



GRACE CHURCH

Promise and Fulfillment: Reign

Psalm 45:1-7; Hebrews 1:8-12

Grace Church | 12.26.19

If you are not aware, this Sunday, the last of the year, marks our last Sunday in our Advent series. I realize that Advent has technically ended already, it does so on Christmas day when we rejoice in God with Us, the fulfillment of all our longing. Of course we don't follow a strict church calendar here, even though we see the value in orienting our hearts towards different seasons, but the reason we continue our series today is because I want to show you one more promise fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, one more great promise come to rest with us in the incarnation.

This Sunday, the one after Christmas, typically falls in church calendars as either the start of a new season called Epiphany, or simply a waiting time before Epiphany begins in the New Year. Epiphany means "to show" or "to reveal". Now, the season of Epiphany is marked primarily by a celebration of the full revelation of Jesus to the world. Now that he has been born, we begin to see who he really is. In this time of Christmas moving toward Epiphany, one of the stories that the historic church has typically highlighted is that of the visit from the Magi or Wise Men to Jesus. The journey of the foreign Magi reminds us that Christ came not just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles, showing God's heart for the nations and the continued fulfillment of His promise to bring all people to himself. But the visit from the Magi, which I will not get into detail here and I presume you know, also symbolizes something else.

The Magi or Wise men are often called "kings". You've heard that song, "We Three Kings". There is no indication in the text that they themselves were kings, so sorry for all who believed that song as fact. I believe that typically they are called kings because they brought expensive gifts to Jesus. But although they may not have been kings, one thing is clear from the Biblical witness: they came to worship a king. We find their confession in Matthew 2:2, when they come before Herod, the earthly "king of the Jews" and ruler over Jerusalem, and ask him: "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him." See, these wise men had received a revelation from God in the form of a star. They knew that God was revealing himself, showing himself, that an epiphany was here. And they knew that the revealing of God would also reveal a king.

So this first Sunday after Christmas, our goal this morning is to do the same: reveal the king. In our Advent series we have seen Christ incarnate as the fulfillment of God's promise of presence, of joy, of salvation, and now we find one more revelation. This child born is a fulfillment of God's promise to reign in the earth. He is born to be a king and born to reign.



Turn with me then to our main passage this morning in Psalm 45, where we will see a picture of the promised reign of the child born to be king. Notice first the preliminary address in verse 1. The author shows us his heart, the very reason for penning the psalm. **Read verse 1.** His heart overflows with a pleasing theme—this psalm is a pleasing, joyful, song. Most of your Bibles will let you know in the heading that this psalm is a love song. This means it is actually traditionally a marriage song, one to be sung or recited over the bride and groom on their wedding day. It outlines for us both a description of the bridegroom and the bride.

A year or two ago it felt like my wife and I were invited to 20 weddings in just one year. We are at the stage of life where the invitations just keep coming. Oftentimes, if we know the couple well, we will write a heartfelt note to include with our gift. For a few particular couples that are really dear to us, these have been long and drawn out letters, describing to them our joy in their marriage and praising them for their faithfulness, encouraging them with all their best attributes and how they have blessed us by their lives. Psalm 45 is like that—a letter praising a bride and groom on their wedding day.

See the second part of verse 1 too—I address my verses to the king. You see, this is not any normal couple, this is a royal couple, a royal wedding. He is so enamored with the excellence and glory and majesty of the king that he heart overflows into song. What else does he say? “My tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe”. In other words, the lyrics and praise flows from me naturally. The psalmist isn’t blowing smoke at the king and his new bride—no, he truly is enamored by them and in awe of this king.

