

Palm Sunday 2022

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4 ESV)

He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. (Matthew 28:6 ESV)

The King We're Longing For

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Psalm 72

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Introduction:

Good morning!

I want to invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to Psalm 72. Today is Palm Sunday. It is the day that we remember Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. On that day a large crowd greeted him with joy and applause! They waved palm branches! They shouted "Hosanna!" which means "Please Save Us!"

As the crowd looked at Jesus, they saw a king. In fact, they were pretty sure that they saw THE King – the Messiah in the line of David who had finally come to set them free! They were overjoyed!

However, a week later, this crowd had dispersed. They left feeling disenchanted and disoriented. They left because the king who rode into Jerusalem on a donkey was not the king they had expected.

Palm Sunday reminds us that God does not always operate according to our expectations. Palm Sunday reminds us that we see through a glass dimly. The crowd that hailed Jesus as the Messiah King was right! When they looked at Jesus, they anticipated victory and deliverance, and – again – they were RIGHT!

But his *means* of accomplishing that victory was not the plan that they had in mind. The *nature* of his kingship was not what they had set their hopes upon. They had grown up hearing the Messianic Psalms and they had some exciting expectations about what the reign of the Perfect King would look like. Unfortunately, their expectations were misguided, and those expectations kept them from understanding what their King was about to accomplish for them.

I want to make sure that you hear that this morning, because the scenario that we observe on Palm Sunday has been on repeat for generations. MANY people have walked away from Jesus because the King that he IS doesn't line up with the King that they imagined him to be.

Today, we're going to turn our attention to one of the Messianic Psalms – one of the Psalms that pointed forward to the Perfect King. Psalm 72 is a prayer of Solomon – a prayer that he likely composed as he assumed the throne from his father David. Alec Motyer notes:

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

So, Psalm 72 is a prayer for Solomon, but fundamentally it is a prayer that points *beyond* Solomon. Solomon was unable to live up to the standard that we will find in this Psalm – we will highlight some of those stories along the way. It was a prayer that pointed *forward* in faith to the Messiah King – to King David's greater Son. It is a prayer that could never find fulfilment in a sinful man. Commentator Derek Kidner says here:

As a royal psalm it prayed for the reigning king, and was a strong reminder of his high calling; yet it exalted this so far beyond the humanly attainable... as to suggest for its fulfilment no less a person than the Messiah²

The Messianic Psalms looked beyond the sinful, feeble kings of the present and painted a portrait of the Perfect King that we need. As we reflect on this Psalm, we will understand something of the excitement that was abuzz in Jerusalem as Jesus entered on a donkey. As they witnessed Jesus' triumphal entry, the Messianic Psalms – Psalms like Psalm 72 – were ringing out in their hearts! So, what were they so excited about? This Psalm paints of a portrait of the King we're longing for.

¹ Alec Motyer, *Psalms by the Day* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2016), 195.

² Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72 (TOTC)*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), 254.

The King We're Longing For

We're going to make our way slowly through this Psalm, unpacking it as we go. Look with me now at verses 1-2:

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)

What we see here in these opening verses is that the King we are longing for will reign with justice and righteousness.

1. He will reign with justice and righteousness

The King we are longing for is a King who will only and always do that which is right.

He will be just. There will be no unfairness in his decisions. Every wrong will be righted.

He will be righteous. His conduct will be blameless. His life will be the epitome of goodness.

Solomon prayed that he could be such a king and from his earliest days, he demonstrated wisdom and fairness in his rulings. He was such a wise king, in fact, that people flocked to Jerusalem to learn from him. The Queen of Sheba came to offer him gifts, and 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.** (1 Kings 10:9 ESV)

So, there *was* justice and righteousness in Solomon's reign.

But it was only a glimpse. Because, like every leader before him and every leader who would follow, Solomon's reign was tainted by sin. He broke God's commandments and married many wives from the neighboring nations. He adopted their customs and worshiped their gods. His sin

brought ruin upon the nation, and the united tribe of Israel would go on to split in two under the reign of Solomon's son.

