying about through his servants for thousands of years, and so now this great moment of culmination has come where after all of the centuries of biblical prophecy, now the one who has been promised is here and he is Jesus, he is Immanuel, which translated means "God with us." So the fulfillment, the birth from the very first chapter of Matthew is tied to the fulfillment of what was stated in the Old Testament. We'll discuss the implications of that for us today a little bit later on here this morning.

As he goes on and continues to speak of the youth of Jesus, the place of Jesus' birth fulfilled prophecy as well. Look at Matthew 2:4 where Herod is trying to ascertain the place where Messiah was to be born. In Matthew 2:4,

4 Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet:

Do you see it again? It's being tied to what was said by the prophets in the past. The person of Christ, the significance of Christ was being proven in real-time by appeal to prophecy and by statements of what was happening in history being in fulfillment of what was predicted by those servants of old. So it says in verse 6, what had the prophet said? In verse 6,

6 'AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.'"

And so Micah had made his prophecy some 700 years before the birth of Christ, Micah 5:2 is what's being quoted there as indicated by the caps in some of your Bibles. Isaiah was prophesying it about the same time 700 years earlier, and the point is that all these prophecies had been fulfilled. Even though it had been delayed over the course of 700 years, God was keeping his promises and, beloved, this is of great significance for us to remember, is that and think about it this way, let's just think along with the terms of the history of what's happening here, for 700 years generations came and went and people lived their entire lives without seeing any noticeable, observable advance in the purposes of God as it related to the Messiah. People in 500 BC, 300 BC, 100 BC, they might have had this hope in looking for Christ but they lived and died without seeing it come to pass, and maybe at times they heaved a sigh, a groan, "Oh, when is he going to come?" We know something about that today, groaning for when is the Second Coming of Christ, when is he going to come and intervene in this wicked world of ours and "Oh," and it just seems like maybe that nothing is happening as we watch the world spin into greater and greater decay. But beloved, do you see that over the course of the 700 years, God was outside of time working in time to bring to pass his purposes and his purposes cannot – watch this and listen to this carefully – his purposes in our lives and in the world cannot be measured by what we see happening in the world around us, and it cannot be

measured by what we are observing even in such scope of our lifetime. Our perspective is too narrow, it is too limited. We are too time bound to be able to compress everything that God is doing within the course of the 70 years of our lives. This has significance for us. It means that we are trusting in God to work out a plan that transcends our lives, that is bigger than what we can observe, that we root our faith and our trust in what he has revealed in Scripture rather than in trusting in our own mind and observations. We trust in what Scripture says. Our trust in Scripture is proven to be well-founded because of the way that the life of Christ was fulfilled in the prophets.

Beloved, nothing about God has changed. He carries out the fulfillment of his prophecy over 2,000 years at the arrival of Christ. The prophecies that are still in place yet to be fulfilled are equally certain of their fulfillment even if we don't observe it in the course of our lifetime. That means, beloved, just to speak very pastorally here, that when our faith is rooted in these realities of Scripture, it means that we are not shaken when life deals us severe blows and severe adversity, when sorrow comes unexpectedly, when plans don't work out. We don't collapse under the weight of that and say, "What is God doing? Where is God here?" No, we realize that our faith and our confidence is rooted in something that transcends our own existence. These things about Christ were true before you were born. These things about Christ will be true after you are gone. They are independent of your existence for their veracity, for their truth, and therefore we are trusting in Christ in a way that goes beyond what we see and feel in the course of our own lifetime. That means that our faith is well-founded because it is based on the Christ who was promised by God and who brought it to pass.

Now you see this as you continue on, this prophetic significance in verse 14. We read it earlier, Matthew 2:14. Joseph had been warned to flee Egypt, or he had been warned to flee to Egypt, I should say, and now it was time for him to leave Egypt. Verse 14,

14 So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt. 15 He remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "OUT OF EGYPT I CALLED MY SON."

Do you see it again? This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, fulfilled prophecy in the birth, fulfilled prophecy in the city of his birth, fulfilled prophecy in going to Egypt so that he could be called out of there at a later point. Fulfilled prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy. Fulfilled prophecy. God was keeping his promise to send a king.

Now beloved, I have to tell you that I feel the utter weakness of my flesh in saying these things because the significance is so much greater than what my feeble tongue is able to express. What we are reading about here is about a God who is so sovereign, who is so great, who is such a perfect Lord over his creation that he can say what's going to happen thousands of years before it does and it comes to pass in precise particular detail, and as the Scriptures are being written, as the Holy Spirit is working through Matthew in the recording of it, he is pointing back and showing the connection between Christ and these

prophecies that were made earlier so that there could be no doubt, there could be no question that Jesus Christ himself was the promised king, that he is the one to whom we are to look, he is the one in whom we are to believe. God kept his promise to send a king and he orchestrated the birth and the life of Christ to fulfill prophecy so that all of Israel could know that Jesus Christ was really their king.

