



"Joy To The World"
Associate Pastor César Hernandez
Psalm 72
January 6, 2019
9:15 AM Service

Today is our first worship gathering of the New Year. New Year's always feels like a new beginning. Many of us are making New Year's resolutions, using the calendar to mark the day when changes will be made. The new calendar gives us a feeling of new beginnings.

Well, the church calendar is different than the one on your walls or in your phones. The new year for the church calendar starts on the 1st week of Advent, where we await the coming of Jesus. This is followed by a couple weeks of Christmas. And today on the church calendar marks the beginning of a new season.

Today on the church calendar is The Feast of Epiphany. This is when we commemorate Jesus first showing Himself to the Gentiles, represented by the Magi. Epiphany is also a season in the church calendar where, in general, we celebrate the arrival of Jesus. Matthew 2 tells us that *"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'"* This tells us how they found Jesus in a house with His parents. They bowed down and worshipped Him, and they brought Him gifts. This event happens perhaps a couple of weeks, months or years after Jesus' birth, and it shows us that Jesus is king of ALL people, and worthy of our worship.

In the season of Epiphany, we celebrate that the king has come. And so, over the next 7 weeks of Epiphany we are going to preach and teach about this by studying the prophetic Psalm of Jesus today and the Gospel of Luke for the next six weeks. The Psalm for today, when written, pointed to the coming Messiah. And the passages of Luke are passages that give us a big picture of who Jesus was and still is and how He will rule His kingdom. We will be asking ourselves, "What do these passages and stories teach us about Jesus?" Because in each of the stories, God revealed for us God's intention for this new year.

For today, the traditional Psalm for the feast of Epiphany is Psalm 72. You can turn your Bibles to Psalm 72. Before we read the Psalm, let me give you a little history of the passage. We are told that it is a Psalm of King Solomon. Many scholars believe that Solomon wrote this Psalm, but the words were actually King David's. Many others believed that King David on his deathbed prayed for his son, Solomon, and Solomon's future reign and his destiny (which was fully realized in Jesus).

At the end, the scholars believed that Solomon authored the Psalm, but that it was the reduced prayer of David, meaning this was David's last prayer. If we agree with this, we can say that David prayed for his son Solomon, for the prosperity of the kingdom promised him, for its legacy and dynasty. With that in mind let me invite you to read Psalm 72 together, but as we read the Psalm ask yourself what this

passage said about the king, and ultimately the Messiah, Jesus.

Psalm 72 of Solomon:

1 Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness.

2 May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.

3 May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness.

4 May he defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; may he crush the oppressor.

5 May he endure ^[a] as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations.

6 May he be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth.

7 In his days may the righteous flourish and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.

8 May he rule from sea to sea and from the River ^[b] to the ends of the earth.

9 May the desert tribes bow before him and his enemies lick the dust.

10 May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the kings of Sheba and Seba present him gifts.

11 May all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.

12 For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.

13 He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death.

14 He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.

15 Long may he live! May gold from Sheba be given him. May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long.

16 May grain abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. May the crops flourish like Lebanon and thrive ^[c] like the grass of the field.

17 May his name endure forever; may it continue as long as the sun. Then all nations will be blessed through him, ^[d] and they will call him blessed.

18 Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds.

19 Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.

20 This concludes the prayers of David son of Jesse.

In this Psalm there is some trouble implied. If we read closely, we will notice that the world does not seem as it should be. Well, there were poor, needy, oppressed, weak, and victims of violence in the passage. Why else would David have prayed these words if these folks were not present? Remember,

David was in his deathbed in his room with his son Solomon. I am assuming that no one else was there at that specific moment...probably one more person, or a couple of David's servants...who knows. But David's prayer was for the poor, the needy, the weak, and the victims of injustices, violence and so many other atrocities that were happening in his kingdom in that time. But when we read this Psalm and if we put all of those events that were happening on a scale with the events that are happening today, I would say that the same trouble implied in the text is very present in our world. The trouble for us is that our world is not as it should be either; we live in a world with fear, persecution and oppression today. We need to just simply step out of our comfort zone and see what is all around and absolutely, we will notice that some of these things that the Psalm mentioned are also happening today.

