



THE COMING KING

Advent Reflective Guide



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INTRODUCTION

Reading the Psalms

A “psalm” is “a sacred song or poem used in worship. In the New Testament, Psalms is one of the most quoted Old Testament books. Within *The Case for Psalms*, N.T. Wright points out that the “Psalms were the hymnbook that Jesus and His first followers would have known by heart,” and “Jesus himself quoted and referred to the Psalms in the manner of someone who had been accustomed to praying and pondering them from His earliest days.” The Psalms cover the entire range of human emotion. They describe intense feelings of joy, fear, sadness, and anger. It is important to remember that the Psalms are not merely ancient poems. As a part of God’s inspired Word, they are also transformative and powerful, and the modern reader should not neglect them. N.T. Wright urges us to “Sing these songs, and they will renew you from head to toe, from heart to mind. Pray these poems, and they will sustain you on the long, hard but exhilarating road of Christian discipleship.”

Reflect During Advent

Much like the conversations in Psalms, we pray this guide will lead you to have honest conversations with God and reflect on the ideas of hope, peace, joy, love, and worship in light of this Advent season. Within this guide, you’ll find sections of scripture to read, questions to discuss and answer, various prayers and space to write your own prayers, as well as music and art to reflect upon. We specifically chose ancient Christian art, prayers, and classic Christmas hymns and carols to stir up the idea that these concepts have been thought about, prayed over, and have been the basis of worship through art, music, and language for thousands of years. Spend time reflecting on each section as you walk through the five ideas outlined in this guide. If you are an artist, consider creating your own piece of art. If you’re a musician or love connecting with the Lord through music, write a new song or create a playlist to share. If you are a writer or reader, what is God saying to you? Write it down. Do these things as a response to what the Lord is speaking and teaching you through this guide.

We want to see and hear how God moves as you use this reflective guide. Share your story, music, art, and words with us. Tag us on Facebook and Instagram - @anchorchurchonline

PRAYER

Reflect & Pray

Before you begin using this guide, take some time to ponder what Advent and Christmas mean to you. What memories, thoughts, emotions, and questions come to mind? Spend the next 10 to 15 minutes processing those thoughts with the Lord. Ask him to begin revealing truths to you.

Below, write a prayer or something you'd like the Lord to reveal to you through this guide.

After completing this guide, return to this page, reflect, and write down how the Lord worked through your prayer, questions, or revealed something to you. Share and celebrate these things with someone in your life.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR HOPE.

PSALM 80

For the choir director: A psalm of Asaph, to be sung to the tune "Lilies of the Covenant."

1 Please listen, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph's descendants like a flock.

O God, enthroned above the cherubim,
display your radiant glory

2 to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh.
Show us your mighty power.
Come to rescue us!

3 Turn us again to yourself, O God.
Make your face shine down upon us.
Only then will we be saved.

4 O Lord God of Heaven's Armies,
how long will you be angry with our prayers?

5 You have fed us with sorrow
and made us drink tears by the bucketful.

6 You have made us the scorn of neighboring nations. Our enemies treat us as a joke.

7 Turn us again to yourself, O God of Heaven's Armies. Make your face shine down upon us.
Only then will we be saved.

8 You brought us from Egypt like a grapevine;
you drove away the pagan nations and transplanted us into your land.

9 You cleared the ground for us,
and we took root and filled the land.

10 Our shade covered the mountains;
our branches covered the mighty cedars.

11 We spread our branches west to the Mediterranean Sea;
our shoots spread east to the Euphrates River.

12 But now, why have you broken down our walls
so that all who pass by may steal our fruit?

13 The wild boar from the forest devours it,
and the wild animals feed on it.

14 Come back, we beg you, O God of Heaven's Armies. Look down from heaven and see our plight. Take care of this grapevine

15 that you yourself have planted,
this son you have raised for yourself.

