

Introduction

The fact that human life is sacred is upheld in a number of ways in the Scripture. Certainly we see it in Genesis 1 as God takes counsel with himself to create man in his own image and grant to him dominion over every living thing that moves on the earth. In Genesis 9 the connection between sanctity and being made in the image of God appears again. The Lord declares that he will require a reckoning from man and beast for the lifeblood of a human. The Lord declares, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” This emphasis is evident in the Ten Commandments where the Lord forbids murder. And then there is Psalm 139 which beautifully and artfully portrays the fearful and wonderful manner in which God has knitted together every single human being, even in their mother’s wombs. In addition the sacred nature of human life is born out in the Scripture by the principle of loving one’s neighbor as oneself.

And yet, the sanctity of human life is still further emphasized by the principle of justice. From the viewpoint of God as expressed in the Bible, justice—what we could call righteous judging or godly governing—carries with it inherently an appreciation for the sanctity of human life. Unquestionably God values human life. Justice in the eyes of the Creator therefore involves the protection and preservation of such life. This fact is expressed back in Genesis 9. But the value of human life is not only evident in terms of a prohibition against and punishment for murder. It is also evident in God’s design for how human beings are to live. God’s design for human life is for flourishing and fullness. It is the sinfulness of man himself that has thwarted that intention. If humanity would follow God’s commands, life would be valued. The fact that human life is so cheap in our day, our generation, and our nation is a testament to the fact that as a society we have turned our backs against God’s word and refuse to follow God’s commands.

What I am asserting here becomes quite clear as we turn in the Bible to Psalm 72. This psalm is the prayer of David for his royal son Solomon. He

is seeking that his royal son who is to become king in his place be enabled to govern in the wisdom and righteousness of God. And you will see what that looks like. And you will see the outcome of such governing. And it speaks to the conditions in which we find ourselves in 2019 in the United States of America.

[Read Text; Pray]

David prays here that God grant his justice and righteousness so that David's son would govern in the way of the Lord. Notice verses 1-2. "Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son. May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!" The act of judging in this context speaks of governing, ruling, and leading the people. This was the work of the judges whom God raised up prior to the establishment of the monarchy in Israel. The judges judged the people not as we think of judges in a courtroom but as a king establishing and enforcing a righteous standard for his people. As we look at this Psalm we see several facets of this righteous rule.

I. A Blessed Rule

We observe in the psalm a connection between governing in this way and blessing. Look at verse 3. (Read) As God's righteousness is exalted by this kind of rule, the land and its people will experience prosperity. Then notice in verse 5 that the people living under this kind of rule fear God throughout all generations. Look at verse 6. (Read) When the king rules according to the righteousness of God, he is like a refreshing rain falling on dry parched ground. The dry grass was mown and there were the exposed roots languishing in parched ground, longing for refreshing rains. David's longing for his son to govern according to godliness will make him a refreshment for his people—and even more, that they will flourish. Look at verse 7. "In his days may the righteous flourish, and peace abound." The world claims to want peace. David realizes that peace is known when government is done God's way. Further expression of blessing appears in verse 16. "May there be abundance of grain in the land; on the tops of the mountains may it wave; may its fruit be like Lebanon; and may people blossom in the cities." There is flourishing, abundance, and beauty. David prays in verse 17b, "May people be blessed in [this king]."

II. An Extended Rule

So David asks God that his son govern according to God's righteousness and he associates prayers for blessing the people with a king who governs that way. He also prays for an extended rule of this king. He asks that it be extended in terms of time. Verse 15 pleads, "Long may he live." Verse 17a says, "Let his name endure forever and his fame as long as the sun!" But he also asks that his rule be extended in terms of territory. Verse 8 appeals for dominion from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth. Verse 9 focuses on desert tribes and enemies. Verse 10 mentions kings of Tarshish and the coastlands as well as the kings of Sheba and Seba. Verse 11 looks for all kings everywhere to fall down before this one who governs with God's righteousness.

III. A Glorious Rule

And at the end of the psalm we notice the result of this king's rule. He rules in the righteousness and justice of God. He benefits and blesses the people. They fear the Lord. He conquers his enemies and subjects them to his rule. And as a result, the Lord, the God of Israel is praised. Look at the final two verses of the psalm. Here is where it culminates: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed is his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen!"