There are actually multiple passages in the Old Testament which remind us of the promise of the reign of Christ, and many could be chosen, but the reason this psalm was picked is because it is, in my estimation the most beautiful promise. This morning, just a few days after Christmas, I think our receptors for grandeur are a little frayed. We might be exhausted from family, or travel, or hosting others at our home, or saddened that some of the happy thoughts of Christmas have faded. Maybe we are reluctant to go back to work or study. And so here I can stand and proclaim to you a great truth: “the baby you celebrate at Christmas is meant to reign over the heavens and your life!” And that is a great truth, no doubt. But I don’t want you to just hear it today, in some way I want you to feel it. My invitation to you is to shake off the emotional dust of Christmastime a bit, and focus on not just the proclamation of the king, but the character of the king himself. Fall in love with the glory of Jesus again today. And that’s why I love this psalm, because it is a call for our hearts to overflow with a pleasing theme, a call for us to address a verse of praise to the king, a call for us, like the wise men, to lay down gifts and to be enthralled with the beauty of Christ.

To that end, this morning I want to show you three aspects of the reign of the true king which are promised here and fulfilled in Jesus Christ’s incarnation. We will first that we are promised an excellent king, second a powerful king, and thirdly an eternal king.

The Excellent King



The king who came to reign in the first advent is not just a king because he was born to be. That is true, but it's not as if he inherits his rule and doesn't live up to it. He meets all the expectations of the office. One of my favorite sermons is by the pastor-theologian Jonathan Edwards. It is called "The Excellency of Christ". In it Edwards uses Revelation 5:5-6 as his text, where in his vision John describes Christ as the lion of the tribe of Judah and also the lamb that was slain. Commenting on the seeming juxtaposition of Christ being described both as a lion and a lamb, as a powerful hunter and also a humble sacrifice, Edwards locates the beauty of Jesus in his ability to contain numerous seemingly paradoxical titles. He says that "there is an admirable conjunction of diverse excellencies in Jesus Christ."¹ He then goes on to name some of these "diverse excellencies". In Christ we see infinite highness and infinite condescension, infinite justice and yet infinite grace, glory and humility, majesty and meekness, obedience and dominion, sufficiency and reliance. As he goes on, unpacking each of these diversities of Jesus, we see a full formed example of what it means to be excellent. Christ is excellent because he is unmatched, not just in some ways, but in every way. And here in our text we see some of this diverse excellency of the promised king.

Take a look again at **verse 2**. Notice the first trait of this king: "You are the most handsome of the sons of men". Now, here is an interesting description. Why is it important that a king be handsome, beautiful, or "fair" as this word is often translated?

We remember first that this psalm is a song for the king, and it is most likely composed in honor of King David, or perhaps Solomon, David's son. If anything, it is a song of praise for the concept of the ideal king, which David was praised to have met most closely in his reign. So is this just simple flattery for his office? Perhaps not. We see David described like this *before* his installation of king as well, in 1 Samuel 16. You likely remember the story: Samuel goes to find and anoint the new king, and he knows he will come from the house of Jesse, one of his sons. So all of Jesse's older sons are brought before Samuel, but the Spirit doesn't confirm any of them.

Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward.

Notice two things here. First, the description of David. Ruddy, handsome, with beautiful eyes. There's something different about him. He is different. Not quite like Saul, the disobedient current king, who the Scripture defines as "There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people." No, David is not taller or stronger, he is passed by his older brothers. He is a humble shepherd. But his beauty is different. The word "ruddy" is the same one used to describe Esau in Genesis, who was said to be

¹ Jonathan Edwards, "The Excellency of Christ".



“red” all over because of his hair. It’s a rugged beauty, earth worn, accustomed to hard work, perhaps the work of the shepherd. And his beauty is set in his eyes, not his stature. Have you ever heard someone has “kind eyes”? That’s what I think of here. You look at him and feel at ease, a comfort. The Song of Solomon portrays the bridegroom similarly, as the bride exclaims: “My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand.”

Why is it important that the king be handsome? So he might be distinguished from others. It was less to do with his actual features and more to do with his excellency. The king who is worthy to be praised and worthy to reign is a king who is noticeable. There is something about him: in his eyes, in his demeanor. Maybe he isn’t the strongest or tallest, but he is the brightest, the most radiant.