16 For we are chopped up and burned by our enemies. May they perish at the sight of your frown.

17 Strengthen the man you love,
the son of your choice.

18 Then we will never abandon you again.
Revive us so we can call on your name once more.

19 Turn us again to yourself, O Lord God of Heaven's Armies. Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR HOPE.

REFLECTION

John Piper defines biblical hope as a confident expectation and desire for something good in the future. This is different from the way in which many people use the term “hope” today. Often, when people say “hope” they mean something like “wishful thinking.” For the Christian, hope is based on confidence and focused on biblical truth.

In 2018, in Thailand, a young man turned 17. His parents waited for him to come home to celebrate with birthday cake and presents, but he didn't come home that evening. He, his soccer team, and coach had decided to explore the Tham Luang cave and found themselves trapped by cave floods. Their bikes were soon discovered outside the cave, and a rescue began, though no one was sure if they were still alive. Rescuer Arpakorn Yuukongkaew told reporters, “We had a little bit of hope... that's all we had to work with.” Things looked grim for the next seven days while the rescue was planned and executed. Then, “Hope became reality,” the head of the Thai Navy Seals declared. All 13 people were found and rescued. In a year like 2020, we need hope to become a reality for us, too.

In order to have a real and lasting hope, we don't need another self-help plan - we need a Savior. Psalm 80 recognizes that any real hope has to be found in God himself. The psalmist is looking and longing for God to return to his people - to look on them with favor rather than judgment. He cries again and again for restoration, which he knows will come when the King comes again and dwells with his people.

In the midst of this year, with all its trials, these same facts are still true. God's goodness, love, grace, and strength have not changed. His actions toward us are more than just what we may have seen and felt over the course of the last 12 months. As we celebrate Christmas we might be disappointed with how our celebrations have changed or been cancelled, we might be bummed about the year gone by, or we may grieve lost friends and family. But we can't succumb to the temptation to give up hope. Christmas reminds us that God's actions in history are more than just what we're experiencing in our immediate surroundings: his love for us and powerful works on our behalf in Jesus are beyond dispute. That's what Psalm 80 is all about - God's promise that, though we may feel trapped and drowning in our broken world, our rescue is certain because our King has come and will return again.

The end of the year can be full of disappointment as we look back and see ways in which we've failed this year - through our own faults or others. Paul points to our true hope: not that we'll be better next year, but that our hope is in Christ and he will never fail. “And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” (Phil 1:6). In our day, we can look back to Jesus and see the hope the psalmist was waiting for. We too can cry out with the same longing that he records in Psalm 80. Jesus offers hope to all who remember what he has done for us and to all who would come to Him by faith. Jesus rescues, restores, and gives life to the hopeless.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR HOPE.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What are you hoping for this Christmas? Where are you currently looking for hope? Have your hopes for the future changed this year? If so, why?

Are you hopeful for your own future? Are you hopeful for our world? Why? If not, do you want to have hope?

What specific hopes do the events of Christmas give us for the future? Are those hopes purely "spiritual," or are there things we can look forward to in the "real" world?

Do you have a sense of longing for the return of Christ? Is that longing part of your celebration of Advent?

Am I leading others to find hope in Jesus? How might I be able to encourage someone else to find hope in Jesus this week?

Now that you've spent some time pondering and answering the above questions, who can you talk through these ideas with? Who can you encourage and share hope with?

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR HOPE.



The Good Shepherd. Artist Unknown.

First Half of the 5th Century.

Original image located in Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Italy.

Public Domain.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR HOPE.

COME THOU LONG EXPECTED JESUS

(14)

H Y M N X.

I.

COME Thou long-expected JESUS,
 Born to set thy People free,
 From our Fears and Sins relieve us,
 Let us find our Rest in Thee :
Israel's Strength and Consolation,
 Hope of all the Earth Thou art,
 Dear Desire of every Nation,
 Joy of every longing Heart.

II.

Born thy People to deliver,
 Born a Child and yet a King,
 Born to reign in Us for ever,
 Now thy gracious Kingdom bring ;
 By thine own eternal Spirit
 Rule in all our Hearts alone,
 By thine all-sufficient Merit
 Raise us to thy glorious Throne.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR HOPE.

PRAYER

I arise today through a mighty strength: God's power to guide me, God's might to uphold me, God's eyes to watch over me, God's ear to hear me, God's word to give me speech, God's hand to guard me, God's way to lie before me, God's shield to shelter me, God's host to secure me.