Now as you continue reading through the Scripture, you will find that the apostles of Christ who came later appealed to this point often in their early preaching, this significance of fulfilled prophecy. Look at Acts 13 with me, if you will. Acts 13 and we'll see more about these fulfilled prophecies next week as well as Matthew writes about the later years of Christ. But in Acts 13:26, the Apostle Paul is preaching and he says in verse 23, let's say, let's start there. Actually, go to verse 22,

22 "After He had removed him [he had removed Saul from being king], He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.'

Now look at what he says in verse 23,

23 From the descendants of this man, according to promise, God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, 24 after John had proclaimed before His coming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel."

So it's according to promise that he came. A descendant of David according to the promise of God. God was keeping his promise as Christ came to earth, keeping his promise to an entire nation of people.

Now in verse 26 you see the reference to Abraham. He says,

26 "Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. 27 For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him."

Do you see it, beloved? Fulfilled prophecy. David, fulfilled promises. Sons of Abraham. The death of Christ being in fulfillment of prophecy. And in verse 28,

28 "And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. 29 When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. 30 But God raised Him from the dead; 31 and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people."

And look at what he says in verse 32,

32 "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, 33 that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'"

Prophecy after prophecy after prophecy and, beloved, the point transcends even fulfilled prophecy, it is that God who made these prophecies as a promise to his people, has kept his promise. He has been faithful to do what he said he would do. This is a revelation of the nature of who God is. He makes promises, he is able to keep them, and he does keep them. His word can be trusted. What is said by his servants in the Scriptures can be believed and you can know that you are believing it without your trust being misplaced; that he is not a God who fails his people, he does precisely what he says, he does it to the uttermost. He is a God to be fully believed and fully trusted and this is seen supremely in the coming of Christ and in the details of his very life.

Turn over a few pages to the book of Romans 1, Romans 1 where you see this yet again. Romans 1:1,

1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which [you know what's coming] which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake,

You see it again, what God promised beforehand, it is fulfilled in Christ. It was done through his prophets. This is a significant theme, we are to see him in the context of the prophecies that led up to him and to realize in the fulfillment of prophecy, that Christ is the one, the one and only whom God has appointed through whom we must be saved, through whom we will believe. Acts 4:12, "there is no other name under heaven given to us by which we must be saved." Jesus saying, "No one comes to the Father except through Me." Well beloved, part of the reason that you know this is true and why that must be true is that no one else can fulfill these prophecies like Christ did. The constellation of the prophetic stars, if I can put it this way just trying to be a little bit poetic here, the constellation of prophetic stars all pointing to their fulfillment in Christ and their light shines on no one else. It is Christ in whom we believe. It is Christ alone who is the fulfillment of the prophets.

Now, what does that mean for us today? Well, this testimony from Matthew strengthens our confidence in Christ. Beloved, I can't say this often enough: you and I who are Christians, you and I who have trusted entirely and exclusively in Christ for our eternal salvation, for the forgiveness of sin, for the promise of eternal life, beloved, on the

authority of God's word I tell you that we have not believed in vain. Our trust is well-placed. Our trust is rooted in that which is fulfilled in Scripture and when you see, beloved, when you see fulfilled prophecy in the light of Christ, here's what should start to click in your mind: you start to realize that God in his grace has brought you to the one true Lord. That is a gift of grace that is not given to everyone. There are billions living in the darkness of Hinduism and Catholicism and Mormonism and Islam who are in great darkness, who are believing and trusting in lies and shaping their life and vaguely hoping in eternity on things which cannot deliver them. This is tragic of an infinite proportion. It should grieve us to contemplate that. Then by contrast, for us to be able to come to Scripture, for us by contrast to know Christ, for us by contrast to be on the receiving end of these promises from God is to realize that we are on the receiving end of a great grace, a great mercy, a great love that God appointed for us that we did nothing to deserve, and the magnitude of the fulfilled prophecy lifts our hearts toward praise, the magnitude of who Christ is leads our hearts to praise, and the contrast that God has given this to us when to date it has been withheld from so many billions of others, is a cause of humility knowing that we did nothing to deserve this, that we have been on the receiving end of the distinguishing love of God, and that we have been given things and our eyes have seen and our hearts have believed in that which has been withheld from others, gives us a sense of profound humility as well as a sense of profound gratitude. "O God, I could have just as easily by human reckoning, I could have just as easily been born into the darkness of Islam in Saudi Arabia and never once heard the name of Christ, and yet here You allowed me to be born into this life, born into this place that You brought the influences of believing people somehow to bear on my life so that I too might be saved, that I might be brought to Christ, that Your Spirit would do a work in my heart to bring me to know and to understand this great culmination, this apex of the universe, this apex of history, you've done that for me, O God! Oh, praise Your name! Hallelujah! Worship and adoration from my heart to Your glorious throne, O God, for Your power to do this and for Your grace to include me in the plan!" You young people, and for some reason I am just particularly burdened to speak to those of you this morning that were born into Christian households, and sometimes people get on the wrong track of thinking which makes them skeptical of the blessing of God that was given to them to be born into a believing household. What an awful way to think about a blessing that God has given to you, that by his providence he allowed you to be born into a Christian household where you could hear the truth from the very beginning; that God put you into a realm of protection where the truth is what was given to you from the beginning and that you did not have to be untangled from prior lies. You can't measure, you can't calculate the benefit of that blessing. So rather than having that in the course of a sinful heart turn you toward skepticism, it should turn you to a sense of gratitude. "God, You put me in a place where I could be sanctified by a knowledge and an understanding and receiving instruction on the truth from the people who are closest to me."