Such will always be the case with human leaders – and, just to be clear, I understand that this includes me. Our longing for a just and righteous leader will never – *can* never – be fully satisfied by sinful men. The best leaders that we can conjure up still stand under the indictment of Romans 3:

“None is righteous, no, not one;
¹¹ no one understands;
no one seeks for God. (Romans 3:10b-11 ESV)

None is righteous. None is blameless. None is capable of ruling with perfect justice. History bears witness to this sad reality. Every leader will ultimately fall short.

Except for one.

As the crowds saw Jesus entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey, they recognized him as the King that they had been waiting for. They allowed themselves to entertain the question: “Could this be the one who will finally rule with perfect justice and righteousness?”

They assumed, however, that his justice and righteousness would be manifested with judgement against the occupying Romans, and so they were perplexed when Jesus allowed himself to be taken into custody. How could he usher in justice and righteousness in captivity?

They failed to recognize that a just and righteous King would also need to address the sins of his people. They failed to realize that it was *because* of his justice and his righteousness that he surrendered himself to be crucified. Their expectations of who he would be and what he would do clouded their vision.

On Good Friday, we're going to spend our morning reflecting on how the cross displayed the justice and righteousness of God because we want to make sure that we are seeing what God has told us that we ought to see as we join the crowd in shouting “Hosanna!”

The King we're longing for will reign with justice and righteousness. And, as a result:

2. He will usher in peace and prosperity

Look with me now at verses 3-7:

- 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! (Psalm 72:3-7 ESV)

Good leadership is a blessing! When the king reigns with justice and righteousness, everyone in the kingdom reaps the rewards. This was Solomon's prayer as he began his reign and, once again, we saw a glimpse of this in his lifetime.

The reign of Solomon represented the absolute highwater mark in Israel's history. David had been the warrior king. He had subdued the enemies of God's people and, as a result, he handed his son a kingdom that experienced peace on every border. In this season of peace, Solomon's wisdom led to prosperity – the kind that we see described in verses 15-16. Look there with me:

- 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! (Psalm 72:15-16 ESV)

The Israelites caught an obvious foretaste of this when the Queen of Sheba brought 9,000 pounds of gold to Solomon as a tribute! The rising tide floats all ships, and Solomon's accrual of wealth was good for the nation.

However, it was also tainted by sin. In fact, when Solomon died and passed the kingdom on to his son Rehoboam, the Israelites came to the new king and complained:

“Your father **made our yoke heavy**. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you.” (1 Kings 12:4 ESV)

As prosperous as Solomon's reign was, it did not resemble the “rain falling on the freshly mown grass” that Psalm 72 longs for. There was still poverty in Israel. There were still people who felt lost in the system. There was still inequity and burden.

And the peace that Israel enjoyed was a fleeting peace. Within a generation, they were at war with themselves, and the nations were making plans to strike. The Northern Kingdom would be overrun by Assyria. The Southern Kingdom would fall to the Babylonians. They would live in subjugation to the Medes, then the Persians, then the Greeks, and then, finally, to the Romans.

The crowd on Palm Sunday, living as they were under Roman subjugation, was OVERJOYED at the arrival of Jesus! Finally! A King who can ACTUALLY usher in peace and prosperity! Finally, the poor will be lifted out of their poverty! Finally, wars will cease, and tyrants will fall!

But the Perfect King came to usher in a peace that the crowd did not expect – a peace that they didn't know that they needed.

He came to make a way for them to have peace with God.

And the Perfect King came to usher in a prosperity that the crowd had no appetite for. He came to make them rich toward God. He came to absorb their debt of sin and to share with them his treasure in heaven. Jesus said:

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither

moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21 ESV)

This wasn't the peace or the prosperity that they anticipated, so they were perplexed and disillusioned by the cross. Let's make sure that we don't fall into the same trap. The Messiah King did not come to give you earthly comfort or riches. If that's what you are expecting, then the cross will look like foolishness to you. He came to give you peace with God and an inheritance in heaven. He has truly and eternally crushed our oppressor and lifted up the poor and afflicted, therefore, we must sing a better "Hosanna" this morning!