St. Brigid of Kildare, Circa 451-525

Spend some time with the Lord & write your own prayer below.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR PEACE.

PSALM 85

For the choir director: A psalm of the descendants of Korah.

1 Lord, you poured out blessings on your land!

You restored the fortunes of Israel.

2 You forgave the guilt of your people—

yes, you covered all their sins. Interlude

3 You held back your fury.

You kept back your blazing anger.

4 Now restore us again, O God of our salvation.

Put aside your anger against us once more.

5 Will you be angry with us always?

Will you prolong your wrath to all generations?

6 Won't you revive us again,

so your people can rejoice in you?

7 Show us your unfailing love, O Lord,

and grant us your salvation.

8 I listen carefully to what God the Lord is saying,
for he speaks peace to his faithful people.

But let them not return to their foolish ways.

9 Surely his salvation is near to those who fear
him, so our land will be filled with his glory.

10 Unfailing love and truth have met together.

Righteousness and peace have kissed!

11 Truth springs up from the earth,
and righteousness smiles down from heaven.

12 Yes, the Lord pours down his blessings.

Our land will yield its bountiful harvest.

13 Righteousness goes as a herald before him,
preparing the way for his steps.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR PEACE.

REFLECTION

How does Christmas restore our peace? When bad things happen, many people wish they could “turn back the clock” and restore things to the way they used to be. They discuss the “good old days” and when things were “better.” Ultimately, they’re wishing for a return to less stressful days with no conflict or tension - peace.

Typically, our idea of “peace” is the absence of conflict, but the idea of biblical peace, *shalom*, is a restoration to the way things should be. We are broken people living in a broken world, but when God talks about peace he means a restoration to the wholeness he intended when we were created. Experiencing peace does not mean that all trouble and hardship is gone. Biblical peace can be found in even the worst of circumstances and is always found in relationship God.

Christmas is about a real peace that enters into the gritty realities of our world. Take the Christmas truce during World War I, for example. Allied soldiers were surprised when, at dawn on Christmas morning in 1914, German soldiers approached the Allied trenches, unarmed, calling out “Merry Christmas!” in their native languages. It wasn’t a trick - and soon the Allied soldiers emerged from their trenches to shake hands with the Germans and exchange gifts. Some of the German troops even put up lit Christmas trees around their own trenches. German Lieutenant Kurt Zehmisch recalled, “How marvelously wonderful, yet how strange it was. The English officers felt the same way about it. Thus, Christmas... managed to bring mortal enemies together as friends for a time.” The only problem was that the truce lasted only a day, and the shooting resumed. That’s the case with most earthly peace, it’s only temporary - but Psalm 85 offers a vision of a peace with no expiration date.

In John 14, Jesus was spending time with his disciples. He knew that He would die soon and wanted to give them truth that would sustain them as they would soon struggle with the reality of His betrayal and death. Jesus said, “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me.” (John 14:1). He would go on to add, “I am leaving you with a gift - peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.” (John 14:27). Jesus reminded them of the truth they knew about God and about Him. He knew this was the key to experiencing peace.

In this Christmas season, we have the opportunity to look back on what Christ has done to give us the gift of peace of mind and heart, while looking forward to when he returns to fulfill lasting peace. Let’s first give thanks for those things, then ask that God would work in and through us to bring a measure of shalom to our families and neighborhoods - that in and through us Christ’s kingdom would continue to flourish in our midst.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR PEACE.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do you think of when you hear the word “peace?” How does that compare to the biblical idea of peace as wholeness, lack of strife, and friendship between people and God?

Which words are a better description of your “typical” Advent season? “Hostility, chaos, and emptiness,” or “harmony, order, and fullness?” How does your celebration of Advent reflect the real peace the Bible talks about?

This Psalm walks through past, present, and future as the psalmist longs for peace. How does looking to God’s acts in history restore our hopes for peace? How can we look for and work for peace in the present in a way that displays the gospel? How does looking to the future bring us peace in the present?