You've been greatly blessed to be put into a household like that and, might I say, while you've been greatly blessed, there's a great responsibility for you, there's a great accountability for those of you born into a Christian household, born to loving Christian parents who whatever their faults and flaws may be, however imperfectly they live the Christian life before you, taught you something about respecting the word of God, taught

you something about believing in Christ, taught you something about your own sinfulness and your need for a Savior. Well beloved, if you've been given a gift like that from the very beginning of your life, the accountability of that is great. How important, how urgent it is for you to seek after Christ, to believe in him and to follow him and to serve him with your life in light of the great blessing that he's given you.

Now one other thing that I'll say. I'm working on a series that will come down the road a few months. I don't want to get into it right now, but just to recognize that to sin against that is just so great. To walk away from that, to reject that is just unthinkable. It's just unthinkable and so if God has blessed you in this way, then your response is one of humble faith and obedience to Christ and to love him and to thank him for that, and as you respond in that righteous way, in that proper way to the blessings that God has given you, it allows your spiritual confidence to take root. As Christians, when we realize these fulfilled prophecies, you don't have to be tossed about by the false teaching of the religious pluralism of our day. I said that earlier. You don't have to wonder. Beloved, what you need is to just be rooted in this truth of God confirmed by the prophets in the fulfillment of their prophecies and realize there is no reason to drift, there is no reason to fear, there is no reason for doubt. God's word is certain. God's word can be trusted. Christ is the fulfillment of all and supremely Christ can be trusted.

And my brothers and sisters in Christ, beloved fellow members of Truth Community Church, if you belong to Christ, you know the King. You not only know the King, you know that that King is now representing you at the right hand of the Father, representing you, bearing your name in his wounds, as it were, before a holy God so that you have been perfectly reconciled to a holy God through this great King that he appointed. Sometimes we just have to let that sink in. God has included you in his eternal plans in Christ. Beloved, what else matters by comparison? Does a failing body contradict the glorious promises of salvation that are found and recognized in Christ? Is a difficult earthly life overcome and contradict the promise of eternal blessedness with Christ in heaven guaranteed to you by the fulfillment of prophecy, guaranteed to you by the resurrection, guaranteed to you by the promise of God in his word? No, beloved, this is where our life is. This is where everything is that is dear and precious to us, it is all bound up in Christ and it's all something that transcends this earthly life, and when you see the fulfillment of the prophecies, you realize that you have been brought to something that is a kingdom that cannot be shaken, Hebrews 12.

Turn over to Titus 1, if you will. You see, we see in these fulfilled prophecies of which Matthew speaks, we see the depth of the foundation upon which we stand. We see our cornerstone. We see the living Temple of Christ and we see that everything has been given to us in him, and that it's certain that it cannot fail. Titus 1:1,

1 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,

You see, Scripture points us again and again to the promise. If God has promised it, if we are in Christ, then it cannot fail. It will come to pass in our life and in our time and in our future eternity just as much as it did in the fulfillment of the prophecies in the life of Christ. He promised and he can't lie. He is true.

So in verse 3,

3 ... at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior,

So beloved, if God has promised, as he has done in Romans 8, that having been justified you will be glorified, if in light of those things, if you've been called you will be glorified. If in light of those things we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who have believed in Christ, who are called according to his purpose, then we are meant to believe that. We're meant to rely on that. We're meant to have a certainty that that is true no matter how much the circumstances of life may seem to contradict it at any moment. Your thinking is governed by the promises of God, not the circumstances of life. If Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I will come again so that where I am you will be also, so that I may receive you to Myself," if Jesus said that as he did in John 14:1-3, you are meant to believe that, you are meant to trust that, that is meant to be a settled conviction that shapes your entire worldview. And the more that life assaults you with its difficulties and adversities, the more you assert over against your tendencies to doubt and discouragement, you assert over against that the promises of God. "No, this is what God has promised in His word. This is what is true. This is what will govern my perspective. Nothing else. I stand alone on the word of God and the promise of God is enough for me to be at rest."

