

THE SON REJECTED BUT RISEN

Psalm 41

INTRODUCTION

Every parent wants his or her children to see the greatness of certain values and ways of living and thus to embrace these values and lifestyles as their own. In many ways parenting can be summed up as the work of seeking to impress on our children the superiority of certain ways of living in such a way that the child not only acknowledges the superiority of this way of life but embraces it as her own. While the particular values may vary widely among parents, all parents share this passion in common. This experience is not only common to parents but to all people. The sports fan not only wants to enjoy the greatness of her team but wants others to share in her admiration. The music fan not only wants to enjoy the excellence of his band but wants his friends to share in his enjoyment. The hunter not only wants to experience the thrill of hunting but wants those he loves to love it as well. The gamer not only delights in playing his favorite video game but his delight is increased when his friends join in gaming with him.

The reason I want you to reflect on this reality is so that you will not think me strange this morning as I seek to persuade you that the crucified and resurrected Son of God, Jesus the Messiah is the most glorious of all persons in the universe. It is my unashamed objective this morning to set before you the greatness of this person so that you will not only see his greatness but join me in rejoicing in his glory. To be a Christian is to be a person who, by a work of God's grace, has come to see that Jesus is the greatest of all persons and so to trust and love him above all else. It is the ambition of every true Christian to desire that others join in enjoying Jesus. This is the simplest way to understand the purpose of the Christian church: we exist for the purpose of enjoying Jesus and his salvation and recommending his glory to others so they join us in this enjoyment.

This morning I aim to impress upon you the greatness of Jesus by considering a prayer written by Israel's most famous king, King David, as a result of his going through some great difficulty. King David experienced a time of great trouble during which he was hated and betrayed by men and from this great trial God rescued him. David, in recording this prayer by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit foreshadowed the sufferings and the glory of Jesus. We know this because Jesus himself, hours before his betrayal and trial and execution, quoted a verse from this psalm as if he himself had spoken it originally. Jesus and his twelve disciples were gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem in order to eat the Passover meal together the night before his crucifixion. After he performed the duty of a household slave by washing their dirty feet he said, in part, "I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. . . . After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me (John 13:18-21).'" By quoting verse 9 of this psalm Jesus is making himself the person who is praying this psalm. Judas is the one who betrays and Jesus is the one who is betrayed. Thus, we see how God has made the experience of David and his prayer a type or a foreshadowing of the experience and prayer of David's greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This morning I am going to use this prayer, which is first the prayer of Jesus by the Spirit through David, to show the greatness and glory of Jesus so that we will all see his glory and therefore trust and love him more than everyone and everything else.

MAIN POINT

Jesus is the most glorious person in the universe because...

I. He confidently came to care for the poor (vv. 1-3)

The opening line of the psalm is a description of the mission of Jesus as he comes into the world. The word translated “poor” is a word that is used of people in any kind of weak or helpless condition. Poverty is an apt metaphor for people in every kind of helpless condition, regardless of whether the cause of the helplessness is economic deprivation or something else. Jesus, in the beginning of his public ministry, when he attends the synagogue in his hometown, Nazareth, reads a passage from Isaiah 61 which says in part, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor...” After Jesus reads this passage he tells his hometown people, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” So the gospel begins the same place this psalm begins with the announcement that Jesus comes to help the poor, that is those overcome by and made helpless by sin. Because of sin we have no resources with which to obtain God’s favor. We have squandered all that God has given us upon trivial and banal pursuits and therefore, by our own doing, are spiritually impoverished and helpless. Jesus comes into the world to proclaim the good news that he has come to rescue us from this self induced poverty.

The Psalm announces that the one who comes to care for the poor has been blessed by God. When the Scripture says that a person is “blessed” it means that the person is the recipient of God’s favor. This man is not blessed because he considers the poor but he considers the poor because he has been blessed by God. This is saying the same thing that the prophet Isaiah says about the Messiah, which Jesus said was a description of himself. It is because God anoints his servant Jesus with the HS that he preaches good news to the poor. So Jesus, by God the Father’s blessing, that is, through the power of the HS comes into the world to care for, to help, to rescue poor, miserable sinners like us.

The next thing to observe about his coming to help the poor is that this mission brings him trouble. Verse 1 says that this one who is blessed by God to help the poor enters into, the Hebrew literally says, “a day of evil”. Verse 2 describes God’s protecting his Son who is in danger from enemies. He needs God to keep him alive because he has enemies. Then in v. 3 it is declared that he is sick. Both the Hebrew words for “sick” and “ill” in this verse are rarely used to describe an actual physical illness but most often are used to describe the trouble that people experience due to their sins or to sin itself as a sickness. For example Isaiah 1:5 uses both of these words in reference to Israel’s sin, “Why will you still be struck down? Why will you continue to rebel? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart ill.” The main thing to see here is that this person who considers the poor and who is blessed by God is also a person who is suffering significantly. And this suffering is in some way connected to sin and God’s judgment of sin. What an apt description of our Lord Jesus who comes to seek and to save the lost but who had nothing but trouble and hardship and hatred and eventually death. He indeed was upon a bed of sickness and ill with the grief caused by sin, not his, but ours.

