



Joy - Advent - 2022

Joy because Jesus is King

1 Kings 1:38-40

We are spending Advent this year looking at Jesus in the Old Testament. The Old Testament, which was completed about 400 years before the birth of Jesus, is a group of books that anticipate the coming of Jesus.

And during this season, we are remembering that time of anticipation and reminding ourselves to live in anticipation of His coming again for us. He was faithful to the promise He made to come the first time through the law and the prophets and the symbols and pictures in the Old Testament, and we expect Him to be faithful to keep His promise to come again.

And what we hope to see in Him today is the reason He can be trusted as our source of joy, and hopefully the way we can break up our apathy and indifference that creeps in to our spiritual lives. Seeing Jesus is transformative, so as we see Him today as the reason for joy, it should make us joyful people.

And one of the places you see Jesus in the Old Testament is in the story of these people, Israel, and their search for a True King.

Israel was set up as a unique people - the only nation in history that God had made a covenant with. God had a unique relationship with Israel - He gave them His laws (like the ten commandments), He gave them promises (that they would be God's people and He would be their God.)

And one of the distinctions was that, as God's people, they wouldn't need a king like the nations around them. Because God was their King. God reigned through his law, they had judges applying that law. And under God, they were free, with no need of a king.

But then they looked around at the nations around them, and they saw these nations with kings. Those nations seemed to be strong, their kings made them unified and

intimidating and dangerous. They saw deficiencies in their judges and leaders, they wanted their judges to fix their problems, they wanted their judges to be righteous, and when they didn't meet those expectations, the people said, "Forget this unique nation with God as our king thing, we want kings like everybody else." This is how it went down:

1 Samuel 8:4-9 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah 5 and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations."

6 But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. **7** And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. **8** According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. **9** Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them."

10 So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. **11** He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. **12** And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. **13** He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. **14** He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. **15** He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. **16** He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. **17** He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. **18** And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

So the people demand a king, God says, "Give them what they want, but make sure they know what they're getting."

So Samuel says you will get a king, but those kings will oppress you - they will think they own your things (taking your orchards like they are their own), they will think they own your children - they will take your children and treat them like they are theirs. They will take a tenth of your flock.

This is hard for us to imagine in our day, but in their day governments could get so oppressive that they'd charge a 10% income tax!

In seriousness, what's significant about that is that the king would try to take the place of God. God demanded that they give 10%, or a tithe, of their increase as worship to Him. That's what you give to God as a way of saying, "All I have is yours." And the king would come and demand a tithe - claiming that all was his. The people dedicated their children to God, and the king would come and claim them. (And totalitarian governments throughout the world do the same today - they try to take the place of God.)

Gods don't share their people. God claims his people, and kings often try, too. God squeezes out tyrannical rulers and tyrannical rulers squeeze out God.

Chesterton said, 'Once abolish the God and the government becomes the God.'

So the people hear the warning, they ignore it, and they get what they want, they get a king.

But God, who is incredibly gracious and always helps his kids clean up the messes they make, says:

1 Samuel 12:14-15 "14 If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well. 15 But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king."

God is like this Father who is always bailing his son out of jail. He told them what to do, they didn't do it, but still, He comes to their rescue. God says, "You shouldn't have asked for a king, but if you're faithful and the king is faithful, I'll allow it to go well. There can be a faithful king. I'll allow for you to thrive, even under a king, if the people are righteous and the king is righteous."

And that began the days of waiting for the True King to come. A king who was strong and powerful, who would lead them well, but who would be faithful to God and blessed by God.

So Saul becomes king. It looks good at first, he wins some battles, but turns back from the Lord and descends into madness in the end.

Then comes David, and he shows tremendous character and courage, he slays Goliath, establishes the city of Jerusalem, builds a palace, defeats enemies, writes Psalms. But he sins, abuses his power, takes Bathsheba, and things begin to unravel.

He wasn't the true King.

But David had a son named Solomon - whose name means the "man of peace." And this is what happened when he was anointed, basically "sworn in" as King:

1 Kings 1:38-40 "38 So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David's mule and brought him to Gihon. 39 There Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, "Long live King Solomon!" 40 And all the people went up after him, playing on pipes, and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth was split by their noise.

Finally, a righteous king. So the people throw such a rocking party in celebration that the earth splits. We are past the bloodshed and abuse of David, we are past the madness of Saul. We have our man, the man of peace, the Shalom-man.

He will be rich and kind and wise and build a temple where God will be worshiped. He shows himself to be wise in his decisions, he points to the Lord as his righteousness and source of wisdom. People come from around the world to see his wealth and learn of his wisdom, The Queen of Sheba comes and is in awe of him. He calls his sons to trust the Lord - the book of Proverbs is mostly his work, a book aimed at teaching his kids wisdom. This is the guy.¹

The champ is here!

"When the righteous increase [or rule], the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan." - Proverbs 29:2

So the people are rejoicing, and it such a huge celebration and they make so much music and noise that the earth splits.

And that's the right way to respond to the right king - joy, celebration, hope for the future, peace about your security, relief that there will be justice and God's wise ways will be in the driver's seat through this wisest man ever to live. There's no room for apathy when

¹ For the promising nature of Solomon's reign, see 1 Kings 3:28, 1 Kings 10:3-5, Proverbs 1:7, 3:5, 16:3.

the righteous king rises. You can relax, you can rejoice, you can let your hair down and celebrate with abandon.