When you think about “peace with God,” do you usually include the idea of active fellowship with him alongside the idea of forgiveness? Does it include a longing for the end of pain and disease and death that Revelation 21 promises? How does thinking about peace in this way change how we think about and celebrate Christmas?

Now that you’ve spent some time pondering and answering the above questions, who can you talk through these ideas with? Who can you encourage and share peace with?

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR PEACE.



Christ Healing a Bleeding Woman. Artist Unknown.
4th Century. Original image located in the Catacombs of Rome.
Public Domain.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR PEACE.

SILENT NIGHT

Largo. Weihnachts-Lied. *Musik von Fr. Kar. Gruber.*

Voci.

S. Weil du kriegst! Weil du kriegst! Weil du kriegst, Jesu, du wachst, diese dich leucht' festliche Nacht, Hol die Welt im
G. Gottes Namen! O! wie laßt Lieb und Lachen göttlichen Mutes, Da sind alle die
B. Die die Welt still gemacht, Und die Himmel goldene Nacht, Und die Nacht
A. Wo sich nicht als ein Kind, Da ist die Welt ein Kind, Und alle die Welt
S. Lange schon sind wir, Und die Welt ein Kind, Und die Welt ein Kind
G. Frieden auf dem Welt, Und die Welt ein Kind, Und die Welt ein Kind

Guilarme.

S. In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht
G. In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht
B. In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht
A. In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht
S. In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht
G. In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht, In der Nacht

Tract von Joseph Mohr, Capriccio 1818.

Earliest surviving manuscript of "Silent Night," in the handwriting of the Rev. Joseph Mohr. (photo: Salzburg Museum).

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR PEACE.

PRAYER

O Lord, let your tranquility dwell among us,
and let your peace remain in our hearts.

May our voices proclaim your truth,
and may your cross be the guardian of our souls.

O Lord, make us bold, make us worthy
to offer to you pure and holy prayer;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Liturgy of the Nestorians, Fifth Century

Spend some time with the Lord & write your own prayer below.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR JOY.

PSALM 126

A song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.

1 When the Lord brought back his exiles to
Jerusalem, it was like a dream!

2 We were filled with laughter,
and we sang for joy.

And the other nations said,

“What amazing things the Lord has done for
them.”

3 Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us!
What joy!

4 Restore our fortunes, Lord,
as streams renew the desert.

5 Those who plant in tears
will harvest with shouts of joy.

6 They weep as they go to plant their seed,
but they sing as they return with the harvest.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR JOY.

REFLECTION

Some songs have a happy sounding melody. They make the listener want to sing along, tap his foot, or even dance. Other songs have a sorrowful sound. Those who hear them may pause, be still, and listen. Psalm 126 could have sounded like either type of song. It starts out as a celebration then transitions into a heartfelt desire for restoration.

The joy the psalmist is waiting for and pointing us to was for God to visit his people. That's precisely what happens at Christmas. It's seen in the angelic birth announcement: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." (Luke 2:10).

In the Dickens tale *A Christmas Carol*, the accountant Scrooge is a miserly grouch. He is jealous for every penny of his fortune, to the point that his employees' inkwells freeze in the office and his accountant Bob Cratchet has to feed his large family on pitiful wages. Sometimes it can feel that God dispenses his blessings with Scrooge-like rarity; we may even think we need to work ourselves into a state of moral perfection before God will smile on us. But Scrooge's first name reveals what we truly need: Ebenezer, a "stone of help." (1 Samuel 7:12). We not only need God to help us and restore our joy, but we need a reminder that God is filled with joy and has blessed us in the past. That's what Psalm 126 is about: a reminder of God's overwhelming joy that overflows onto his people - in no greater event than that of Christmas itself.

Part of remembering joy isn't just looking back on our own history, but remembering the fact that God himself is filled with joy. When we come to Christmas and the beginning of the gospel story, we're coming to what Paul calls the "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God." (1 Timothy 1:10-11). The word "blessed" means "happy," that is, the gospel we love and celebrate is the good news given to us by a happy God. As we come into Advent and turn to the joys of Christmas, the happiest person in the room is God.