Look at the second description of the king in **verse 2**. “Grace is poured upon your lips.” Literally this means his words are “anointed with grace”. The description here implies that the king being praised is not only distinguished in his appearance, but in his speech. When he opens his mouth, it’s as if grace pours out. The connotation for the reader is also one of wisdom: the king is praiseworthy because he is careful with his words. He is not quick to speak in an ungraceful or unwise way. When he speaks, people listen. This kind of speech is categorized of a king: we think of Solomon, who was granted wisdom from God unmatched in all the world, or again of David, whose anointed and graceful words came out in his careful songs and poetry.

The bringing together of both of these traits implies a specific blessing of God that we see at the end of **verse 2**. This is not empty praise, or an exposition of useless traits. The psalmist brings up the beauty and speech of the king to show his excellence and fitness for the office he holds.

So what did the Magi see when they came to visit the young Christ? By that time he was perhaps no more than a toddler: just walking, few words. What made them sure of his kingliness? And what about the disciples, the crowds, the pharisees? What of Pontius Pilate, of the thief on the cross? What did they see? And what do you see when you see Jesus? Is he an excellent king?

I think that the scope of redemptive history will tell us yes, time and time again. He is unmatched, distinguished among ten thousand. What of his beauty? Maybe you’ve heard of the prophecy of Isaiah, that the coming servant of the Lord would not appear to be beautiful.

“He had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

So which is it? Did he have no form or majesty to look at, or like his predecessor David, was he the most beautiful of the sons of men? Does he have the qualifications to reign? In order to answer this, we have to take a step back for the bigger picture. We don’t know how Christ the king



appeared outwardly, but here is what we do know. He was ruddy, rough around the edges, a man of work. His work was not just carpentry, but the rough work of carrying his cross. He did not just inherit his kingdom, he earned his rightful place. Perhaps he was not the tallest or the strongest, but like David, I think his eyes gleam with life. Christ has kind eyes, church, eyes that see through any facade, that reach to the heart and respond with unending grace.

And if there is anything that the suffering song of Isaiah 53 shows us, its that we find his beauty most prominent in his sorrows and his grief. He was disfigured and tortured leading up to the cross, but that is where he is most beautiful. As he bore our sorrows and our grief and our sin, he fulfills the very purpose of his incarnation: he came to save his people from their sins. And in one of the great paradoxes of human history, all those who truly know Christ look upon the cross not with disgust in its brutality, but in awe at its beauty. It is precisely in a glance of the bloody cross of Christ that we see Christ as the fulfillment of the excellent, beautiful handsome king, because in that moment he is truly matchless. No one else could do what he did. And not just in his eyes and broken body do we find beauty, we also see it in his words.

Christ is the king whose lips and words are anointed with grace, whose wisdom is perfectly precise. In John 6 we see a picture of this. The Pharisees are attempting to arrest Jesus before he gets too popular, before its too late and his message ignites the people. But its already too late. The guards they send come back empty handed, and the Pharisees ask: "Why did you not bring him?" Their answer is stunning: "Never spoke a man like this before!" they say. In other words: have you heard the grace and wisdom that spouts from this mans mouth? The authority and boldness of the claims he makes? In John's gospel alone, Jesus claims to be the living water, the bread of life, the only way to God, the light of the world, the great shepherd, the great I AM. No one ever has and no one ever will speak like this king. I've been too long on this point. Here is our point: Christ is not one among many. In his incarnation we celebrate the coming of an unmatched king, whose excellency will never be duplicated. That's what the angels sang about to the shepherds, that's who the Magi came to worship, and that's who still reigns and will come again to reign.