IV. An Ideal Rule

This psalm paints for us a portrait of the ideal king. This is the king for which the world should long. He is the king for the ages, the king of all kings. He is the king who blesses the people, under whose rule the people flourish and blossom and experience peace and abundance and have no lack and who forever fear and give glory and honor to the name of the Lord God. Well does David pray that his son might be this kind of king. Well does he say, "Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son!" But we should still be interested to know what if any details there might be concerning this kind of rule, this kind of governing. Are there any hallmarks of this administration? What are the priorities of this administration in terms of how it governs the people? What are the principles of justice that guide the king? And as we look carefully at this psalm, we can conclude that there most certainly are specific attributes of

divine justice that stand out. We definitely see the chief concerns in the heart of the godly king. I want to show you that there are two in particular. A careful look at this psalm puts a spotlight on two particular conspicuous marks of governing according to divine righteousness and justice. If a king wants to rule the way God does, these two characteristics define what he does. Are you ready?

A. First, he will Deliver the Destitute.

Destitute is the one word I have chosen to represent a number of different terms by which David points to those the godly king defends. Verse 4 says, "May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the children of the needy." Jump down to verses 12-14: "He delivers the needy when he calls, the poor and him who has no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life, and precious is their blood in his sight."

Here are five action words that describe the justice of God in a king. Defend. Deliver. Pity. Save. Redeem. In each case there is a threat to a vulnerable person—weak, needy, poor, the children of the needy, and the helpless (him who has no helper). And here is the reason that he delivers and pities and redeems and saves and defends—their blood is precious in his sight. That is to say he cares about the weak. He regards the needy. He is merciful concerning the lives of the disadvantaged.

When predator cats like lions, cheetahs, and tigers are looking for a meal, there are always stragglers in a herd of prey. Those stragglers are the most likely to be next on the predator's menu. They don't run as fast as the rest of the herd. They are weaker. Maybe they aren't quite as clever as the rest. They are vulnerable. They are not the fittest. And they are most likely to get taken out. Such is not supposed to be the case among humans. God cares for the vulnerable. Their blood is precious to him. Human beings should not take advantage of the weak, the needy, the poor, but should guard them. And that is what the king who governs according to divine justice does. He defends, delivers, redeems, and saves the vulnerable and him who has no helper from oppression and from violence. And I hope you see that the children of the needy get specific mention in the psalm. He

gives deliverance to the children of the needy. The godly king delivers the destitute.

B. And second he Defeats the Dominator.

Verse 4 puts it this way: "He crushes the oppressor." And verse 14 declares he delivers the lives of the needy from oppression and violence." The reason there is oppression and violence in the world is because there are oppressive and violent people. Like a stalking lion they target the vulnerable and squeeze life out of them for themselves. But God's law demands love for one's neighbor. And where love is the law, consideration is given for the weak and the needy and the helpless and the poor.

Now, do you see the sanctity of human life being born out here? It is clear and emphatic. To Noah God prescribed judgment for the human being who takes the life of another human being. So too the king who governs according to divine righteousness protects human life by crushing the oppressor. He delivers the oppressed and crushes the oppressor. He delivers the destitute and defeats the dominator. He lifts up the humble and opposes the proud. This reality is at the heart of the righteous administration of God in the world. It comes across with such emphasis here in this prayer that it simply must be taken seriously. And its application reaches to countless kinds of grotesque situations and circumstances rampant in the world today. Everywhere the more powerful takes advantage of the weaker, everywhere the stronger exploits the needy, these standards are compromised. In this fallen world they are compromised everywhere, all the time. You have got it in murder, abuse of all kinds, in theft, in drug trafficking, in human trafficking, and countless other ways in which strong people take advantage of those more vulnerable. And nowhere is this compromise of the protection of the weak more apparent than in the act of murdering babies in the womb.

The lives of the weak and needy are precious in the sight of the godly ruler. He gives deliverance to the children of the needy. But throughout the world and right here in the United States of America, the justice and righteousness of God are despised and rejected. Human life is cheap. The murder of the weakest and most vulnerable and most dependent human

beings is a testament that this society is a violent oppressor and a dominator.

The abortion industry is a collection of oppressors. It includes the parents who murder their children as well as the doctors and nurses who perform the murder and the researchers and engineers who use the parts and the politicians who join hands with them, all of whom stand to profit or be spared personal trouble by squeezing the life out of a helpless unborn child.