But you read on, and even Solomon falls. His success brings temptation toward decadence, and he gives in. He falls in love with money and his own glory, he indulges his lusts, he worships other gods. So once again they're disappointed.

This cycle of hope and joy followed by crushing disappointment continues.

And it is far worse to have hope like that and have it crushed than to never have hope at all.

And that happens enough times to a nation and that will change their psyche.

You would expect a people that has these repeated cycles of hope and joy followed by failure and disappointment to become very jaded and guarded. You'd be very careful to get hopeful again. Your joy would always have a seatbelt on - you'd have to be cautious.

When you see that much failure of the people you had hoped in, you're going to guard your heart and not get too wrapped up in any again.

You come to expect disappointment. Bills fans know this way of thinking - last week the Bills were kneeling down the ball at the end of the game, and my son, who is 13 says, "They could still lose." Because he knows.

You almost can't get too into it because you don't want to get crushed again.

And when life is like this, when a Bills season becomes a metaphor for all of life, you protect your heart by being cynical and sarcastic and "meh" about everything. Everything is an eyeroll, everything is suspicious, you hold back on joy to avoid the heartbreak. You keep joy's seatbelt on to keep yourself from being disappointed.

You can't get too into anything so everything becomes boring, everything seems dull - because it all disappoints in the end.

But God keeps speaking. He says, "You see how no good king is coming from you? You see how you can't find a Truly Righteous King? Not only will I allow it to go well if you get a good king - I'm gonna send you that good king.

Isaiah 9:6-7 "...and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called

**Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
7 Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.**

**Micah 5:2 “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah,
who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to be ruler in Israel,
whose coming forth is from of old,
from ancient days.**

Now, you can see where this sermon is going. This is very predictable.

Jesus is the True King. He is the King that doesn't disappoint in the end. He is the King worth celebrating, with so much joy that the earth splits. He isn't the king that fails at the end of his story. He looks like he fails as he's crucified like a criminal, but then he rises from the dead, defeats death, He reigns as the perfect king even now. He is powerful and wise, people from around the world are drawn to his wisdom, he slays our greatest enemy.

And, like any king, He claims to be the Sovereign - He rules over all of it, He makes it clear that everything we have is His. But He is the one good king. . But everything we give to Him we get back a thousand times more.

Luke 6:38 “...give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

Mark 10:29-30 “Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.”

He's a king who claims it all, and then gives it back a thousand fold. And in the process, He gives us Himself. He gives his very life.

The Champ IS here!

“When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.” - Proverbs 29:2

So in Jesus, we should have so much joy that the ground splits as we celebrate.

So why, then, are we so often so apathetic?

If that’s the response to the True King, and the True King has come, why are we so “meh?” Why the apathy and lack of joy?

Why so much acedia? That’s not a word we use much, but Dorothy Sayers defines it as “the sin which believes in nothing, cares for nothing, seeks to know nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, loves nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing, and only remains alive because there is nothing it would die for.”²

It makes sense that we could be disillusioned about other kings, other leaders, other hopes. It makes sense that we’d be jaded about a lot. We’re always being sold stuff that doesn’t satisfy in the end and doesn’t pan out.

But if Jesus really is *this king*, why are we so “meh” about Jesus? Why are we so often so spiritually indifferent, asleep, and cold? And what can be done about it?

One reason for our apathy is that we can confuse Jesus with church.

And churches can create this problem - we tend to represent ourselves as more than we are. We are supposed to be imperfect gatherings and imperfect communities that point people to Jesus. But we point people to ourselves and our programs and our leaders as the solution.

And our leaders disappoint - either through normal human weaknesses, or through real corruption. And we had hoped in them. We had thought, “this is the one.” And again and again we are disappointed. Or the hopes and vision for the church don’t all pan out, the joy in what could be gives way to the reality of what is.

² From Cr

And then we hear that we should be rejoicing in Christ - but *I tried that*. But we didn't try that. We tried rejoicing in His gifts, which are mostly temporary, in his church, which is good, but limited, in leaders which can be helpful but are never the True King.

We say we used to rejoice in Jesus but we rejoiced in something else.

So we are apathetic about the whole thought.

Another reason for our apathy is unbelief - because to believe in the Christian story is to believe in the most thrilling of stories and in Jesus we find the greatest of joys.

Part of our modern apathy, I think, is that we don't believe these things really happened, that Christ really rose, that the theology we conceptualize really is true, active, strong, and entirely begging to be applied into orthopraxy. It's getting wrapped up in emotionalism, intellectualism, and distraction that serve to dull our senses. They don't dull scripture.

We think its dull and boring - Sayers

Another reason for our apathy is missing the message of the cross.

We think its designed to steal joy.

Matthew 27:50-51 “50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

Uche Anizor recommends a few habits to feed our joy and overcome apathy in his excellent book, Overcoming Apathy:

- 1) Confess apathy as sin to God and one another - 138
- 2) Feed faith and hope - 165
- 3) Process Grievs, Disappointment, and Doubt with Christ and his people
- 4) Talk about Jesus

Look to the Cross

Believe and be forgiven.

Assurance:

**Psalm 28:6-7 “Blessed be the LORD!
For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.
7 The LORD is my strength and my shield;
in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;
my heart exults,
and with my song I give thanks to him.**

Sermon Discussion Questions:

- 1) In what ways do you see apathy manifesting itself in your walk with Christ?
- 2) Why do you suppose that is?
- 3) How is our lack of joy in Christ evidence of unbelief?
- 4) What truths about Christ can feed our joy?
- 5) What regular habits can help us overcome apathy and feed joy?