

“King of All Kings”—Psalm 72:8-11

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “King of All Kings”, is Psalm 72:8-11 → Solomon prays for the king: *May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust! May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlands render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him!* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

The installing of new leadership over a country naturally brings mixed reactions from its citizens. While some may look to the future with hopeful anticipation others may view it with nervous apprehension. Yet, no matter what the personal opinions, the event of an inauguration, coronation, installation and so forth is usually met with much pomp and circumstance, many times accompanied with celebration. Why? Maybe it has to do with the fact that simply having a leader reveals the ongoing existence as a nation.

However, maybe it has to do more with expectations. What do you expect from your leaders? I wonder how many people would desire a leader who does what s/he wants him to do. It may be natural to desire

a leader who thinks like me and acts the way I want him to act, especially when it comes to my well being and making me happy. Do you really want a ruler who will cater to your own personal desires?

Psalm 72 is a prayer written by King Solomon. The focus of this prayer is the king of Israel, a son of David who rules on David's throne as God's earthly regent over His people. Thus, Solomon may have wrote it with himself in mind based upon his initial request to Yahweh in 2 Kings 3:9 → *Give Your servant . . . an understanding mind to govern Your people, that I may discern between good and evil.* However, the psalm reflects the desire for every king who would sit on the throne and may have been used at the time of each king's coronation. It would then be a corporate prayer of the congregation, expressing the desire of the nation that the king's reign will, as a consequence of God's endowment of His servant, be characterized by justice and righteousness, the supreme virtues of kingship.

Tracing the kings who ruled over God's people following the reign of Solomon reflects the need for such a prayer. Psalm 72:1-2 asks for the king to function according to **God's** justice and righteousness. *Give the king **Your** justice, O God, and **Your** righteousness to the royal son! May he judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice!* It is imperative that the king recognize that he is acting on Yahweh's behalf, amongst the His people (e.g. God even referred to David as

**prince over My people Israel** (cf. 2 Samuel 7:8) because Yahweh was actually their king (cf. 1 Samuel 8:7)). It is imperative that the king recognize he is acting on Yahweh's behalf to counteract sinful injustice with **His righteousness**. It calls for God's king to act in faithfulness to Him.

Unfortunately, such expectations did not come to fruition in the succeeding kings of either the northern kingdom of Israel or the southern kingdom of Judah. Only a handful of them actually trusted in Yahweh. What was expected in answer to the petitions and the desires heard in this psalm would come only in the King of all kings, Jesus.

Notice the extent of His domain as a result of his righteous rule prayed for in verses 8-9 of our text: *May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust!* While his kingdom would reach to the full extent of the promised land, the prayer asks for his authority to extend to all the world. The psalm is actually speaking about no ordinary king. It is speaking about a king who is not only worthy of "kudos" but worthy of worship and praise. It is speaking of the King of all kings, Jesus.

We get a glimpse of the prayer of this psalm coming to fruition in the epiphany given to the wise men soon after the birth of the One to Whom they referred as the *king of the Jews*. The word Epiphany means "reveal" or "shine." The day of Epiphany in the Christian tradition commemorates

Yahweh's revealing Jesus as the King of all kings to the wise men, because they saw *His star when it rose* in the sky and went to worship *Him* (cf. Matthew 2:2). The Greek text refers to them as “magi”—men familiar with astrology who would recognize the birth of a special king by way of a special star.

However, as wise men, they must have had some knowledge of the Old Testament in order to associate such a star to such a King. Maybe they were kings themselves who had read the words of verses 10-11 of our text and went in obedience to *render Him tribute, bring Him gifts and fall down before Him* with a willingness to *serve Him!* The psalm even refers to the *gold of Sheba* being *given to Him* (cf. Psalm 72:15). Maybe they had read the words of Isaiah the prophet from Isaiah 60 → *Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising . . . A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD* (cf. Isaiah 60:2,6). They must have connected their star with God's Word to receive the epiphany of the incarnation—God taking on human flesh in the Babe of Bethlehem—recognizing Him as the King of all kings.

No doubt, a lot of strange stuff was happening with the birth of this King. Like the angel appearing to tell Mary that she would give birth to *the Son of the Most High* to Whom *the Lord God* would give . . . *the*

*throne of His father David, to reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there would be no end* (cf. Luke 1:32-33). I suppose the revelation of Jesus to Joseph, the shepherds and Simeon all make sense since they were Jews *waiting for the consolation of Israel* (cf. Luke 2:25) based on the revelation of God's Old Testament promises. Sure, the shepherds had to explain their presence when they arrived on the scene of His birth (cf. Luke 2:18), but they were fellow Jews. The appearance of these wise men who showed up may have not made much sense. *They fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh* (cf. Matthew 2:11). But they were not Jews.

Many of the Jews of Jesus' day recognize Jesus as this longed for King described in the prayer of Psalm 72. However, true to the sinful human nature many of them desired a king who would be concerned with only their own personal well being and happiness, a ruler who would cater to their own personal desires. However, Jesus was not involved in some kind of political popularity contest. He came in faithfulness to God's promises, to do His will, not the will of the people. Even His miracles and healings were not to satisfy the personal wants and whims of the crowds. The selfish, sinful desire for a king who does what I want him to do, will end up praising him on Sunday and crucifying him on Friday.

As the psalm extends beyond those kings of Israel to Jesus, the King of all kings, it reflects the power of **His** justice and **His** righteousness. His justice extends to every person in the whole world, sinners who should receive the just punishment for their sin. This King, *being found in human form . . . humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross* (cf. Philippians 2:8) where He suffered that punishment for all sinners of all time. His righteousness extends to every person in the whole world, sinners who need the righteousness of Jesus. By confessing our sins and trusting in His sinless sacrifice *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (cf. 1 John 1:9). Thus, His justice is truly uncomprehensible, acquitting us of our guilt even though we're guilty and declaring us holy, blameless and righteous even though we are unrighteous. He is the truly King of grace.

So . . . one can see why the wise men, probably even kings themselves, sought out this King based upon God's epiphany. On the basis of this psalm, you can see why they *offered Him . . . tribute with gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh*, and more importantly, their hearts in humble worship and praise because He truly is the King of all kings. Amen.

*To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God,*

*be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

(1 Timothy 1:17)

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.