However, the main point of these three verses is that this person who encounters such trouble while helping the poor is delivered by, protected, kept alive, blessed in the land and not given up to his enemies by the work of the Lord. These verses are not a prayer but a statement of fact. Thus Jesus knows that his Father has sent him to care for the poor and that it is going to cost him to fulfill that mission but that his Father will protect him and keep him alive and not deliver him to his enemies. There are two things here that make Jesus remarkable. First, he knew all the suffering that awaited him. He knew that Judas would betray him. He knew he would be tortured. He knew that Peter would deny him and all the other disciples would forsake him. He knew he would be executed on that horrible cross. He knew God the Father would turn his back on him. He knew all this and yet he did not hesitate to obey his Father. Many people endure great suffering in order to pursue the good of others. However, rarely, if ever do people know the suffering they will endure in advance. If we knew in advance exactly what it was going to cost us to do good we would not do it. Jesus knew the full extent of the suffering he was going to bear and yet he still pursued the welfare of us poor sinners.

The second remarkable thing about Jesus is that he was able to do this because of his faith in God’s promises. He knew his Father’s character and he knew the promises of the Scriptures and so he trusted that God would not give him up to the will of his enemies. He trusted that God would heal him of his illness, that he would deliver him from the day of trouble. He did not waver in his obedience in spite of knowing all that it would cost because he believed that God would do what he promised. It’s one thing to talk about God’s love and goodness

when you're healthy and surrounded by friends and family and preaching to crowds of people and performing miracles. It is another thing to talk about your confidence in the goodness and love of God when all your friends have abandoned you and you are surrounded by men who hate you and they are beating you and then they drive nails through your hands and mock you while you die. When you are in that condition and yet you say, "the Lord will not give him up to the will of his enemies. The Lord sustains him on his sickbed..." then you are living by faith.

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- *And because...*

II. He suffered because our sins became his sins (v. 4)

In v. 4 we have the main petition of David. He asks that God would graciously heal him. Again, he is using the metaphor of sickness and health to describe the trouble he is in and the deliverance he desires. The fact that he is not referring to a literal illness can be seen in that the trouble he wants to be "healed" of is described in vv. 5-9 as the opposition and hostility of enemies and the betrayal of friends. Most importantly we are to notice that David recognizes that the trouble he is in is due to his sin. If you are paying attention then you have a very serious question. If the suffering of David is due to his sin then how can this prayer be the prayer of Jesus who committed no sins? Jesus always obeyed God and always loved people and thus how can he possibly pray v. 4? You heard the answer to that question when you heard Isaiah 53 read for you earlier in our worship service. This is what God says about his suffering servant, Jesus, the Messiah, "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Or listen to how the same thing is stated in the NT by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Jesus prays this prayer because our sins became his sins. **He was made sick with your sin so you could be made well by his wounds.** God treats Jesus as if he has sinned all his life so he can treat you as though you have obeyed all your life. The perfectly healthy Jesus took the disease of your sin into his body so that it became his disease and he suffered and died from that disease. But by doing it he healed every believer's diseased soul. He healed us of the sickness of sin by his death.

Here is the chief reason to admire and rejoice in Jesus Christ. We are poor, helpless, sick sinners. We have a terrible terminal disease from which we cannot escape. There is no human remedy for this disease. There is no work that can be performed that will heal us of it. But here comes the doctor, our Lord Jesus into the world and he takes upon himself our sins, our disease and suffers the horrible death that our disease creates. But in his death caused by our sin which becomes his sin, he completely purges us of this dread disease.

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III. He loved those who hated him (vv. 5-9)

In verses 5-9 we have a description of how the poor whom Jesus came to help treat him. Some are openly his enemies and wish for his death. In vv. 5-6 we can hear the voices of the Jewish leadership as they plot the death of Jesus. From their first encounter with him they begin to wish for and plot his death. They send their emissaries to him, feigning respect while all the time looking for reasons to officially kill him. Matthew 22:15-17, "Then the Pharisees went and plotted how to entangle him in his talk. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are true and teach the way of God truthfully, and

you do not care about anyone's opinion, for you are not swayed by appearances. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" These men utter "empty words" of flattery all the while looking for something with which to condemn him before the authorities. They gather together in secret and plot to kill him as v. 7 says. Like after he healed the man with the withered hand, Mark 3:6, "The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him." Or again, Matthew 26:3-5, "Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him." Then, in v.8 we can hear the voice of all kinds of people mocking Jesus and applauding his death and gloating in God's rejection of him. Matthew 27:39-44, "And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, "I am the Son of God.'" And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way." All men were sure that God had rejected Jesus and that his death on that cross was the end of him and it made them happy.

