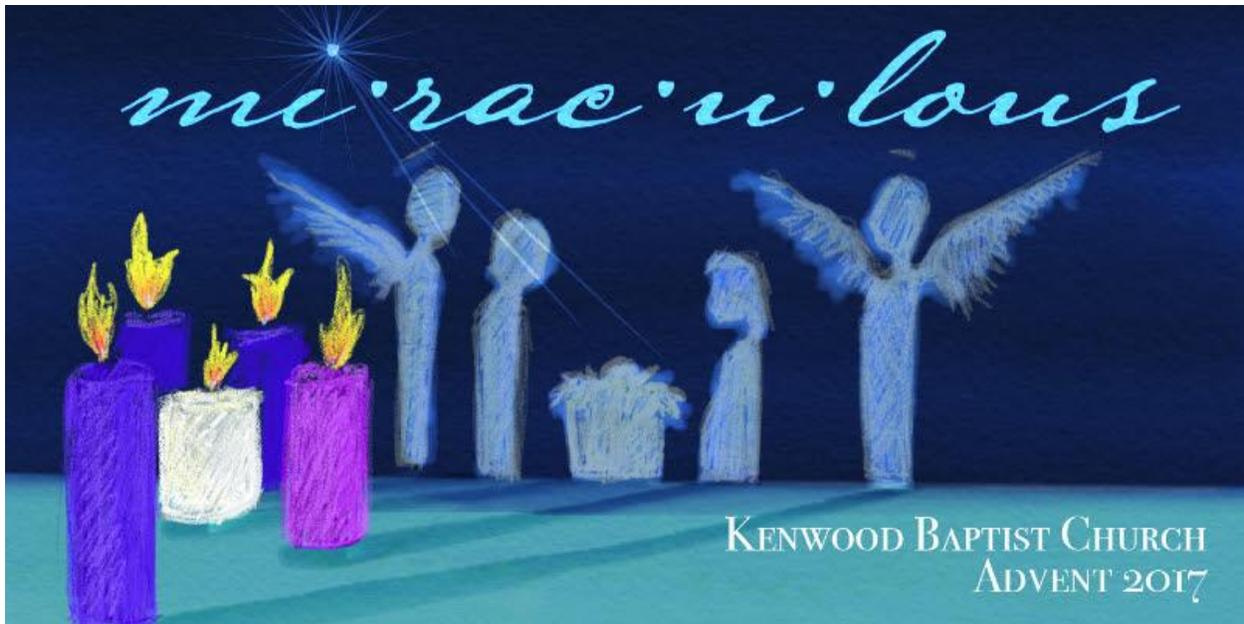


“Mi-rac-u-lous King”
Advent 2017 Sermon Series
Kenwood Baptist Church
Pastor David Palmer
December 17, 2017

TEXT: Luke 1:57-79



Good morning Kenwood. It is a joy to be the Lord's house, and we continue this morning in our Advent series, *miraculous*. We looked together over these weeks of Advent into the miraculous nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. We began our study this Advent with *Jesus, our miraculous Son*, born of a virgin's womb and answered the skeptics among us. We continued last Sunday by looking at *Jesus, our miraculous Savior*, and we saw that the New Testament witness is for the divinity of Jesus. This morning, we turn to consider *Jesus, our miraculous King*. Jesus is a real King. The scope of His dominion is without equal; the strength of His victory is unparalleled; and the success of His campaign endures forever. Jesus, the miraculous King, at the heart of Christmas, calls forth our worship and joyful service. We look this morning at this text in Luke which focuses, it seems, on the occasion of the birth of John the Baptist, and yet John's father, Zechariah, is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies mainly about Jesus, our miraculous King. So, let's enter into this narrative and let the text take us to worship the Lord Jesus, our miraculous King.

Luke 1:57 sets the time and tells us:

“Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son.”

I have a theory that Luke might have been an OB/GYN physician. He is very careful to note the details and personalities, and I think this might have been his area, but we don't know that for sure. On the eighth day of this child's birth came the custom to circumcise the child, and this was the moment that children would be named. Typically, according to the custom in Israel, (this custom is still followed in Greece to this day), where children are often named for their fathers or grandfathers, and so there was an expectation that the son would be named after Zechariah. But his mother answers in Luke 1:60:

"No; he shall be called John."