The Powerful King

But this king is not just beautiful and king, full of words of grace, he also has a strong side. He is our powerful king. Take a look at **verses 3-4**. The tone of the psalm switches from praising certain traits of the king to making a request of the king. The confidence here is so striking to me. Notice in **verse 5**. Remember this is a love song. Its as if the psalmist is urging the king on: I know how powerful you are, I love how powerful you are, so don't hold back! Take up your sword, get your armor on, ride out into battle to meet your enemies! The praiseworthy king is not a weakling who poses for his royal portrait in mock military garb. No no, the psalmist is keenly aware of his prowess in battle, as if he has seen him before. He trusts the kings arrows are sharp, that his sword is ready. Again, the psalmist recognizes that only the true king can accomplish this kind of victory, look at the end of **verse 4**. He says "let your right hand teach you awesome deeds". This may also



be translated as “may you right display awesome deeds”, but I like the rendering of the ESV because it shows the corrective power of this king. He is the one who teaches all mankind exactly who he is, who instructs us with his great show of strength.

In my mind this picture is solidified by one character that might be one of my favorites in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. I think I just used a LOTR allusion a couple of weeks ago, but you'll just have to get over it. One of my favorite characters is Theoden, king of Rohan. In the books, he is portrayed as a timid king who slowly regains his strength and courage and glory. In the end he goes out swinging, which I love. He is not one to go down without a fight. But before the end, he shows his true self in what is called the battle of Helms Deep in the book. Helms Deep is an old fortress of Rohan. It is named after Helm, an old king of Rohan, and in the fortress there was a huge horn, called helms horn, which was blown to strike fear into the hearts of the king's enemies. In this scene, the king finds himself surrounded by his enemies with no seeming escape. I want to read for you.

But even as the gate fell, and the Orcs about it yelled, preparing to charge, a murmur arose behind them... and it grew to a clamour of many voices crying strange news in the dawn. The Orcs upon the Rock, hearing the rumour of dismay, wavered and looked back. And then, sudden and terrible, from the tower above, the sound of the great horn of Helm rang out...

'Helm! Helm!' the Riders shouted. 'Helm is arisen and comes back to war. Helm for Théoden King!' And with that shout the king came. His horse was white as snow, golden was his shield, and his spear was long... Light sprang in the sky. Night departed.

'Forth Eorlingas!' With a cry and a great noise they charged. Down from the gates they roared, over the causeway they swept, and they drove through the hosts of Isengard as a wind among grass. On they rode, the king and his companions. Captains and champions fell or fled before them. Neither orc nor man withstood them.... So King Théoden rode from Helm's Gate and clove his path to the great Dike.

If you are alive and breathing, you cannot read that and not get some fire in you. Can you see the picture? A true king is one who meets the challenge, who is not afraid to sound the horn and ride out victoriously.

When the Magi glimpsed the young Christ, they did not know he would also be a warrior. But maybe they sensed it. And in his time on earth, many expected Jesus to gird his sword on his thigh. But he didn't, at least not in the way they expected. And yet make no mistake, the incarnation was a declaration of war. It was Helms horn blowing in the deep, announcing the coming of the king. And what is the cause of this king? See the end of **verse 4**. “For the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness”. This king isn't a warmonger. He doesn't ride into battle for the thrill of it. He has a mission: to bring truth. He comes in power so that all who see him see and know the truth of God, and there is no falsehood in him. He comes with meekness. He was strongest at the cross,



when he appeared the weakest. He comes with righteousness, to right all the wrongs of the world and to make just all the unjust. And just as the king came once to ride into battle victoriously, he will come again. When he does, John tells us in Revelation 19 that he will be on a white horse, and what will be his name? Faithful and True. "Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war."

