

Advent 2019

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! “May they be secure who love you!””
(Psalm 122:6 ESV)

“May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!”
(Psalm 72:2 ESV)

“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.”
(Psalm 146:3 ESV)

“Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!”
(Psalm 80:19 ESV)

A Prayer For The Perfect King

December 8th, 2019

Psalm 72

Pastor Levi denBok

Introduction:

Good morning! Please turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 72.

Psalm 72 is both a Royal Psalm and a Messianic Psalm – meaning – it speaks about the Davidic King but it also points forward to the PERFECT King who is to come. That’s why this Psalm is read during advent. Remember “advent” comes from the latin word “adventus” which means “coming”. Advent is the time when we stop to marvel once again at the amazing mystery that the King of Kings – the Messiah King of Psalm 72 – has come to us and is going to come again. In that sense, you should almost have three screens open in your mind as you hear this Psalm today. It’s about Solomon, but it also points forward to the life of Jesus. Those are the first two screens, and I suspect you instinctively already have those open. BUT, there is a THIRD screen that we need to open in our minds. This Psalm points forward to the SECOND advent – the second coming of Christ – when those who have placed their trust in him will experience the joy and the glory of his reign forever! Three screens.

One commentator says:

Psalm 72 holds up before the actual king (in this case, Solomon) some of the dimensions of the ideal which he is meant to embody, a reminder of his high calling.¹

You’ve heard us say this before, but I’ll say it again because it’s helpful: David and then Solomon after him were like arrows shot at the sun. They pointed us in the right direction, but they ultimately fell short. This Psalm was fulfilled in PART by Solomon, but it finds its glorious resolution in the reign of the PERFECT King. His name is Jesus.

¹ J. Alec Motyer, *Psalms By The Day* (Geanies House: Christian Focus Publishers, 2016), 195.

With that in mind, please look with me to Psalm 72. Hear now God's inspired, innerant, living and active word to us today:

Of Solomon.

- 72** Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal son!
- 2** May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice!
- 3** Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
- 4** May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor!
- 5** May they fear you while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!
- 6** May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth!
- 7** In his days may the righteous flourish,
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!
- 8** May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth!
- 9** May desert tribes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust!
- 10** May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands
render him tribute;
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts!
- 11** May all kings fall down before him,
all nations serve him!
- 12** For he delivers the needy when he calls,
the poor and him who has no helper.
- 13** He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
- 14** From oppression and violence he redeems their life,
and precious is their blood in his sight.
- 15** Long may he live;
may gold of Sheba be given to him!
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all the day!
- 16** May there be abundance of grain in the land;
on the tops of the mountains may it wave;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
- and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field!
- 17** May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun!
- May people be blessed in him,
all nations call him blessed!
- 18** Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.

¹⁹ Blessed be his glorious name forever;
 may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen!
²⁰ The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended. (Psalm 72:1-20 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord – thanks be to God!

Very simply, what we find in today's text is a prayer for the Perfect King:

A Prayer That Points To The Perfect King

This morning, we're going to pray with Solomon that God would bless us with a Perfect King. And through this prayer, we will be pointed to the Messiah King, Jesus Christ. First, in this prayer we are pointed to:

1. The one who reigns with perfect justice

The prayer begins:

Give the king your justice, O God,
 and your righteousness to the royal son!
² May he judge your people with righteousness,
 and your poor with justice! (Psalm 72:1-2 ESV)

Is there anything worse for the flourishing of a nation than corruption in its leadership? If the people who have been entrusted with power to lead, use that power to further their own agendas, then a nation will not and CANNOT thrive.

Look at our world today. Look at the countries that live in perpetual poverty. While they are diverse and the issues are complex, there is a common denominator: Each of them is held back by a broken or corrupt system of leadership. As Proverbs 13:23 says:

The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice. (Proverbs 13:23 ESV)

There can be no flourishing if there is no justice.