Regardless of our current circumstances, we have great cause to give thanks to God: for creating us, for loving us, for sending his Son to and for us, for thousands of ways he has shown up in our lives in specific ways. Deliberately remembering these things and expressing gratitude for them reminds our heart of the overflowing blessings of God and awakens our joy.

Jesus wants us to have joy. He desires for us to be full of joy. Let joy overflow in your life.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR JOY.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Does Christmas fill you with joy? If not, why not? If so, what fills you with joy as you think about Christmas?

How does this psalmist express his desire for joy? How does he fuel his (and our) joy?

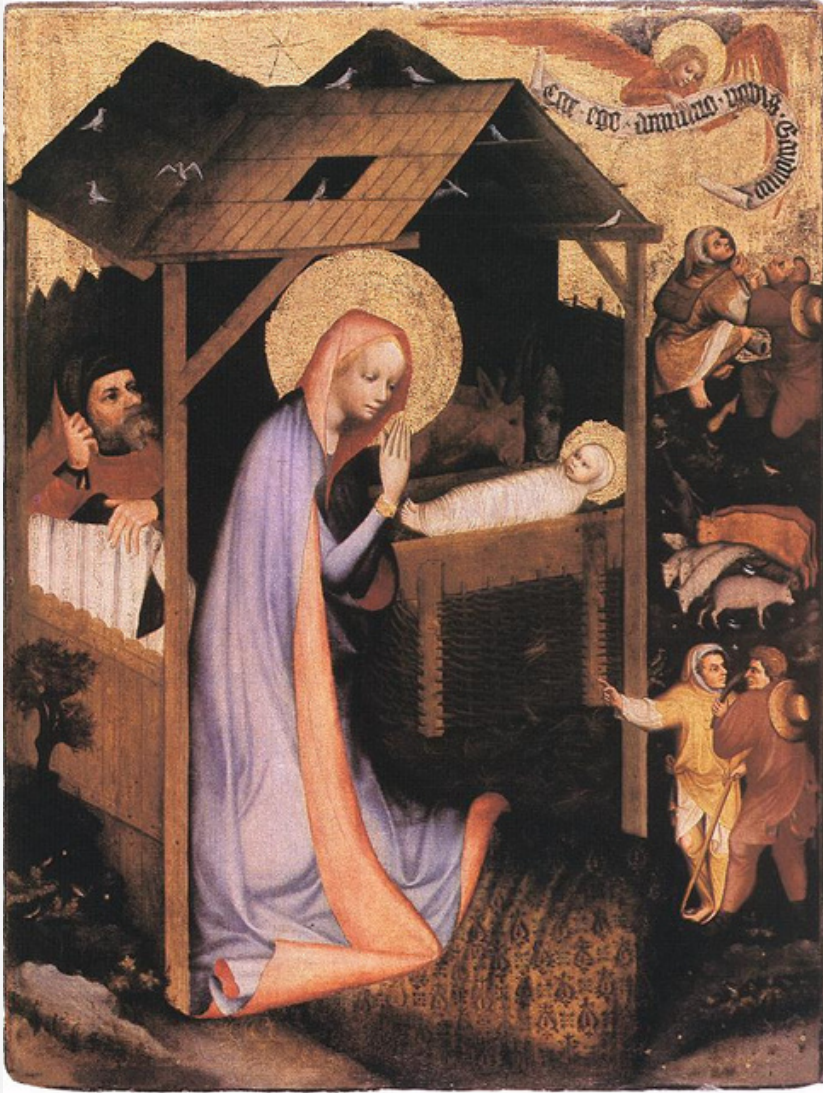
Why might it be important for Christians to be filled with joy and happiness? Do you think others would describe you as filled with joy?

Reflect on how Christmas and Easter are connected. How are joy and sorrow mingled?

How can we maintain our joy through the sorrows that many experience at Christmas? How do we keep our joy even as we grieve lost loved ones? How do we keep our joy as we deal with the disappointments of a Christmas season changed by COVID? How can we encourage others who are experiencing sorrow in this season?