Johanan in Hebrew means *Yahweh is gracious*, and the arrival of this son is a signal to all the world that God's grace is about to appear on the scene. The people questioned in Luke 1:61:

"None of your relatives is called by this name."

So, the people signified or made signs to Zechariah. Remember that Zechariah had become mute and unable to speak after the angel Gabriel visited him in his priestly service with the stunning announcement of about what the Lord was about to do. Zechariah is unable to speak, and so they made signs to him, and he asks for a writing tablet. He writes on the tablet that the son's name is John. Everyone is astonished. As soon as he writes this name, Zechariah's mouth is opened; his tongue is loosed, and he begins to bless God and praise Him. Luke tells us that he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and Zechariah then prophesies about the advent of this miraculous King. It is this blessing, this announcement, in Luke 1:68-75, which focus on the coming of the Lord Jesus that we want to consider this morning. These words of praise and blessing, though they are eight verses in English, in the original text form a single sentence. It is a single sentence, an explosion of praise. It is a blessing to God, gratitude and thanksgiving. This blessing begins in Luke 1:68 with:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people."

The advent of Christ, the miraculous King, is nothing less than the visitation of God, the arrival of God to this world and His arrival to redeem His people. In the Latin translation made by Jerome in the fourth century, this opening line begins with *benedictus*, and so this praise, this expression of thanksgiving, is sometimes known as the *Benedictus*, just as Mary's song of praise is often referred to as the *Magnificat*. In many monasteries and other church traditions, the *Benedictus* prayer and the *Magnificat* prayer are prayed every day, and so they are woven deep into the fabric of devotion for many Christians in the world today.

I want to look at this expression of praise more carefully, more closely, and notice together that Zechariah's praise is grounded in the arrival of a royal figure. I want to challenge you at the very beginning of the sermon, and I actually want to try to bring together two things that we often separate. Sometimes we hear it expressed like this: "Oh, the Israelites at the time of Jesus were

expecting a political Savior, but God was bringing them a spiritual one.” If you had said that to a first century person, they wouldn't know what you were talking about. Sometimes we spin it this way: “Well, this political kingdom is realized in this spiritual reign.” Other times we separate, and we say: “Oh, the Israelites were expecting an earthly kingdom, but God was bringing them heavenly one.” Again, a first century audience wouldn't have had any idea what we were talking about because that distinction is foreign to the biblical world. I want to challenge us, as I have been challenged this week, so let me give you the punchline of the sermon early. The punchline of the sermon is that Jesus Christ is actually a real King who is reigning and ruling this world this morning. He has power unlike any other king. His victory cannot be overturned. He has arrived in power; the method of His victory is different from earthly kings’, but the accomplishment of it is without equal. This expectation of a true, real King, who will rule the nations and redeem His people with power and defeat our enemies, is both rooted in Scripture and realized in Jesus Christ.

I want us to look at this closely. Zechariah's outburst of praise says: “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.” Why? “Because He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David.” A *horn of salvation* is an image of strength, might, and power. It recalls Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:10 when Hannah receives a son Samuel and she praises God and says:

“The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; against them He will thunder in heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed.”

The image of a horn of salvation is a royal image. It is an image of great strength drawn from the strength of animals who possess a horn in such a way. Samuel grows up to be a prophet of the Lord and takes a horn of oil and anoints the son of Jesse, David, as anointed king. As soon as he does this, the Spirit of God comes rushing mightily upon David. A horn of salvation; a king of strength, power, and might. The house of David is a real house. The King coming from this place is a real king, not just a spiritual one. The house of David is a dynasty that would endure forever, as we will see. Some critical scholars have questioned this. There is even a PBS documentary that asked the question: “Did the house of David really even exist historically?”