Solomon understood this. His first act as King was to plead with God for wisdom so as to govern his people well. God granted this request and under Solomon's reign, Israel experienced a peace that they would never experience again.

We see a glimpse of this justice in Solomon but we saw it in magnificent colour in the life and ministry of Jesus. How many times did the Pharisees try to trap him with difficult questions from the law? But they never could! His wisdom was unlike anything that they had ever seen!

And in his second coming this perfectly wise and righteous King will ascend to his throne and he will execute perfect justice. Revelation points forward to that day:

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. (Revelation 20:11–12 ESV)

Are you ready for that day? If you have surrendered to the King, then you look forward with eager expectation to life under his perfectly just rule. But if you are living in rebellion to the King... Make peace with him today, because this is how the story ends. The perfectly righteous King will reign over his people with perfect justice.

Second, this prayer points us to:

2. The one who delivers the poor and needy

We see this at two points in the text. First, look with me at verse 4:

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor! (Psalm 72:4 ESV)

Now flip ahead to verses 13-14:

¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.

¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life,
and precious is their blood in his sight. (Psalm 72:13-14 ESV)

We need a King who cares about the poor and the needy. Amen? In my time in India, I was broken by the way in which the poor were completely discarded. Every day we would walk past a fat cow that was adorned like god and then a homeless child of a lower caste sitting in the mud. There is no flourishing when the poor are treated like garbage. And the “poor” in this text aren’t simply those who have no money. One commentator describes them as:

Those thrust to the lowest place in life, at the bottom of life’s heap.²

We need a King who defends the people who feel like the world is working against them; those people who feel like they can’t catch a break; those people who wonder if there is ANYONE IN THE WORLD WHO CARES.

THERE IS! THERE IS A KING WHO CARES!

Solomon gave us a glimpse of this in his life. Part of his job was to exercise judgement over difficult cases; cases like the one we find in 1 Kings 3.

Two prostitutes were living together and they each had newborns. They were sharing a bed and, at some point in the night, one of the women rolled onto her child and killed him. When she awoke,

² J. Alec Motyer, *Psalms By The Day* (Geanies House: Christian Focus Publishers, 2016), 195.

she swapped the suffocated child out with the living child of her sleeping roommate. The roommate, when she awoke, quickly realized what had happened because she did not recognize the baby laying next to her. The two women proceeded to take their case to the new King.

Can you imagine?

Now, if Solomon sent these two prostitutes away to sort it out themselves, few would have faulted him. He was the King of Israel, after all! Should he really be spending his valuable time seeking justice for a prostitute?

And yet, Solomon did not turn the women away. Instead, he came up with an ingenious ruling. He ordered that the baby be cut in half so that he could be divided equally between the two mothers. One prostitute – the woman who had already lost her son – thought that this was a great idea! The other prostitute – the woman who was the TRUE mother of the child – pleaded with Solomon to simply give the child to the other woman. She would rather lose him to another mother than lose him to death. At this point, the genius of Solomon's plan was revealed as he was able to discern the identity of the true mother and to return the child to her.

Now, Solomon spoke into the brokenness of his people, but he did so from the safety of his palace. But Jesus would do far more than that. Jesus came down from his throne to enter right into the mess. The King of the universe allowed himself to be born to a virgin in Bethlehem. He left his royal garments and his heavenly kingdom and traded them for swaddling cloths and a manger.

He lived amongst the people, suffered amongst the people, felt the pain of loss with them, was tempted with them, was homeless with them, was rejected with them and ultimately, allowed himself to die with them. One commentator writes:

The divinely appointed and blessed king does not serve his own interests but those of others.³

That is the ideal of Psalm 72. A King who gives of himself to rescue and redeem his people. And is there anywhere where that ideal is seen more clearly than at the cross? Consider this scene in Matthew 27:

And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." (Matthew 27:37 ESV)

The inscription was meant to be an insult. But Pilate spoke better than he knew. Indeed, this IS Jesus, the King of the Jews! The King of the world! The King who perfectly fulfilled Psalm 72:14:

From oppression and violence he redeems their life,
and precious is their blood in his sight. (Psalm 72:14 ESV)

If you are here today, and you don't believe that you are precious in the sight of the King, then you haven't truly seen the cross.