But finally, the worst thing that can happen, one of Jesus' close friends, a person with whom he shared meals, one whom he trusted in as his friend, this one betrays him. Judas, whom Jesus invited into his inner circle, who traveled with Jesus and listened to him preach and watched him perform mighty miracles and listened to his confrontations with the religious leaders and who was empowered by Jesus to preach the gospel and heal and drive out demons and whose feet were washed by Jesus, who shared in that final, intimate meal as Jesus revealed that he knew he was going to be betrayed; this Judas lifted up his heel against him. He went to the Jewish authorities and arranged to hand Jesus over to them for thirty pieces of silver. He arranged to betray him with the kiss of friendship.

The glory of Christ is so clearly set forth in the contrast between his helping and caring for and rescuing the poor and then those very poor whom he came to save are the ones who treated him like this. The gospels set forth in story form what this psalm highlights in poetry what the apostles describe in their letters. Paul writes, "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates his own love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." "The saying is trustworthy and worthy of all acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners and I am the foremost... formerly a blasphemer, persecutor and insolent opponent..." Here is the chief reason to be astonished at the greatness of Jesus: though you wished him dead and that his name would perish, though you spread slander about him abroad, though you conspired against him and wished the worst for him, though you gloated over his suffering, yet he came to save you, yet he gave his life for you. We are not the innocent sick for whom Jesus dies but we are willfully sick with sin. We are not the innocent poor but we have intentionally made ourselves poor by squandering all that God has given us on things that God hates. Yet, Jesus makes himself sick in order to heal us, he becomes poor that we might be made rich.

Our music is full of the wonder of this reality. Here are a few lines from some of the songs we love to sing about Jesus: "Behold the man upon the cross. My sin upon his shoulder; Ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers. It was my sin that held him there..." "What thou my Lord has suffered was all for sinners' gain. All mine was the transgression, thine the deadly pain." "Could we bear from one another what he daily bears from us? Yet this glorious friend and brother loves us though we treat him thus. Though for good we render ill, He accounts us brethren still." O that our hearts would melt with love for this Jesus who loved us even when we hated him.

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IV. He was raised from the dead and seated at God's right hand forever (vv. 10-13)

Verse 10 returns to the main request that God the Father would raise up his Son from his suffering and his dying. But note the reason for why the Son wants to be raised from the dead: it is so that he can repay his enemies for what they have done; it is so that he can do to them what they have done to him. How discordant this sounds on the lips of the one who while he hung upon that cross prayed for those poor sinners who mocked and killed him, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." So how can the same Jesus pray both things? I only have time to give you the short answer. That prayer upon the cross for forgiveness is how Jesus presents himself to us now. This is the day of salvation. Amnesty and pardon are available now to every rebel who will believe in this crucified Savior. However, there is a deadline after which no more pardons will be given. Jesus knew prior to his death and while he hung upon that cross that the Father was going to raise him from the dead and seat him at his right hand where he would wait until that day when he would make his enemies the footstool for his feet. The Jesus who hung upon that cross is the same Jesus who only days before this warned those who listened to him that he was going to return and to gather all the nations before him and separate the goats from the sheep. The goats he said would be sent into eternal fire while the sheep would be brought into eternal life. Jesus knew that one of the effects of his death and resurrection was that he would come again as the judge of the whole earth and so part of his prayer was that the Father would fulfill his plan and his promise to vindicate his glory by sending him back as the judge. So you and I should marvel at this Jesus because one day each one of us will stand before him as our judge.

Finally, in vv. 11-12 we hear Jesus rejoicing in the fact that his Father has delighted in him and rewarded him for his obedience by not letting his enemies shout in triumph over him, by setting him in his presence forever. God the Father delights in God the Son and upholds him and seats him at his right hand forever because of his obedient life and death. His enemies gloated for a moment while he hung upon that cross and while he was laid in that tomb, yet their gloating was short lived. As Paul says in Ephesians 1:20-22, "...he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet..." Right now the rejected and crucified Jesus is raised from the dead, seated in God's very presence having been given power and authority over all people and all demons and all angels and all kings and all governments and he waits for the day he will return and repay all who have opposed him and his Father.

Why would you prefer pleasure and money and retirement accounts and respect and video games and manicured yards and vacations and sex and shopping and sports and education and movies and hobbies and computers and spouse and children to this amazing Jesus? Let this day be the day you begin to trust him and not your bank account or your job or your own goodness. Let this be the day you forsake other saviors and other salvations and pursue Jesus with the same energy you pursue physical health. Let this be the day you begin to embrace Jesus more than anyone and anything else. Let this be the day you finally see and fear and trust this most glorious of all people, the rejected but risen Lord Jesus Christ.

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