The King we're longing for will reign with justice and righteousness and he will usher in peace and prosperity. This blessing will stretch beyond us – His authority will be all encompassing. That's the next thing we see in this passage. The King we're longing for will have dominion from sea to sea!

3. He will have dominion from sea to sea

We see this in verses 8-11:

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! (Psalm 72:8-11 ESV)

This prayer envisions a kingdom that stretches across the world – a reign that is felt even by the nomads living in the arid deserts. The enemies of this king will recognize his authority and they will fall down face first in homage. They will "lick the dust" in their reverence.

While tribute was brought to Solomon from Sheba, even still his authority never reached to the extent envisioned here. No king's authority ever has, though many have tried. Alexander the Great did the unthinkable when he stretched his authority from the Mediterranean all the way into Asia.

1500 years later, Genghis Khan surpassed Alexander's accomplishment with a kingdom that covered some 9 million square miles. 700 years later, the British monarchy surpassed even that as King George V ruled over 25% of all the world's land surface.

And yet, as remarkable as these kingdoms were, they pale in comparison to the rule that is described in Psalm 72. The perfect King will have a worldwide rule – he will reign from sea to sea. The prophet Zechariah foretold that such a King would arise. Zechariah 9:9-10 says:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall speak peace to the nations;
his rule shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9-10 ESV)

THAT is what the crowd in Israel was cheering for as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey! The King of Zechariah's prophecy – the Messiah King of Psalm 72 – the King who will rule from SEA to SEA had come! He will rule with justice and righteousness! He will usher in peace and prosperity!

But how does a king assume such a position? The crowd likely assumed that he would amass an army and wage war with Rome. Their expectations revolved around political influence, military force, and geographical dominance.

What a shock it must have been, then, when he didn't even attempt to resist as he was arrested, tried, and crucified. Is it any wonder the Palm Sunday crowd was nowhere to be seen on Good Friday? The cross looks like the opposite of power. The cross looks like humiliation, submission, and defeat.

But the Messiah King had greater plans than a political coup. Jesus DID come to overthrow the rulers, the powers and the authorities, but it wasn't the authorities that his followers were

expecting. Jesus came to overthrow the *spiritual* rulers and authorities, and at the cross he accomplished his great victory. Paul writes in Colossians 2:

He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. (Colossians 2:15 ESV)

Down was the way up. When Jesus rose from the grave, he rose with authority. He rose with the keys of death and hell. He rose as the King who reigns over heaven and earth. He said exactly this before he ascended to heaven to sit down on his throne. In Matthew 28, Jesus declares:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of **all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18b-20 ESV)

From sea to sea, Jesus right now possesses all authority! We, therefore, are called to go to every tribe and every nation and to declare a simple message: Jesus is the KING! We make disciples, we baptize, and we teach them to obey the King who reigns over all the earth.

And, as they come to know King Jesus, they will delight in his reign because he is the Perfect King – the King who delivers the needy.

4. He delivers the needy

Let's jump back into the text. Look with me at verses 11-14:

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. (Psalm 72:11-14 ESV)

I included verse 11 again because I want to make sure that you see the way that this section is connected to what we just discussed. Why should kings fall down before the Perfect King? Why

should nations serve him? Why is it good news that his dominion stretches from sea to sea? Look again at the first word of verse 12. The nations will serve him FOR he delivers the needy when he calls. We serve him GLADLY because he is a King who abounds in mercy and kindness! Jesus' universal reign is good news for the world because he is the merciful King that we need – full of pity, love and power!

Solomon wanted to be this king, but he knew that the bar was too high. We long for our leaders to lead us like this, but they inevitably fall short. The need is too great. Imagine we found the very best person in Canada – the most compassionate, competent leader that we could muster – and we appointed them as our next Prime Minister. Could they even begin to make a dent in the problems that we are facing in our nation? Could they find a home for the over 20,000 children who are currently wards of the state? Could they find a solution for the more than 235,000 people who experience homelessness every year? Could they even begin to comfort the 593 reported victims of human trafficking in Canada this past year?