As we consider the power of Jesus the King, here is a question to help you apply this concept. Do you do what the psalmist does? Are you so convinced of the power of your king that you call him to battle? When was the last time you came face to face with sin, suffering, or the results of the fall and called on the strength of your conquering king? Spurgeon says it rightly:

Loving spirits jealous of the Redeemer's glory long to see him putting forth his power to vindicate his own most holy cause.²

Church, we should long to see Jesus get his sword ready. Not so we can get back at all those people who annoy us, but so that we can see sin killed, darkness dispelled, and all the sad things made untrue. When we are weak, we call on our powerful king to ride out in glory for our sake.

The Eternal King

The last thing we find about this promised king is that he is unmatched not just in his excellence and power, but in the longevity of his reign. He is an eternal king. **Read verses 6-7** again. Up to this point, there are promises of this king which we have applied to Jesus that might be also applied to other kings, like David. David had excellence, he was a mighty warrior. But at this point the psalmist takes a turn. Notice what he calls the king he has been praising, in verse 6. He says your throne, O God. He gives the king a title of deity. Now, it is unclear exactly what the original psalmist meant by this. Perhaps the most likely solution is that he is so enthralled with his king that he compares him to God. The word here is Elohim, which is name for deity, but not the proper name for the God of Israel, which would be Yahweh. Still, I think the meaning is clear for us. Who could this king be who is so categorically different that he might be praised as God? What is it that sets him apart? Not just that he is excellent, not just that he is powerful, but that he is eternal. Only God is eternal.

It's his eternal nature that sets him apart, that allows him to be anointed *beyond* his companions. And church, we know the answer to the question. The only eternal king is king Jesus. This is exactly the argument of the writer of Hebrews. Turn with me to Hebrews 1. The author of Hebrews has established for his readers the truth that Jesus Christ is the exact imprint of the nature of God. There is no better or coming final revelation from God, because Jesus is God. And the reason he is GOD is because he has been there from the beginning. He is not like the angels, not a created being, but rather the creator. Look in **verse 8**. Notice something? The author of Hebrews

² Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*



uses our exact passage in Psalm 45 to prove his point about the sons excellency. He says that our psalmist in Psalm 45 is speaking of *the son*. The king to whom he offers his love song is the very son of God. And what makes him truly set apart, what makes him truly God, what makes him the kind of king that we can always trust and always rely on and who will never let us down? Its his etnernity. He never loses the throne. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the promise to David made by God, that his throne will endure forever. From the line of David comes a Son born to rule eternally.

Here we remember that Psalm 45 is a psalm for King Jesus, but it is also a wedding song. “ Its a song about the love of the king, not just the reign of the king. All the qualities of his kingship are rightfully applied to his love: his love for his bride is excellent, it is powerful, it is eternal. Over and over again scripture refers to Christ as the bridegroom, he even uses that title himself in Mark 2. And who is his bride? Revelation 21 provides us the best answer.

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal...

The angel takes John up to see the bride, and brings him to a city like no other—the new Jerusalem. Who is the bride of the lamb? Those who dwell in it, the people of the new Jerusalem. Just a few verses later, we are told what kind of people enter into this city.

But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. **Revelation 21:9-11, 27**

Those who are Christ's, written in his book, written so that they might have life, written with his blood—these are his bride. His church, his people, his own. This is the good news that we is shown to us at Christmas, but the good news that continues on the rest of the year. Christ is our king, but also our husband. When we repent of our sin and turn to him, we are not only welcomed into the kingdom of a good king, we are welcomed into the royal family. A Psalm 45 can be our song, we can live our lives in praise and awe of our king, our hearts like the pen of a ready scribe, ready to give him praise for his beauty and grace. A king who is eternal, who will never divorce us.