³ Willem A. VanGemeren, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Psalms-Song of Songs)*, ed. Frank A. Gaebelein, vol. 5, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 473.

Look again.

The King of the universe loves you so much, that he voluntarily took all of your sin upon his shoulders so that he could die in your stead! He did this to redeem you, and me. People who were poor and needy and enslaved have been enriched, and fulfilled and set free. The Perfect King did that. And even now he is preparing a place for us in his kingdom.

Third, this prayer points us to:

3. The one who brings prosperity and renewal

The perfect King will bring life, not just to the people, but to the land itself. Look again at verse 16:

May there be abundance of grain in the land;
on the tops of the mountains may it wave;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field! (Psalm 72:16 ESV)

Let's be careful to notice here that the prosperity and renewal comes AFTER justice. If there is corruption and dysfunction at the top, then there will not – there CANNOT – be prosperity and renewal at the bottom. Leadership – either good or bad – will inevitably trickle down to every facet of society.

A little over ten years ago, Amanda and I were serving on a missions trip to the Dominican Republic, and we lived in a Haitian refugee camp for three months. Haiti and the DR share an island and, at the time, there was a huge wave of Haitians that were illegally immigrating into the Dominican to try to find work. Our new Haitian refugee friends explained their plight to us.

In earlier years, Haiti had been an ideal tourist destination, and the constant influx of tourists was great for the economy. Haiti had a secondary export – charcoal – which was also great for the economy. The charcoal was made by chopping down and burning up the trees. This should have been regulated, but it wasn't, and before long the tree population in Haiti was decimated. With all of the trees chopped down, Haiti became less marketable as a tourist destination. Thus, Haiti's primary exports of tourism and charcoal seemingly died overnight and the country was left reeling. Bad leadership overflows to all of society – even the land.

We see this in the opening pages of our Bible, don't we? In Genesis 3, our first leader Adam FAILED as a leader. That sin resulted in a curse and that curse bled into every facet of life – even the land itself. God said to Adam:

“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
‘You shall not eat of it,’
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;

¹⁸**thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;**
and you shall eat the plants of the field. (Genesis 3:17-18 ESV)

As a result of sin, the ground itself was cursed.

We still feel that today. The prayer of Psalm 72, then, is ultimately a prayer that God would send a King who would REVERSE the curse and bring renewal and prosperity to the land.

Now, we find a GLIMPSE of that in Solomon's life. Under his wise reign, the nation of Israel became wealthier than it had ever been. In 1 Kings 10 we're told:

All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; **silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon.** (1 Kings 10:21 ESV)

Do you see that? Israel enjoyed so much fruitfulness under Solomon's reign that silver was nearly rendered useless. That's a pretty impressive taste of prosperity and renewal!

Yet, what we see under the reign of Solomon PALES in comparison to that which we see in Christ. Solomon temporarily flourished in the midst of the curse. But Jesus tackled the curse head on. The Apostle Paul explains:

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” (Galatians 3:13 ESV)

In his life and death, he took the curse of sin upon himself so that we – and all of creation – could experience renewal. This is why we sing one of my favorite songs at Christmastime. Joy To The World. We ought to sing it all year long because it's not really about Christmas. Did you know that? It's actually about the SECOND coming of Christ – the time when he will finally make all things new and the curse of sin will finally be broken! That's why we sing:

No more let sins or sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found⁴

At Christ's second coming his blessings will flow and the effects of the curse will NO LONGER BE FOUND. There will be no more tears. There will be no more sin. There will be STREETS OF GOLD and every one of God's people will enjoy PROSPERITY and RENEWAL! On that day:

They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
²²They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. (Isaiah 65:21-22 ESV)

⁴ Isaac Watts, 1719. Verse 3.