So fulfilled prophecy confirms the faithfulness of God to his elect but what about those of you that are here and you're not in Christ? You haven't believed in him? Maybe you're aware of that fact, maybe you're just like I once was, thinking you're saved when you're really not. What does fulfilled prophecy have to say to you? What does it have to say to the lost who are not in Christ and who are facing a terrible judgment at the hands of a holy God who forgives sin only in Christ but otherwise requires payment to the last drop? What does fulfilled prophecy say to one like that?

Look at Mark 1:14 with me, if you will. Mark 1:14, and in the maximum amount of sincerity and earnestness that I can muster up from my defective heart, I plead with you to hear the words that are said here and what the fulfillment of the time means to you who are hearing the Gospel not in Christ. This is a word of invitation, a word of command, a word of promise to you as well. Mark 1:14,

14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 15 and saying [look at this], "The time is fulfilled

In other words, the prophetic calendar is in operation. Everything that has been necessary has now been fulfilled. I am here," Christ speaking and he says,

the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Repent and believe in Christ. To you who are not Christians, the Bible says, the fulfilled prophecy indicates to you that Christ is asserting himself as Lord as he comes to you in your conscience through the spoken word, and what he comes in message to you is it is time for you to repent from all of your sin. It is time for you to believe in him for your salvation. The crucified and resurrected Lord, the one who died in the place of sinners and was raised for their justification, it's time for you to believe in him. And Christ commands you to repent. He commands you to believe in him. And what we mean by believing in him is to recognize him as Lord, to receive him as your personal Lord, your personal Savior, and to rest in him as the one who alone is able to save you from sin. To recognize him, to receive him, to rest in him is the idea of believing in Christ.

Well, my dear unsaved friend, some of you young people who have been here months and years hearing the word, coming basically because your parents tell you it's time to get up and go to church, right? I get that. Some of you may be visiting, having come in not really having dealt seriously with matters of religion but, hey, it's Christmas, why not go to church, right? My dear friend, what I would say to you is this, is that here this morning God has set forth Christ to you through the preaching of his word. He has shown you that he has confirmed and established Christ through the fulfilled prophecy as the one who alone is able to save the lost. God has graciously brought you under the sound of his word. God has graciously brought you to hear about Christ and graciously now offers to you the kingdom, offers you eternal life, offers you the forgiveness of your sins, and lovingly graciously calls you to his Son whom he sent for that very purpose, to save sinners just like you. Can you see, my friend, can you see that God's intentions toward you are good? That his offer of Christ to you is generous? That it is gracious? That it is sincere? That there are no conditions attached? That there is nothing that you must do other than come to Christ to be saved? Surely you can see that, can't you, that a loving God is pleading with you at such a time as this?

Look at the Gospel of John, if you will, John 6. John 6:37 and hear this universal call of Christ that goes out, and understand that you have every reason to believe in him and to accept his testimony and to obey his command. In John 6:37 he says,

37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, [and look at this, my unsaved friend] and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

There is an unmitigated, unqualified promise to Christ to everyone who will come to him, he will receive him. You can be received by the promised King today. Right now. He will receive you today and the only reason that anyone would walk out of this building unsaved today is because of the sinfulness and hardness of their own heart to reject such a gracious offer.

Verse 38, Jesus said,

38 "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

You can have eternal life now with the assurance of a promise from this promise-keeping, prophecy-fulfilling God, that Christ will raise you up on the last day and the fear of the grave is banished.

My friend, do you behold this Christ? He's calling you. He's telling you to come to be saved from your sin, to call you out of the world no matter how deep your guilt is, no matter how bad you have been, no matter how indifferent or blasphemous your life has been. He offers you forgiveness and complete reconciliation in a moment if you come to him. So I simply ask you will you believe in him now for eternal life? He's calling you. He will receive you if you will but come to him with all your heart.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we believe in this Christ. We thank You for keeping Your promises over the millennia to send Him. We thank You for those in the past who brought those promises to us that we might believe. And now, Father, having received those promises, as we extend them to others, we ask for like blessing on all those who hear. Send Your Spirit, O God, that each one under the sound of my voice would be drawn to this wonderful King, the Lord Jesus who is King of kings, Lord of lords, and the love of our innermost heart. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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