So, if this is true, if David's prayer was in that direction, if we are noticing trouble in our world now, then why is this Psalm good news for its readers? What is the good news of this Psalm, and what is said about the King, and the Messiah? What is the good news of the text? The good news is that the king will rescue the weak.

Implications

Why is this good news to the readers of this Psalm? It is good news because all too often we feel stuck. The oppressions, unhealthiness, and fears we live with seem to dominate us. And so, we make promises to ourselves each New Year about how we will change. But we are weak. Last Sunday the sermon challenged us to find a place in this church in which each one of us as individuals can grow in God's kingdom; but once in a while we feel stuck, that we couldn't move forward from where we are and that is a problem.

You know the prayer of David could be divided into different sections, I will say four. David's prayer expressed a concern of a righteous king. (vs. 1-7) The Lord was King over His people, and the man on the throne in Jerusalem was God's representative (as we elected our representatives today) and he was obligated to lead the people according to the law and to be impartial in his dealings, in other words a king who is righteous and who imparts justice. David's prayer also expressed a concern about a universal dominion (vs. 8-11). There was not peace, people were fighting one another and as God's people they couldn't find the peace that they were searching for; but there can be no peace on earth until the Prince of Peace is reigning, and the nations have submitted to Him (Jesus). David's prayer expressed a compassionate reign (vs. 12-14). The king of Israel was looked upon as God's shepherd who lovingly cared for God's flock, a king who led the kingdom fairly and honestly in his decisions. And also, David's prayer stated a level of a prosperous nation (vs. 15-17). God's covenant with Israel guaranteed them of prosperity so long as the rulers and the people obeyed His commandments. But unfortunately, Solomon didn't reach all these ideals, his reign was unfair and God's people, the people of Israel, were suffering and were desperate. It seems to me that Jesus, the baby in the manger, the twelve-year-old boy who was lost and was found in the temple talking and asking questions of the teachers, that Jesus our Savior, had such a great compassion for the needy, and He met all their needs. Not only did He hold their blood (life) precious to Him, but He shed His own precious blood for the salvation of the world.

The news that the king will rescue the weak is good news because all too often we look at the news or events around us and feel like we are powerless to do anything. We often live like the king is dead, or inaccessible. So, the news that the king will rescue the weak is good because we know that the unpleasant realities we live in and see are not the ends of our story. (Let's make our own story in this 2019) We are not stuck. Our fears, our failures, our unhealthiness or anything that we struggled with in 2018, are part of the past; they do not define us, because our identity resides in the identity of the

King, the King of kings, Jesus Christ. When God looks up to us, He does not see the messiness that we often see. He sees that we are in the company of the righteous King. Why? Because we have been rescued, and we will be rescued further; we are holy, free, clean and welcome to live with God.

The good news for us today, the first Sunday of 2019 is that the King, Jesus, has come and is rescuing the weak. Jesus is our expected King. He is the Messiah. He rules with power and compassion. He rules with love and justice. He rules with mercy and humbleness. And because He paid the ultimate price for our wrongdoings, and then rose to life again, we have access to Him. The King is not dead, but very much alive. The King is not protected in some inaccessible tower, or behind unbreakable glass, but rather walks among us, healing, conquering evil, and bringing redemption. Jesus is our King, who is with us, and in the season of Epiphany we celebrate that He has come.

From this Psalm we learn that because we have access to Jesus, the King who rescues, we can pray with confidence and expectation that He is making things right. I love how the New Living Translation reads v.14. It says: *"He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their lives are precious to him."* The truth is that you are precious to Jesus. He loves you, and is fighting for you. We can know Him, and be known by Him. So may we live in the reality that He is our King, our Messiah.

Invitation

During this 2019 Epiphany, when leaves do not yet hang from the trees, and our yards and the fields are brown and lifeless, we look to God for the spring to come, for a new day when we give life, and abundantly. Psalm 72:6 dreams that the king will be: *"May he be like rain falling on a field, like showers watering the earth."*

We look to God for the summer to come, a time of rejoicing and time of gatherings with family and friends. We look to God for the fall to come, when the colors of the trees reflect the majesty of God in the nature and revives our spirits with the colors of life. We look to God for the winter to come in which the white of the snow reflects the pureness of God. Let's make our own story in 2019, going out into the world, and seek to be the Body of Christ, to be Jesus out in the world, and be partners in the healing of the world.