

The Righteous Reign of our Risen King

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[0 : 00] Well, today is obviously a significant day in the Christian calendar, Easter Day, the day we celebrate the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead on the third day.

And tonight, Psalm 72 helps us to reflect on this resurrection day, on one of the great consequences of the resurrection that we can easily overlook or neglect as we reflect on the rising of Jesus from the dead.

And there's another big day in our diaries coming up, actually, that helps us to think about what it is, the date the 6th of May. What's happening on the 6th of May?

It is Coronation Day. King Charles III will be crowned as king. And no doubt there will be much publicity on the day every news camera will be turned to Westminster Abbey.

Every headline will read some version of king crowned or something more creative than that. But then give it a few weeks and the coronation will be history, won't it?

[1 : 13] Even a few days later, how many of us will be wondering what King Charles III is doing now? Perhaps not many of us. It's not like he was king for a day.

That is the point, isn't it, of a coronation. He is king from that day onwards. But for most of us, the king will be out of sight, out of mind.

And I wonder whether we as Christians can do something similar at Easter. God raised Jesus gloriously from the dead. We celebrate that ultimate act of power and grace, that one day that has changed the world and changed so many of our lives.

But what then? What then? What then? I wonder if for many of us, much of the time, we live as if he was raised and he will return, but in between that things have perhaps gone on as normal.

We live not as if the resurrection had never happened, but simply as if it was used for a day and not for every day since then.

[2 : 23] Or to put it this way, what will the resurrection matter to you tomorrow? When you wake up on an ordinary Monday and an ordinary week, what will the resurrection mean?

Well, surely what the resurrection tells us, perhaps most obviously, perhaps too obviously, is simply this, that King Jesus lives, that he is upon the throne.

There are so many benefits that flow down to us in Christ from his resurrection. But here is one that we might forget, that we today live in the reign of the risen King Jesus, and that his reign is a perfect and righteous reign.

The resurrection gives us a righteous and risen King who will never die again. Or think about it this way. Has the church ever needed a succession plan?

Have we ever needed to wonder who is next in line to the throne? Have we ever needed to organize a coronation day? We have not.

[3 : 29] Because Jesus' reign, which began with his resurrection when God proclaimed him King, and continued in his ascension when he was crowned King, he hasn't ended for the last 2,000 years, and it never ever will.

But I wonder, for you, for me, for us tonight, is our King out of sight, out of mind? Brothers and sisters, the resurrection doesn't only give us future hope, but a present and life-changing reality here and now.

God's reign, his kingdom, into which he calls us to come under the reign of our risen and righteous King. And tonight, Psalm 72 helps us to reflect on the wonderful reality of his reign and his kingdom.

And for us to begin to appreciate what kind of King Jesus is, this psalm first shows us what King our world needs. Firstly then, verses 1 to 11, the King our world needs.

Because most of this psalm, perhaps you noticed, is prayers for the kind of King that the King should be. Even if you just glance down those first 11 verses, you see most of them begin with the word may.

[4 : 49] May he be like this. Let him be like that. Big prayers for a big King. We can break it down into five big prayers for this King.

First, for the character of his rule, Luke. Endow the King with your justice, O God. Your royal Son with your righteousness. The character of the King.

Let him be righteous. Let him be just. And we long for that, don't we? For justice in our world, for a righteous rule over us.

But we live in a world where, in fact, the opposite is often the case. Where leaders and governments are routinely, almost weekly it seems, sometimes accused of misgoverning and wrongdoing.

Even the last few weeks in the news, of course, the contest to replace the first minister threw up all kinds of unfairness. Unrighteousness.

[5 : 49] In the government, in the process, in the candidates. Down south, the truth continues to come out, doesn't it? About the dubious and the deceitful ways that decisions were taken during the pandemic.

Across in the states, a former president is going to court facing 34 felony charges. And that is only this week's news, isn't it? It feels like our world is in a constant state of damage control.

And we groan, do we not? If we've not become desensitized to it, with every fresh revelation, the latest scandal, the newest letdown in government, in leadership.

Because we long, don't we, for righteousness to reign. Because we can't escape the fact that our leaders are not above reproach.

If we're honest, have we given up expecting perhaps anyone to come out of these things squeaky clean? And that is, of course, before we even get into dictators, war criminals, oppressive regimes.