It is apparent from this psalm that a government, and those who join with it, which refuses to protect the "least of these" which refuses to give deliverance to the children of the needy puts itself directly at odds with God. And speaking of the responsibility to "deliver the children of the needy," it is noteworthy that in the United States of America 75% of unborn child murders occur in the wombs of women classified as low income or poor. In America the government has bowed out of protecting the unborn. It has in fact joined forces with the largest killer of unborn babies in the land, Planned Parenthood. In fact our government has become so corrupt that while it refuses to defend the cause of the weak, it has chosen to defend the cause of the perverted and lawless. It has locked arms with those who boldly dare to identify themselves with the sin of pride. And these are waging war against people who humbly, and in accord with the word of God, cannot affirm their deviancy. Peace is shattered and material prosperity is a short-lived counterfeit for the real blessing God offers.

It is staggering to ponder the blatant way in which the world and our own country have set themselves in opposition to God. It is a fearful thought to consider how the world has entrenched itself as a violent oppressor. It will be crushed by God, who delivers the poor and destitute and smashes the proud dominator of human beings.

Conclusion

So how shall we respond this morning?

1. We should lament and confess the sad state of the land in which we live. It is about time for the annual State of the Union address from our President. And it is of little matter what can be said about our condition that is good. The evil of child murder being condoned in this land is a

corrupting reality that scandalizes the false belief that we are a great country. America is not a nation whose god is the Lord. It is a nation whose enemy is the Lord. Our land is in need of repentance and contrition. It is in need of Christians who will pray and confess and plead that God would bring revival.

2. We should be praying relentlessly for our governmental leaders. Paul instructs Timothy that we should pray for kings and those in authority that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. After all that is what this psalm itself is. Like David we should pray that our government would rule by the justice and righteousness of God and that they would defend the cause of the weak and helpless rather than squeezing the life out of them.

3. We should stand up. Call government and people who support this godlessness to account before God. We should support political action and candidates who will work to end the exploitation of the weak. Do not idolize America, but be responsible citizens as any Christian in any nation of the world must be. Determine to speak for these who cannot. Lift up your voice whenever you can. Write letters to the editor. Place posts on social media. Go to a clinic and speak to parents who are considering murdering their children.

4. We should step up. HB made mention in that video we watched earlier of the need for being pro-life after birth as well as before. We can support agencies which promote adoption and help unwed mothers in difficult circumstances. One such local agency is Evangelical Child and Family Agency.

5. We should speak up. We need to be reminded of the importance and renew our intent to spread the gospel. The gospel is the only hope for a land like ours. It proclaims Christ Jesus as Savior of sinners—Savior and forgiver even of those who have murdered babies, who are willing to confess their sins and trust in him. Christ Jesus is also a transformer of hearts. Thwarting the atrocity of abortion is a good thing and a right thing. But the fundamental need for our generation is forgiveness and reconciliation with God.

6. Finally, we should look up. Long for and look for and pray for the king that epitomizes David's prayer. We can be encouraged and energized in the midst of this present darkness as we anticipate the rule of this kind of king. He will be a ruler that rules with divine justice and divine righteousness. He will be a king who brings refreshing and flourishing. He will be a king whose nation submits to his rule out reverence and awe and joy. His citizens will blossom in the cities like the grass of the field. He will deliver the needy and the helpless and save the weak. He will redeem them from oppression and violence. He will crush the oppressor and defeat the dominator. His enemies will lick the dust. Through him peace will abound till the moon be no more. His dominion will be from sea to sea, to the ends of the earth. His name will endure forever and his fame as long as the sun. People will be blessed in him and all nations will call him blessed. And because of him praise to God will redound. The people will say "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory!"

You know who this king is. He is the king who gave himself to deliver the weak and helpless, the poor and needy. He is the one who came to seek and save the lost. He is the one who did not come for those who consider themselves healthy but for those who know themselves to be sick sinners. He is the one who died for them. He is the great Shepherd of helpless and vulnerable sheep. He is the great deliverer who has invaded the realm of the evil one to bring out those under his violent oppression. After making purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. To him the Father said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." And the day is coming soon when the kingdom of the world will have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign over all forever and ever. In this One has God blessed his people and all to the praise of his glory.

So as we pray and speak and work and languish, let us take joy in Jesus who has overcome and whose day as ruling reigning king is imminent. Are you ready for his coming?