

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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First Sunday after Christmas, December 31, 2017

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 134, 130:1, 59, 339:1-4, 55.

Lessons: Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:1-12, Matthew 2:1-12.

Sermon Text: Psalm 72.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Next Saturday, January 6, is Epiphany. That is a day on which we remember Jesus Christ being manifested or revealed especially to Gentiles, as we heard in our Gospel lesson.

The fact that Jesus Christ was also sent to redeem Gentiles is something which was promised throughout all history. A Savior was promised to Adam and Eve. Abraham was told ***“all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*** Genesis 12:3 (NIV)

We have here a psalm which points first to David praying for and speaking of the kingdom he is passing on to his son Solomon. But because this is the eternal, almighty Word of God, it is also a psalm which prays for and speaks of the kingdom of his son to be born of the Virgin Mary. Today we look again at

GREAT DAVID’S GREATER SON

- 1. That Son is Jesus, who brings the forgiveness of sins.**
- 2. Many, including Gentiles, will come to him.**

When David, the author of this Psalm, prays ***“Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness”*** we must realize that Jesus Christ, of course, is the Son ultimately being talked about, for Matthew chapter 1 gives us the genealogy of Jesus Christ on the side of Joseph, the husband of Mary, who is plainly a Son of David. We also read in Luke that the angel Gabriel told Mary ***“You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”*** Luke 1:30-33 (NIV)

Look at what this son does: ***“He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.”*** He will judge fairly, with righteousness, with moral perfection, with sinlessness. No mere human could do that! He judges by the gospel, in which God had declared all mankind righteous. Scripture tells us ***“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.*** Romans 3:23-25 (NIV)

Righteousness flows down from God, just as rain and winds flow down from the mountains and hills into the valleys.

“He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy.” This idea is repeated later in the psalm: ***“he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.”*** What is it that really makes one poor and needy? It is not really the lack of money in your bank account or the lack of great earthly wealth. There are many in the world

who have an abundance of earthly things and possessions and even have honor and praise from men. But they are still poor and needy in God's eyes. It is sin that makes one poor and needy. ***"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."***

Sin makes us poor – living in the poverty of sin with eternal damnation hanging over our heads. That person is truly poverty-stricken who does not have, does not believe in, or had never heard of the riches God gives us in Jesus Christ. That person is truly needy – and unbelievers can only pass such neediness on to their children. That person is truly needy who has never heard of the marvelous gifts of Jesus Christ – gifts like the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. That person is truly needy who does not believe that Jesus Christ died for all his sins to redeem him from eternal death and damnation.

What does a person really need except the hope and assurance of eternal life? All things in this life pass away – including life on earth itself, for no one lives forever on earth. Men are seeking ways to live longer and longer but physical death is the fate of every human. Even those people whom Jesus raised from the dead while he was on earth have eventually died. They are no longer living today. Should we be surprised that some scientists have concluded that about 115 years is about all that mankind can ever expect to live? God was absolutely right when he commanded Adam even before Eve was created: ***"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."*** Genesis 2:15-17 (NIV) Earthly, temporal death comes to all men, and eternal death comes to all who do not believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior. ***"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** Romans 6:23 (NIV)

But this great and powerful son of David ***"shall break in pieces the oppressor."*** Who is the oppressor? The worst oppressor in all of mankind's history of evil human oppressors is Satan. All mankind is in his grip until and unless Jesus Christ frees one from that bondage. This psalm is another promise that the great oppressor – and all his allies – will be totally destroyed.

This great son of David ***"will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations."*** God's people will fear, love, and trust in him above all things. They shall honor, respect, and praise and hold in the highest regard this Son of David, who is also true God forever! As long as the sun and moon endure – through all generations – as long as the world exists! God's people will honor and glorify him until there is no more time. And that will continue in heaven, of course, through all eternity!

David then piles up pictures of how this great son of his will bless mankind and especially all believers: ***"He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust."*** (KJV)

When rain comes, it showers the earth. Rain almost never comes down just as a hand-full of drops, but it comes abundantly. So will this descendant of David come down like the rain in the rainy season – abundantly! When we see the word ***"flourish"*** we expect and think of flourishing on earth, but the believer in Jesus Christ will especially flourish in the blessings and hope and assurance of eternal life.

There will be an abundance of peace as long as the world endures – day and night. This, of course, is not the kind of peace where sinful men stop fighting and hating other sinful men. This is the kind of peace the angels spoke of that this king shall bring. This is peace with God, to whom we have been reconciled through Jesus Christ. This is the peace the angels spoke of in Luke 2, and the peace of which Jesus spoke: ***"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*** John 14:27 (NIV)

Because his message shall be spread over all the earth, the power of his Word will give him dominion ***"from sea to sea"***. There is a reference to "the river". That is the great river Euphrates which illustrated the eastern-most extent of the physical kingdom of Solomon. What better way to show the extent of the power of the great David's greater son than to compare it to the power that David's immediate son Solomon would experience?

The message of this greater son of David would be spread around the world – in the wilderness of sin. We think, too, of the message of John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness and of those who went out to hear him and be baptized in the Jordan River for the repentance of sins.

This Psalm is especially appropriate in the Epiphany season because of references to people coming from afar with gifts for Jesus.

We read: ***“The kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to him; the kings of Sheba and Seba will present him gifts. All kings will bow down to him and all nations will serve him.”*** and ***“May gold from Sheba be given him.”*** We are reminded of the gifts the wise men – the Magi – gave to Jesus in Bethlehem: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, valuable gifts. Tradition holds that it was three “kings” who came to worship Jesus in Bethlehem. Luke does not write of “kings”, and although there have been many kings, leaders, rulers throughout history who believed in Jesus Christ – including many kings who were descendants of David, some may have pointed such passages as our text to give the idea that it was kings who brought these gifts – three gifts named by Luke – to Jesus as a child. But we cannot be certain that they were “kings” who came to Bethlehem or that there were three of them. But many great people shall come – and have come – to Jesus in faith.

Look at what Jesus does for us! ***“For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight. Long may he live!”*** Joseph was ***“to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”*** Matthew 1:21 (NIV) This is the kind of rescue, of redemption that mankind needs.

We too, even today, rejoice at what Jesus has done for us. And we have a calling to go and proclaim this message to everyone we can, for ***“All nations will be blessed through him, and they will call him blessed.”***

David closes this psalm, which is also the end of a section of Psalms, with the words ***“Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds. Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory.”***

So as we remember Epiphany, and begin the season of the year called “Epiphany”, may, we, too, praise our Savior Jesus Christ! ***“Amen and Amen”*** as the Psalmist tells us!