[6 : 57] The Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Chinese surveillance and control of its citizens. The tyranny of the Taliban. Friends, this is the world that we live in. Most of the world actually knows that unrighteousness, that injustice, far more personally, far more painfully than we do here tonight.

But the more we see, the more we cry out, don't we, for justice to be done, for a righteous rule over us. God, grant the king to rule righteously.

Let him judge with perfect justice. Let his reign share in your perfect character. Let your justice, let your righteousness be the standard of his rule.

Then will not the judge of all the earth do only what is right? Do we not long for that? If only we had a king who did only what is right. For all people.

For all people. And not least the helpless and the needy. See, out of that character, a second prayer for the concern of his rule. Verse 4. May he defend the afflicted among the people.

[8 : 10] Save the children of the needy. May he crush the oppressor. See, this is where that character is to be focused. What will he do with his righteousness, his justice?

May he save the needy. We know that's best, don't we? There's so much money poured into helping needy people, helpless people in the world. We'll come back to this in a moment to see who these people are that the king ought to be concerned about.

His special concern. But worth just noting now is not, is it the self-important and the powerful and the influences that are to be his concern is the weak and needy and oppressed.

Third, we see a prayer for the length of his rule. May he endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon through all generations. What's he saying?

May this be a king who never dies. That long. Now, perhaps that sounds like a strange thing to want to us. Most leaders, after a few years, we want to change them, don't we?

[9 : 21] We go to the polls. Why wouldn't we want to change this one? Why would we want a king who lives and reigns forever? Well, I think most people got close to wanting something like this recently.

Last year, a monarch celebrated 70 years sitting on the throne and then she passed away. And the incredible thing is that even after 70 years, when most of us had been born under her rule, had never known any other king or queen on the throne, almost all of us would gladly have had her stay on the throne longer, wouldn't we?

Even, perhaps we didn't say it, but part of us wished, even indefinitely. Why? Because of the kind of queen that she was.

We knew she had to die, but because she ruled with such grace and righteousness, we didn't want her to have to leave the throne. And friends, believe it or not, we want a king who lives as long as the sun and the moon, who reigns for all generations.

It might run against our every political instinct, but only because of the quality of the leaders that we have known. Only because of who it is who is sat upon a throne in this world.

[10 : 44] When we get a righteous ruler, something deep, deep within us wants him not ever to die, but to rule and to reign forever. Because we pray, fourthly, that the result of his never-ending rule will be like rain falling on a moan field, like showers watering the earth.

In his days, may the righteous flourish and prosperity abound till the moon is no more. Who wouldn't want to live in a kingdom like this?

Under the shelter of his reign, let the righteous flourish and grow, have peace and prosperity. There's a similar idea in verse 3.

Under his reign, may the mountains bring, literally, shalom to the people. Wholeness, completeness, restoration, rightness. Let him put everything right the way it should be in this world.

That is what that prayer is for. For a reign that restores life and heals what is broken. And so we pray, finally, for the scope of his rule.

[11 : 54] Verse 8, look. May he rule from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. Verse 11, may all kings bow down to him and all nations serve him.

What are we praying? Let him be a universal king. Again, that might go against our every instinct. Do we want one world king?

But when we hear news of actual tyrants and actual despots, do we not long for a righteous rule to intervene?

To spread across the world, across borders, to stop all war and terror. Wouldn't we want a king to do that? To unite all peoples under his reign in peace and unity and prosperity.

A universal kingdom of rightness. This is a portrait, isn't it, friends, of the king that our world needs. And that the best part of us knows that we want.

[13 : 01] One whose character is righteous. Whose concern is for the weak. Whose life doesn't have an end. Who rules over all people. And under his reign brings healing and wholeness and peace.

And our hearts cry out, don't they? Oh God, let us have a king like that. Let that king rule over us. Well, today, brothers and sisters, we celebrate, don't we, that God has answered that prayer.

That he has answered this prayer. That he has given a resounding yes to the cries of his people by raising his son, Jesus Christ, from the dead.

Here is your king, he says. Here is my son who shares in my very nature. Here is your king who lives forever in the power of an endless life. Here is one who will gather people of every nation and family around his throne.

Into his kingdom, the nations will bring their glory, riches, and splendor. In his kingdom, the nations will find healing and restoration. He was dead, but behold, he is alive.