One of the most exciting pieces of clay to come out of the ground that was connected to Cincinnati is this one. It is a victory stele written in Aramaic by Hazael of Aram



in the 9th century. It was discovered by Avraham Biran, of the Hebrew Union College here in Cincinnati, at Tel Dan in the northern part of Israel. When you come in a little closer to this

inscription, you see there are two words in white so that they can be read more easily. I want to astonish you this morning, because I think you will be able to read this. The remarkable thing is



that the English language, the Latin alphabet that we use, is a grandson, if you will, of Phoenician, which is the grandparent for both Greek and Hebrew. As different as they seem, those languages, those scripts, are related. The most important letters of this inscription, as you move from right to left, if you look at the fourth letter and the sixth letter, they look like a

triangle. Do you see that? That triangle shape, if you can remember your math growing up, is a letter. It's the letter Delta or D, and those last three letters form the word David. Of the first three letters, the third one looks like a T because it's the last letter of the Hebrew word *beth*, house of David. This is the only mention of the house of David on inscription that's been found in the ground outside of the Bible. The house of David is a real dynasty. The King who is to come from the house of David is a real king. Zechariah believed this, expected this, and he praised God that the horn of salvation has been raised up as God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old. Zechariah was a priest. He was familiar with the hope of Israel, this hope that was rooted in the prophetic promises that God had made.

What did the Lord speak to us through his prophets? We mentioned earlier in this series the word given through Nathan the prophet to David that God would raise up a descendant of David who would come forth from his body, that God would establish His Kingdom, and that his house would be established forever. The prophets of Israel speak repeatedly about the coming of this descendant of David. His rule is described in a way that thrills our hearts. Of all the passages that one could choose to describe the coming advent of the Son of David, and there are literally dozens—passages like Jeremiah 23, Ezekiel 37, Amos 9—I want us to concentrate on just one. Isaiah 11:1-10 gives us the job description of the Son of David. Let me tell you, it's electrifying. Part of my role as senior pastor is that I get to give input to writing the job descriptions of our staff, and it's always a joy to think of how God will use someone. We been finalizing the draft of the job description for the new worship pastor, and it's always a joy. But this job description of the Son of David is absolutely thrilling, so look with me at what this King, this miraculous King, will do and who He will be. Let's look together at the outcome of His reign. Isaiah 11:1 begins with this image:

"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit."

Jesse is David's father. The image of a stump is of a tree that has been cut down, and Isaiah lived at the time the northern kingdom was taken away into exile to Syria. Isaiah saw that the sin of the nation would ultimately cause them to be driven out of the land, that they would be in a sense cut down, and that the last Davidic King would be taken into exile. Isaiah, by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, sees beyond this exile that something extraordinary happens from this stump—that a shoot bursts forth from this cut down tree, and it grows up and it shoots branches, and it becomes fruit-bearing. This royal image from the line of Jesse in Isaiah 11:2, this branch coming forth will be filled with the Spirit:

“And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.”

Isaiah 11:3 tells us this Davidic King will be filled with the Spirit:

“And His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what His ears hear,”

He will not be influenced by the perceptions of man. In Isaiah 11:4, this King:

“but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall kill the wicked.”

This coming Davidic king will be from the line of Jesse. He will be filled with the Spirit; He will delight in the Lord; He will judge in righteousness; He will utterly destroy the wicked. Isaiah 11:5 says that He will be clothed in righteousness:

“Righteousness shall be the belt of His waist, and faithfulness the belt of His loins.”

The advent of this King will bring about the transformation of the world, as the imagery continues, and Isaiah uses language that presses the limits of human understanding to describe that the conflict and violence that fills this world will be brought to an end. He describes this with animals being at peace with each other and people. In Isaiah 11:9, he climaxes by saying:

“They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

The arrival of the Son of David, who is filled with the Spirit, will banish wickedness from the earth. He will judge in righteousness, violence will come to an end, and the knowledge of God will fill the earth. This is no ordinary King, and when He has done that, the climax of this poem in Isaiah 11:10 says:

“In that day the Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of Him shall the nations inquire, and His resting place shall be glorious.”

This Son of David will stand, and the nations of the world will stream to Him. That's a

miraculous King; that's an extraordinary job description. It's a promise that God made to His people; it's a promise whose realization brings about God's sovereign intentions from the very beginning and the longing for this King is attested in Scripture beyond the close of the Old Testament, in the intertestamental period, and right up until the time of Zechariah's prophecy. Take for example Psalm 89, which is a Psalm written by Ethan the Ezrahite, someone we don't usually talk about that much. We think of David as the writer of most of the Psalms, but some of the Psalms are written by others. This Psalm, Psalm 89, sings of the steadfast love of the Lord forever, and this steadfast love calls to mind the promise of God to David. In Psalm 89:34-35, he says of the Lord:

"I will not violate My covenant or alter the word that went forth from My lips. Once for all I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, His throne as long as the sun before Me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies."