The best leaders that we can muster simply do not have the capacity to care for the immense need that exists all around us. They don't have the financial capacity. They don't have the emotional capacity. They don't possess the wisdom. The need is too great for any earthly leader.

Therefore, we need a King who is omnipotent – a King who possesses all power. We need a King who is omniscient – a King who sees all things and knows all things. We need a King who is omnipresent – who is there in the dark and lonely places where the broken and the downcast often reside. And we need a King who – while possessing all that power and holding that lofty position – still cares about the plight of the least of these.

And that's who Jesus is.

In his earthly ministry, there was no need that was beneath him. He washed the feet of the disciples, and he welcomed the children to come to him. He embraced those with contagious diseases, and he ate with tax collectors. He healed the sick, and he gave sight to the blind. He surrounded himself with the poor and the disenfranchised, and he was never too busy for those that needed his help. Then, in a perfect display of love and mercy, he took upon himself all of the sins of his enemies and he paid for it in his body on the cross.

He is now seated at the right hand of the Father ruling over our world, but he is also “with us always, to the end of the age.” Solomon’s citizens complained that he had made their burden heavy, but Jesus says:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (Matthew 11:28-30 ESV)

This is our King. He cares for the needy and he meets us in our weakness. And the best part about the King that we are longing for is that:

5. His reign will endure forever

As we conclude, look with me at verses 17-19:

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! (Psalm 72:17-19 ESV)

The reign of David, and Solomon, and Hezekiah, and Josiah, and every other good king that God’s people ever had eventually ended in death. This is one of the tragedies of this fallen world. Even when we *do* find good leaders, their time is cut short by their mortality. And they are often succeeded by lousy replacements. Solomon was replaced by his terrible son Rehoboam whose foolishness caused the kingdom to break in half. Hezekiah was replaced by his evil son Manasseh. Josiah was replaced by his wicked son Jehoahaz who only reigned for three months before the kingdom was handed over to Josiah’s other evil son Jehoiakim.

Good kings come and good kings go. One leader leads a nation out of debt, but the next sets them back a decade. One leader roots out systemic corruption, but the next makes his fortune off of

bribes. Every time we think we've found a leader that can make a positive difference, they are replaced by the next in a long line of disasters.

There is one throne, however, that will never be succeeded. There is one King who will reign forevermore. His name is Jesus, and he is the King that the world is longing for!

He was king over our grandparents, and our great grandparents, and he will reign over our children and our grandchildren and *their* grandchildren should the Lord tarry. Charles Spurgeon once said:

Charlemagne, Maximillian, Napoleon, how they flit like shadows before us! They were and are not; but Jesus forever *is*.³

And that is good news, because what an AMAZING king he is! If he were a tyrant, then his eternal reign would be reason to mourn. But he is no tyrant.

He is the righteous and just King.

He has ushered in peace and prosperity for his people.

He reigns from sea to sea.

He is the deliverer of the needy.

And he will reign forevermore.

This is the King who rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to shouts of Hosanna! This is the King who went to the cross to set his people free. This is the King who is seated on the throne right now.

³ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *Treasury of David - Third Ed. Vol. 1 of 2*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House), 309.

So, let me ask you this morning: Do you recognize Jesus as your King? Have you surrendered to his wise and perfect leadership? Have you taken refuge in his cross?

Whether you acknowledge him or not, he is the King. Whether you have surrendered to him or not, one day every knee will bow. Whether you have taken refuge in his cross or not, one day every sinner will stand before the judgement seat of the just and righteous King.

So come before it is too late. Bow before the Perfect King. Enjoy the peace and prosperity that he purchased for you with his blood. Sing a better hosanna than the crowd on the first Palm Sunday.

Praise the King!

¹⁹ Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
Amen and Amen! (Psalm 72:19 ESV)