No more thorns. No more sweat on the brow. No more corruption. Prosperity and renewal.

Are you excited for that day? If you're not, then give your head a shake! It's going to be glorious! And it is only possible through the reign of the perfect King.

Finally, this prayer points us to:

4. The one who will reign over all people forever

In verse 8, the psalmist prays:

May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth! (Psalm 72:8 ESV)

Fun fact: Did you know that this is where we got our nation's motto? I confess, I did not know our national motto until Wednesday of this week, but NOW I do, and I LOVE it! "From sea to sea."

Our founding Father's longed for a day when all of Canada – from the Atlantic to the Pacific – would be united under godly leadership like that which we see here in Psalm 72. I can get behind that motto.

Solomon is praying here for a King that will reign over the whole earth and, if that's not enough, he widens his scope even further:

¹⁵ Long may he live;
may gold of Sheba be given to him!
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all the day!

¹⁷ May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun!
May people be blessed in him,
all nations call him blessed! (Psalm 72:15, 17 ESV)

This is a prayer for a King that will reign over the whole earth forever. Now, OBVIOUSLY Solomon could not accomplish that. Yet, in Solomon's reign, we do find an incredible glimpse of a fulfillment of these expectations. In 1 Kings 10, we are told that the rumor of Solomon's wisdom had spread far and wide, and the Queen of Sheba came to Israel to find out if the rumors were true. After inspecting the kingdom and testing Solomon's wisdom, she declared:

Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness.” ¹⁰ Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones. Never again came such an abundance of spices as these that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. (1 Kings 10:9-10 ESV)

This was the absolute high water mark in the Davidic Kingship. Never before had the kingdom of Israel experienced such peace and prosperity! If you imagine that arrow flying towards the sun, 1

Kings 10 is the apex – the very top of the arch – but in the very next chapter, that arrow began to plummet back to the earth. There, we read of Solomon:

He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. **And his wives turned away his heart.** (1 Kings 11:3 ESV)

Within a generation the Kingdom of Israel was split in two. Solomon was not the King that we needed, but he pointed forward to the King who would come. He too would be recognized by the nations and would receive gifts from far away lands. In Matthew 2, we read:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem,² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” (Matthew 2:1-2 ESV)

They came to see this king. And they didn't come empty handed. In verse 11, we read:

And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11 ESV)

Even at his birth, it was clear that Jesus' reign would stretch to every tribe and nation. And BEFORE his birth, it was announced that his reign would last FOREVER. The Angel Gabriel said to Mary:

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,³³ **and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.**” (Luke 1:30–33 ESV)

Do you see that? Jesus is the King who will reign forever, and his dominion spreads from sea to sea! The King has come and he is coming again! Therefore, I want to close with one question:

How Should We Respond?

If this is who Jesus is – if he is the Perfect King of Psalm 72 – and if he is coming again to usher in his kingdom then how should we respond? We don't need to rack our brains to find an answer because Philipians 2 gives us a clear instruction:

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11 ESV)

Our response this morning is simple:

1. Kneel before the King

Do you love your King?

Do you love the way that he governs with righteousness and justice?

Do you that he saves the poor and the needy?

Do you love that he blesses us with prosperity and renewal?

Do you love that he will reign over all people forever?

Then kneel before Him this morning.

Because he is going to return, brothers and sisters, and I CAN'T WAIT! I can't wait for him to finally consummate his new kingdom where we will finally and completely experience the peace of his reign! The days when:

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”
(Revelation 21:4 ESV)

Are you longing for that day? Are you eager to live under the reign of that King?

Then kneel. Kneel before the King who redeemed you with his own blood so that he could grant you an eternity in his paradise.

That is the only appropriate response to the Perfect King.

And this is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.