



river west church

Just King Jesus

Psalm 72

Pastor Christopher Coffman

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Throughout the summer we've been on a quest to know God through the book of Psalms. Contrary to what some believe, the Psalms are not a collection of poetic musings about God. Instead, these scriptures teach how to interact with the living God of the Bible. They are much more than nice, little prayers and songs. In fact, there's nothing "nice and little" about the Psalms...much less the God of the Bible. Instead, the Psalms reveal a God that's bigger and more beautiful than our words or songs can keep up with. Perhaps this is why there are so many Psalms in the Bible! Each Psalm we encounter gives a new opportunity to appreciate a new facet of who our God is. Today, we turn to Psalm 72—a royal psalm that many believe was written by King Solomon during his reign. Others believe that this psalm is actually a prayer of King David for his son Solomon before he died (v 20). Regardless of its author, the intention of the psalmist is to fix our attention on a greater and more glorious King than both David and Solomon.

Solomon: The Kind of King We Are

According to Jewish tradition, Psalm 72 was used as a prayer during coronation ceremonies in Israel. As they placed a crown on a king's head, these words would be prayed over him in faith: "Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!" (Ps 72:1) In one sense, the future of the nation hung in the balance in this moment. What kind of king would he be? On the one hand, if he was a just and righteous king then God's people would flourish like a well watered garden (v 6, 16). They would enjoy abundant peace and prosperity (v 3, 7). However, if the king was unjust and unrighteous then the entire nation of Israel would suffer. The weak would be oppressed and abused by the strong. The needy and poor would be exploited by the rich and powerful. Instead of worshipping God as King the people would turn away from God to empty idols. Sadly, this is exactly what happened toward the end of King Solomon's reign. What happened to the servant king who selflessly asked the Lord for wisdom to rule his people righteously (1 Ki 3:6-9)? How could a leader who "loved the LORD" walk away from his faith and worship phony gods and goddesses (1 Ki 3:3; 11:1-8)? How could the same guy who wrote, "Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker" build God's temple with slave labor (Prov 14:31; 1 Ki 9:15)? And yet he did. However, think for a moment. What would you do with the kind of power, influence, wisdom, and wealth that Solomon had? What kind of king would you be? Would you use your power, influence, wealth, and wisdom to glorify God or meet the needs of others in your community? Or would you use these same things to glorify yourself and influence others to meet your needs? Unfortunately, as we consider Israel's history—and our own hearts—we realize that, left to ourselves, none of us is just and righteous (Rom 3:10-18).

Justice: The Kind of King We Need

As you read through Psalm 72 and other royal psalms, a consistent theme begins to emerge: The God of Israel does not tolerate injustice. He will send his just and righteous King—the Messiah—to judge the nations. When the just King comes, he will "defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor" (Ps 72:4). Now, many people today have a difficult time accepting a God of justice. As a result, there are a number of books and teachers today that present God as a benovolent social worker in the sky who overlooks evil and injustice. The problem with this concept of God is that only a just King can actually redeem and restore our broken world.

Jesus: The Kind of King We Get

As we get toward the end of Psalm 72, the tone changes from one of prayer and promise to praise (v 15-17). The psalm, which happens to be arranged last in a collection, ends with a song to God's great and glorious King—a King whose fame endures forever and outshines the sun. A King not only greater than Solomon but a King that "ALL kings fall down before" (v 11). This King is none other than Jesus—our

“King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 19:16). Unlike the rulers of this world, this King came “not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45). Instead of a coronation ceremony, we nailed him to a cross. Risen from death, he rules, reigns, and will one day come to restore all things. What can we say before this kind of King but...

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.

Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory!

Amen and Amen!” (v 18-19)