[14 : 15] He is risen and he reigns. He is risen and he reigns. He reigns. Originally, of course, we see the psalm was written of Solomon, King David's son. These were always unrealistic prayers for Solomon, weren't they?

But appropriate, because in Hebrew, his name is actually the same as the thing his people prayed for. Shalom. You actually see that even in the English translations in the consonants.

Solomon, don't we? Solomon, shalom. What is the prayer? When Solomon is on the throne, then surely shalom will flow down to his people.

Yet we know he, like the rest, turned out not to live up to these hopes for a righteous king. But Jesus says, wait, doesn't he? Wait, because a real Solomon and a better Solomon has come.

What does Jesus say? The queen of the south will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. For she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom. And now something greater than Solomon is here.

[15 : 25] A king to eclipse Solomon. Someone better. A true king of shalom. A true king of peace has come. And brothers and sisters, here is the good news at Easter.

That that king is actually on the throne tonight. As we sit here, he is actually on the throne. He is really king.

Since Jesus' resurrection, these prayers are answered prayers. And we pray only that they would be answered more and more, don't we?

What does King Jesus teach us to pray? Your kingdom come. We want that because we want the king like this, don't we? Listen to some of King David's final words.

When one rules over people in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless day. He is like the brightness after rain that brings grass from the earth.

[16 : 32] Can you taste the life, the light, the goodness, the righteousness of his kingdom? Is that not how it feels, brothers and sisters, to live under the reign of King Jesus?

Because we know the king who our world needs. And he is the king we need also. We ourselves.

Because secondly, we see he is the king who will save. Now, I wonder if you notice there's a part of this psalm that isn't a prayer. If you just look right in the middle, lines that don't begin with the word may.

Today, verses 12 to 14, these are not prayers. They're actually statements of fact. Look, he will. He will. He will. In fact, this is why we pray for this king to reign.

For he will. Because he will do these things. And what will he do? Look, he will deliver the needy who cry out. The afflicted who have no one to help.

[17 : 34] He will take pity on the weak and the needy. And save them from death. He will rescue them from repression and violence. For precious is their blood in his sight.

In the Old Testament, this is actually one of the big tasks on the king's to-do list. To come to the rescue of God's people. When they were threatened, it was the king's job to go and save them from being killed from the power of opposing forces.

And this is why we pressed pause earlier. In considering the concern of the righteous king. Because when we hear those words today, words like needy and weak and oppressed, what do we do?

We think that it's speaking about some other poor, needy, helpless people somewhere else in the world. When in fact, it is not.

We have been trained not to see ourselves as the people who need help. Not to see ourselves as the helpless, weak, needy, and afflicted that God's word speaks about.

[18 : 39] Who the king comes to save. But brothers and sisters, these verses are not speaking about someone else. They are verses about me and you.

Perhaps in the back of our minds, we wonder, do we really need saving? Like the people did back in this psalm. Aren't they more needy to have an oppressive regime on their doorstep than we are here tonight?

Or we underestimate the power of the enemies that we have, if we think like that? Which of us can control death?

Who will command death to wait? Will death not come when we are not expecting? Take us when we haven't planned it? Who can control sin?

Is it not crouching at the door, waiting to take us when we are least expecting it? Are we in control of the devil?

[19 : 39] Or is he not prowling around like a lion looking for someone to devour? Friends, we are more helpless in the face of our enemies than we think and would like to believe. And like God's people back then, we cannot think that we do not need saving by a king like this.

Or saving a bit and then we'll take it the rest of the way. We need someone to crush our oppressor and save us from death. But again, today is that not just what we are here to celebrate?

That we have a king who will save, who will rescue and deliver. For he has overcome death. He has conquered the grave. Death had no claim upon his sinless soul.

He rose in glorious and incorruptible power. He proclaimed the end of an old reign of death. The beginning of a new reign, a new creation of life and wholeness in him.

And it is because he has risen from the dead, we can say as confidently as this, that he will deliver the needy who cry out. That he will save the needy from death.

[20 : 49] He will rescue them from oppression and violence. Because he did not rise again only to wait for his return. He rose again to save all those who cry out to him today.

And that is why it matters to us tonight that he is not out of sight, out of mind. Why it matters that we know that he lives and reigns.