Now that you've spent some time pondering and answering the above questions, who can you talk through these ideas with? Who can you encourage and share joy with?

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR JOY.



The Adoration of Jesus by Master of Trebon. Before 1380.
Original image located in Alsová Jihoceská Galeria, Hluboká. Public Domain.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR JOY.

JOY TO THE WORLD

P S A L M S. 253

III.

Let the whole Earth his Love proclaim
 With all her different Tongues ;
 And spread the Honours of his Name
 In Melody and Songs.

In these two Hymns which I have formed out of the 98th Psalm I have fully express'd what I esteem to be the first and chief Sense of the holy Scriptures, both in this and the 96th Psalm, whose Conclusions are both alike.

P S A L M XCVIII. *Second Part.*
The Messiah's Coming and Kingdom.

I.

J OY to the World ; the Lord is come ;
 Let Earth receive her King :
 Let every Heart prepare him Room,
 And Heaven and Nature sing.

II.

Joy to the Earth, The Saviour reigns ;
 Let Men their Songs employ ;
 While Fields & Floods, Rocks, Hills & Plains
 Repeat the founding Joy.

III.

No more let Sins and Sorrows grow,
 Nor Thorns infest the Ground :
 He comes to make his Blessings flow
 Far as the Curfe is found.

IV.

He rules the World with Truth and Grace,
 And makes the Nations prove
 The Glories of his Righteousness,
 And Wonders of his Love.

P S A L M

Isaac Watts, Psalms of David Imitated in the
 Language of the New Testament (1719).

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR JOY.

PRAYER

Blessed are You, O Lord, who has nourished me from my youth up, who gives food to all flesh. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness that we, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom to You be glory, honor, might, majesty, and dominion, forever and ever. Amen.

The Clementine Liturgy, First Century

Spend some time with the Lord & write your own prayer below.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR LOVE.

PSALM 89:1-4, 19-37

A psalm of Ethan the Ezrahite.

1 I will sing of the Lord's unfailing love forever!

Young and old will hear of your faithfulness.

2 Your unfailing love will last forever.

Your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens.

3 The Lord said, "I have made a covenant with David, my chosen servant.

I have sworn this oath to him:

4 'I will establish your descendants as kings forever; they will sit on your throne from now until eternity.'" Interlude

19 Long ago you spoke in a vision to your faithful people. You said, "I have raised up a warrior. I have selected him from the common people to be king.

20 I have found my servant David.

I have anointed him with my holy oil.

21 I will steady him with my hand; with my powerful arm I will make him strong.

22 His enemies will not defeat him, nor will the wicked overpower him.

23 I will beat down his adversaries before him and destroy those who hate him.

24 My faithfulness and unfailing love will be with him, and by my authority he will grow in power.

25 I will extend his rule over the sea, his dominion over the rivers.

26 And he will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.'

27 I will make him my firstborn son, the mightiest king on earth.

28 I will love him and be kind to him forever; my covenant with him will never end.

29 I will preserve an heir for him; his throne will be as endless as the days of heaven.

30 But if his descendants forsake my instructions and fail to obey my regulations,

31 if they do not obey my decrees and fail to keep my commands,

32 then I will punish their sin with the rod, and their disobedience with beating.

33 But I will never stop loving him nor fail to keep my promise to him.

34 No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said.

35 I have sworn an oath to David, and in my holiness I cannot lie:

36 His dynasty will go on forever; his kingdom will endure as the sun.

37 It will be as eternal as the moon, my faithful witness in the sky!"

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR LOVE.

REFLECTION

Many people express their love by making promises to others. Some examples could include a husband and wife exchanging wedding vows, a parent who promises to be at his daughter's musical performance, or a person who promises to pick her friend up at the airport. In each of these scenarios, one person is willing to give of himself to meet the needs of another. His intentions are expressed in the form of a promise. When a promise is not kept, a person quickly feels unloved. This feeling was also expressed within Psalm 89; yet, the psalmist turns from the thought that God may have broken his promise and declares that he is faithful. God's people must remember the character of God, trust in His plan, and believe that God does love His people. He will demonstrate His love by keeping the promises that He has made to them.