Ethan the Ezrahite knows of God's enduring promise, and yet he lives and writes and sings in a moment when this has not yet been realized, and in Psalm 89:49, this Psalm ends with a prayer:

"Lord, where is Your steadfast love of old, which by Your faithfulness You swore to David?"

There's a longing for the advent of this King. Do you long for the arrival of the Ruler who will rule the world in righteousness, who will decide every case, every situation, with equity? Do you long for a ruler who will be filled with the Spirit of the living God and will take such delight in the Lord that the result of the advent of His reign will proliferate a knowledge of God in the earth? Do you long for the arrival of a King who will bring violence to an end? Do you long for the advent of the King whose reign will not be limited by any geographic barriers, but whose reign and whose righteousness is so desirable and attractive that the nations of the world gladly stream to Him? God taught His people to long for the arrival of such a Ruler, because He was bringing one.

The intertestamental period does not give us canonical Scripture, but we have many texts, songs, prayers, hymns—sometimes I liken it to a Christian bookstore of antiquity. Often it can be thrilling to see the prayers and new songs that people writing. We have actually one collection of such psalms or hymns or prayers from the intertestamental period, and they are called the *Psalms of Solomon*. There are 18 of them. It would be like a double-boxed CD set. We don't have the music for these, but we do have the lyrics, and these are prayers that come from the first century BC, right before Zechariah's prayer and praise. These songs are filled with a longing for the arrival of the real King of Glory. The Psalms of Solomon 17:1 begins:

"Lord, you yourself are our king forever hereafter, for in you, o God, does our soul boast."

The prayer continues in Psalms of Solomon 17:4-5a:

“Lord, you chose David as the king over Israel, and you swore to him regarding his descendants forever so that his kingdom would not fail before you. But because of our sins, sinners rose up against us, they attacked us and expelled us.”

The song continues that the world itself is groaning, that creation itself is languishing, and then the psalm takes a decisive turn with a prayer that the Lord would raise up this promised King and the nations would stream to Him and creation itself would be renewed. This King is identified explicitly in Psalms of Solomon 17:32:

“And he will be a righteous king over them, taught by God. There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all will be holy, and their king will be the Lord Messiah.”

God taught His people, spoke to them through the prophets. They hope for this in the Psalms, pray for this in the intertestamental period. The last piece of evidence I want to set before you that Zechariah would have known extremely well is the prayer that is the most common prayer in the synagogue liturgy. The most common prayer is prayed three times a day, a thousand times a year. It is sometimes called the Amidah Prayer, or standing prayer. Other people call it the Prayer of Eighteen Benedictions. It is like the Lord's Prayer in the first century. Zechariah would have known it by heart. The 15th paragraph of this prayer is a prayer for the advent of this real King:

“May You quickly make flourish the offspring of David, Your servant,
and may his horn be exalted in Your salvation,
for we have hoped for Your salvation all day.
Blessed are You, O Lord, who makes the horn of salvation flourish.”

God wove this expectation into the hearts of His people, and the overwhelming testimony of the New Testament is that these prayers have been answered in the birth of Jesus, our miraculous King.

We see in Zechariah's praise in Luke 1:68-71:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has revisited and redeemed His people and has raised up a horn of salvation in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old that we should be saved from our enemies.”

Don't overly spiritualized that. The advent of the real King will rescue you from enemies that you face, ones that you can see, and ones that you cannot; ones that are around you on the outside, and ones that are attacking you on the inside. The arrival of this King will rescue us, bring salvation from our enemies. He will arrive to show mercy, promise to our fathers, and for

God to remember His covenant. The arrival of this miraculous King means that God fulfills the old, the promise that He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us. Zechariah does not even finish this phrase, but the grant that he has in view is the grant that God declares in Genesis 22:16-18 when the Lord says:

“By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed because you have obeyed My voice.”

This is an astonishing statement. God promises to Abraham this blessing: descendants like the stars; a place to worship; and the destruction of his enemies. Don't minimize this feature of Christ's Kingship.

Zechariah's song ends about Christ in Luke 1:74-75 saying:

“. . .that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.”

God's promise of a miraculous King has been realized in Jesus Christ. The New Testament witness aims to persuade you that God's promise has been kept, that the job description of the Son of David has been accomplished and is being carried out and extended this very day—a miraculous King.