Because he is the kind of king who will save us when we cry out to him now. His resurrection proves that he can and he will for he lives. He is the kind of king who the concern of his rule and reign in heaven is to defend.

To deliver, to rescue, to deliver the poor and needy from sin and death. That is his preoccupation as he sits upon his glorious throne.

He is not a ceremonial king. He just gets wheeled out for the big occasions, the photographs. And he is not an opportunistic king.

[21 : 55] He spends time only with the powerful and the influential. He is a savior king who comes to the rescue of his helpless people to actually save us from our very real and present enemies.

So let me be so bold with all due respect to say that not thinking much about King Charles after his coronation probably won't hurt you.

That if you don't often think about what Charles is doing, that probably won't be a big problem. But not thinking, friends, about the Lord Jesus.

His reign, his kingship will leave us at the mercy of our enemies. Sin will come with a vengeance. Death will cast its dark shadow over us.

The devil will stalk us and attack us. We will not stand a chance against those enemies unless we know we have a king who will deliver us.

[22 : 56] And cry out to him to do that. So do we rely upon him, our living king, for our salvation today? Or do we think that we can actually handle it?

Or actually even more dangerously, we have cried out to him for salvation and think that we can carry on and handle it ourselves.

No, we have a savior who lives. This is great and wonderful good news. We need a savior every day. And that savior is our king who saves.

The empty tomb tells us so. So come to him today and come back to him tomorrow. Tomorrow, this is what the resurrection means to you tomorrow, isn't it?

That you have a king who will save you tomorrow. As he will save you today. He is the king not only that our world needs, but that you and I so desperately need.

[23 : 51] Not only people out there somewhere, but us in here. And knowing he is the king who will save, he is therefore, lastly, the king we should praise.

Verse 15 brings us back to our knees in prayer. But this time not, Luke, for the kind of king that he is. But for what a king like this deserves from his people.

Long may he live. May gold from Sheba be given him. May people ever pray for him and bless him all day long. Gifts, physical and spiritual.

Gold, prayers, blessings, praise be heaped upon him. And verse 17, eternal fame. May his name endure forever.

May it continue as long as the sun. When the queen died, it was said that she was the most famous woman in the world. What did that mean? It meant that more people in the world knew her name, recognized her, than perhaps any other woman.

[24 : 54] I don't know if that's true, but that's what fame is, isn't it? People who don't know you, knowing who you are, knowing your name. That is what somebody famous is.

You are famous when people who will never meet you know who you are. You are more famous when your name is remembered long after you are gone. And the number of names we know from history, we know grows smaller and smaller, doesn't it?

The further back we go, until we could barely mention anyone who lived far back in history. But the final prayer here is that the name of God's king would be famous forever.

That his name would never, ever be forgotten. That is surely the highest honor that we can bestow as a human race, isn't it? Not to let someone's name drift back into the mists of time and be forgotten, but instead to spread their fame through all generations across the world.

Surely eternal fame is the highest honor that we can give. And that is what this king deserves. I've used the word praise for what's being prayed here, but we could talk about adoration, exaltation, service, allegiance, a giving of everything that we are, everything that we have, to lift up and to glorify this king, to spread his fame, our wealth and treasure, our service, our prayers, our possessions, our praise, our thoughts and desires, our words and deeds, our daily lives, our very hearts to him, our risen, our risen, our reigning king, Jesus deserves that kind of honor because through him all nations will be blessed and they will call him blessed.

[26 : 42] Through him, says the psalmist, God's purposes for his world will come true. Through this king, God's blessing, salvation itself, will come to every family of the earth.

And so all the world and every church, and we ourselves, if we are in him, owe him every blessing we can give, the highest honors that we can give him.

And so as we finish, our king lives. So do you give him your daily highest praise? Since King Jesus is risen, do you know each day, will you remember tomorrow that he lives, that he is the righteous, the reigning king?

Have you asked him to save you? Will you ask him to deliver you tomorrow? Friends, we celebrate his resurrection, but tomorrow, let us still celebrate his life and reign in the way that we speak and live, in the way we come to him, praise him, turn to him.

Will you put yourself under his loving rule and live your life in his kingdom? Easter gives us a risen king who will reign righteously forever.

[28 : 00] And so let us come under his rule, his protection, his love, and praise him together now. Let's pray together.