Many of you may know the name George Whitefield. He was a British preacher who spent many years in America during the time of the Great Awakening, traveling and preaching. He is known by many as one of the greatest preachers to ever live, and his preaching helped spark a great revival all over the country of men and women hearing the clear gospel and coming to faith in Christ. One of my favorite sermons from Whitefield is one that he delivered to a whole crowd of women when he was invited to preach at the “society of young women”. Now if you know anything about the culture of that day, it was very very important for a young woman to find an appropriate match for a husband. Call it backward or sexist, but that's how it was. Most women were not well educated



besides a simple schooling, and their status or future was often dependent on their husbands. So Whitefield comes to preach to a whole host of young women, and he does something masterful. He entitles his sermon “Christ, the Best Husband”, and then proceeds to spend his exposition by unpacking all the beauty and excellency of Christ as the match beyond all matches. Guess what his text is? It’s Psalm 45. Listen to how he speaks, I will quote at length here:

Consider who the Lord Jesus is, whom you are invited to espouse yourselves unto; he is the best husband; there is none comparable to Jesus Christ.

Do you desire one that is great? He is of the highest dignity, he is the glory of heaven, the darling of eternity, admired by angels, dreaded by devils, and adored by saints.

Do you desire one that is rich? None is comparable to Christ, the fullness of the earth belongs to him.

Do you desire one that is wise? There is none comparable to Christ for wisdom. His knowledge is infinite, and if you are espoused to Christ, he will guide and counsel you, and make you wise unto salvation.

Do you desire one that is good? There is none like unto Christ in this regard; others may have some goodness, but it is imperfect; Christ's goodness is complete and perfect, he is full of goodness and in him dwelleth no evil.

Do you desire one that is beautiful? His eyes are most sparkling, his looks and glances of love are ravishing, his smiles are most delightful and refreshing unto the soul: Christ is the most lovely person of all others in the world.

Do you desire one that can love you? None can love you like Christ: His love, my dear sisters, is incomprehensible; his love passeth all other loves: The love of the Lord Jesus is first, without beginning; his love is free without any motive; his love is great without any measure; his love is constant without any change, and his love is everlasting...

What do you say? Shall the match be made up this evening between Christ and your souls?.. Some marry in haste, and repent at leisure; but if you were once espoused unto Jesus Christ, you would never repent; nothing would grieve you, but that you were not joined to him sooner; and you would not be disjoined again for all the world.³

Friends, man and woman alike, the invitation this morning is to consider the king who reigns on his throne. Christmastime is the first glimpse we have of him: the baby in the manger is the one who is the excellent, powerful, and eternal king. In your considering the king, remember that he does not desire to reign alone. Nor does he desire that his subjects would be distant, cold, locked out of the castle where he dwells. No, his people are also his bride, invited in close, matched with him forever, brought into the castle and even to dwell in his house.

³ George Whitefield, “Christ The Best Husband”.



One question remains:

“Whom do we want to be the ruler of our lives?”

Would you rather be the ruler of your destiny, fumbling around with your own fate, unsure if you will be a good king? Or would you decide that you might lay aside your desire for self rule and submit yourself to the king, even espouse yourself to the king, to use Whitfield's language. This requires submission: giving over your job, your marriage, your health, your family, your kids, your vocation, your passions, your time, your money, all your autonomy. It requires re-orienting your life. But for all who see the beauty and excellence and power of the eternal king, that submission is a daily joy. To wake up every morning in awe of our king and ready to live under his reign is not a duty, it is a delight.

And here we come to the real question that keeps us up at night. Is there one who is truly in control of this world? The answer is yes. For however it may appear that sin and death and our enemy Satan are in control of our world, the incarnation was the announcement that death's time was coming to an end. We live in what is called an inaugurated kingdom, You can simply refer to it as the "already not yet". The king is come, and he rules in this world. The strong man Satan is bound, as Jesus would say. But the world is not quite yet as it should be. It's passing away, nearing its natural end. And then the king will return and he will make a new world, a world he too will rule and reign over, a world where he will be with his people forever as their bridegroom.

That's the hope of advent and after, church. The king has come, the king will come again. The king reigns, the king will always reign. And the king is full of love for all who come to him by faith, ready to welcome you into his house and his beloved bride. When sin and death come knocking, fight them with that hope: Jesus Reigns.