Let's just look briefly at how the New Testament presents to us that Jesus fulfills this awesome and soul-stirring hope. Remember Isaiah 11:1:

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.”

The first sentence of the New Testament, Matthew 1:1, tells us that this has happened in the birth of Christ:

“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham.”

That is the first thing we learn about Him. Isaiah had said that the Spirit of the Lord would rest upon the Davidic King. At the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, He came to Nazareth where he had been brought up. He went to the synagogue and stood up to read, and the scroll of Isaiah was given to Him. He unrolled the scroll and selected the place where were written these words from Isaiah, words that Luke records in Luke 4:18-19:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to

the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

He rolled that scroll up and looked at the gathered people and said in Luke 4:21:

"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Isaiah 11:3-5 says about the Davidic King:

"He shall not judge by what His eyes see, or decide disputes by what His ears hear, but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His waist, and faithfulness the belt of His loins."

He will judge rightly, and you know He will judge rightly by deciding in favor of the meek and the humble.

Jesus' first sermon in the New Testament, the Sermon on the Mount, begins with a set of blessings. Each of these blessings is astonishing. They really are. The Beatitudes, we call them *The Blessings*. They are one of my favorite portions of Scripture to meditate on when I'm running, to soak in these words. In one of those blessings, Jesus says: "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." Who is Jesus that He just gave the earth away? He just decided in favor of the meek. Jesus' miracles worked righteousness for the outcast, the oppressed, and the afflicted. So many times in the gospel narratives, these actions are linked with the Son of David. When Jesus passed by and two blind men followed, they cried aloud: "Have mercy on us, Son of David," and Jesus healed them. A demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus. He healed this man, and all the people were amazed. They asked: "Could this possibly be the Son of David, because He just destroyed the enemy of our souls right before our very eyes? Maybe that's the Son of David, because He is supposed to be a victorious King who slays the wicked with a word." They came up to Jericho, His disciples with Him, and a great crowd of people. Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the road, and when he heard it was Jesus, he cried out and said: "Jesus, the Son of David, have mercy on me," and Jesus made him well.

The New Testament witness of the ultimate confrontation with evil takes place in Jesus' final week. Remember, Isaiah 11 said that He would strike the earth of the rod of His mouth, with His breath; with the breath of His lips, He will kill the wicked, and in this ultimate confrontation takes place in Holy Week. Jesus, as He enters the city of Jerusalem, is heralded by the crowd who cry out to Him: "Hosanna to the Son of David. Save us, Son of David." Jesus, our miraculous King, does conquer evil, but He does not triumph over our enemies through sophisticated

technology. He does not triumph over our enemies with a well-funded defense budget. Technology always needs to be updated; weaponry can always be defeated by superior weaponry; military tactics change daily; the demands of soldiers are different in every campaign, but Jesus, the miraculous King, comes up to Jerusalem and confronts evil and defeats it. He defeats it on the cross. We read in Matthew 27:28-31:

“And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they spit on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe and put His own clothes on Him and led him away to crucify Him.”

We recall Nathan's oracle to David in 2 Samuel 7:13-15, a thousand years before, concerning David's Son:

“He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. I will be to Him a father, and He shall be to Me a son. When He commits iniquity, I will discipline Him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but My steadfast love will not depart from Him.”

Some of you are wondering: But Jesus doesn't commit any sin, and that is true, and yet the New Testament witness is that our sin is placed upon Him, and Jesus, the miraculous King, conquers evil. He conquers evil by absorbing the righteous wrath of God against the sin of the world, and when the heavens are pulled back for us in Revelation 5, we see the celebration, the celebration that echoes for eternity. It's in praise of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered! He is victorious! Oh how we underestimate the victory of this Son of David. The angels tell John in Revelation 5:5:

“Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered.”

His triumph is evident in the lyrics of the new song praising Him in Revelation 5:9-10:

“Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

The advent of Jesus, the Son of David, is of a miraculous King who is a real King, who banishes wickedness from the earth, who reclaims lives captured and held hostage by the enemy of our souls. His advent stands as a victory sign against all evil, and His arrival brings about the renewal of the world. Remember Isaiah's promise that the advent of the Son of David would bring about a transformation of the world, that violence would be steadily eliminated, and that the Son of

David, the Root of Jesse, would stand triumphant as a signal or banner for all peoples, and they would stream to Him.

This stands behind Jesus' statement to His disciples in Matthew 28. After His death and resurrection, Jesus stood on the mountain in Galilee before them, and when they saw Him, they worshiped Him. He said to them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me." Oh, what a statement! I can't even conceive of what all authority looks like, all authority on heaven and on earth. All of it, given to Him! And Jesus, our miraculous, victorious King, then sends us out to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey. There's the transformation, and Jesus says in Matthew 28:20:

"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Jesus, our miraculous King, has triumphed. Do you believe that? We need to recover the true nature of His Kingship. Some of us have too small a picture of Jesus; some of us have just a sentimental version. We need to recover this full picture of Scripture of Jesus, our miraculous, victorious King.

Meditating on this reality this week has challenged my own heart in three ways, and I want to end by challenging you in the same directions: three Rs. The first one is to **rejoice**, to rejoice for the right reasons. Isaiah 12 follows Isaiah 11, and Isaiah 12, reflecting on the arrival of the Son of David, is one of most joyful portions of the Old Testament. It is an outburst of rejoicing. Isaiah 12:1-3:

"I will give thanks to You, O LORD, for though You were angry with me, Your anger turned away, that You might comfort me. 'Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation.' With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

If your heart, if your joy is dry this morning, I want to point you to this victorious, miraculous King and draw fresh water from the reality of His Person to fuel and sustain your joy.

Secondly, I want to invite you to **receive** the earth's miraculous King. I love the hymns of Isaac Watts. Isaac Watts, the English hymn writer, was the first one to ever write songs in English. Aren't you glad? What a blessing. Not only did Isaac Watts write songs in English, but he was the first to write songs whose lyrics were taken from outside of the Psalms, whose lyrics were based on the truth of who Christ is. One of his songs that we sing at this time of year is *Joy to the World*. Listen to the royal imagery.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room
And heaven and nature sing.
Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy.
No more let sins and sorrows grow
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

I love the last stanza:

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness
And wonders of His love.

Do you believe that? Receive this miraculous King this morning if you have never done so before.

Thirdly, and finally, I challenge you to **reclaim** the earth in His name. The danger at the end of the day from this false separation of earthly and heavenly, or political and spiritual, is that we end up saying that the heavenly and the spiritual matter, but the earthly doesn't. When we reject this false dichotomy, this anachronistic distinction, then we can be empowered to reclaim the earth wherever He has placed us. This means missions; it means discipleship; it means that Christians should be leaders in social action in the world. One of my former mentors, a former pastor of this church, said to me once, anecdotally: "Wherever Christianity has spread, the rights of the poor, women, and the vulnerable have gone up." That is true. One of the most poignant advent conversations I have had was with a UC student. He was a very bright young man of Jewish ancestry, but not practicing, not really believing much of anything, hoping in science, trusting in his intellect. As we talked about the meaning of Christmas, I kept trying to point him towards Christ. Though he doesn't attend the synagogue, though he doesn't read the Bible regularly, growing up in that environment, he had picked up enough to know this. He said: "You know what? I know from our Scriptures that when the Son of David comes, the earth is going to be changed, that His rule will be in righteousness, and that all nations will come to worship Him." I replied with all due humility, "I believe that's happening."

Two billion people this morning will gather around the world to worship Jesus, the Son of David, Our victorious King, and wherever His reign extends, violence goes down and righteousness goes up. You and I are called to join Him as He reclaims all of this world that He has made and to fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord like the waters cover the sea. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, You are our victorious King, and Lord, we ask Your forgiveness this morning where we have undervalued your Kingship, where we have imagined that it's for another time, another place, where we have imagined that it's for another sphere. Lord, I pray this morning for those who are in darkness that You might arise, Son of righteousness, and bring light. Lord, I pray for those who are bound, that You, mighty Son of David, would set them free. I pray for those here this morning who are wearied by their circumstances, that Jesus, a miraculous King, might give fresh water from the wells of salvation. I pray for those who are overwhelmed and paralyzed and fearful by the needs of this world, that You would breathe courage, that You would freshly fill us by the Holy Spirit, that we might follow You, our victorious Champion, our conquering King who is making all things new.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.