The question we're left with after reading this Psalm is "How long until this [the loving fulfillment of his promise] happens?" It already has. In Christ, God reveals the King to whom Psalm 89 refers, and Jesus reveals that the love which God has for him is the love God has for all those who are in him.

How can God seal his promises to love us forever if his justice demands we be punished for our rebellion against him? This is precisely what Christmas is about. We celebrate the incarnation of God's Son because he did not remain a baby, but grew up, took on our sin, and bore God's wrath in our place. This is how God, in his holiness, can love such unholy people. (Romans 3:24-26).

This should have a deep impact on how we love others. We're freed from trying to "prove" ourselves worthy of God's love, and instead we can simply rest in his love for us. That frees us up to love each other. We can share openly and honestly about how God has loved us through good and bad, through our successes and our failures. It's one of the purposes of gathering as a church and of gathering around tables and in small groups with our brothers and sisters in Christ - to be reminded constantly of God's love for us and given more and more reason to be confident and worship. God's unfailing love for us frees us up to love others even when they don't love us in return, even when they cause us to suffer, because we have all the love we will ever need - and more - from God himself.

Romans 8:35-39 discusses God's love for His people. It also acknowledges the fact that sometimes it may seem as though God does not love His people. They may suffer. They may feel abandoned. They may think that God has abandoned His promises. Paul asks, "Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death?" He quickly answers, "No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love."

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR LOVE.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is your description of love? What qualities does it have? How has God demonstrated his love for you in these ways?

How does God's sovereignty impact our view of God's love? Does that give us more or less confidence in his love for us?

God states as an incontrovertible fact that he loves us. How does it help us trust God's love for us to realize just how unlovable we really are - that, morally speaking... your sins have made you disgustingly ugly?

How can we reflect the love of God in our own love towards others? How should this impact how we love our spouse? Our kids? Our neighbors? Our community? Our church?

Now that you've spent some time pondering and answering the above questions, who can you talk through these ideas with? Who can you encourage and share love with?

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR LOVE.



Resurrection of Christ and Women at the Tomb by Benozzo Gozzoli and Fra Angelico. 1440-42. Original image located in Convento di San Marco, Florence. Public Domain.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR LOVE.

O HOLY NIGHT

Gras duszy.
Modlitwa.
 (CANTIQUE DE NOËL.)

Text Polski A. Leśkiewicz.
 Muzyka Adolfa Adam.

Andante maestoso.

Głos.

Do cie - bie glos - wzno - si - my Mal - ko
 Wszak syn - Twój rzekł - że za Twoją przy -
 Mi - aut. - Chró - tku, - cęst Chou - re - so - ten -

Piano.

Bo - ga Niech wzruszy cie kor - na mo - dli - wa ta, Spraw ja - ska
 czy - na Wy - stu - cha proś - wi - u - da - ru - je nam, Ach zli - tuj
 nel - le où l'homme Dieu de - scendit jusqu'à nous, pour ef - fa -

twą - niech nas o - mi - ja trwo - ga A syn Twój Bóg niech nam po - cie - che da. Ach
 się - niech dzie - ci twe nie zgi - na Bo lo - sem ich ca - lym Bóg rzą - dzi sam. O!
 cor - la tache o - ri - gi - nel - le et de son père ar - rêt - ter le courroux. Le

wto - bie - twi - ko jest nadzie - ja ca - la Ty wesprzeć zech - cięj biedne dzie - ci - twe
 zlił kres cier - pień, spoj - rzajna lezdro - je I od - dal tro - ski, u - kój za - le - te,
 monde en - tier tris - sail - le des - péran - ce à cet - te nuit qui, lui don - ne un sauveur

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Cantique de Noël (O Holy Night) by Adolphe Adam.

Published 1902. Public Domain.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR LOVE.

PRAYER

Lord, because you have made me, I owe you the whole of my love; because you have redeemed me, I owe you the whole of myself; because you have promised so much, I owe you my whole being. Moreover, I owe you as much more love than myself as you are greater than I, for whom you gave yourself and to whom you promised yourself. I pray you, Lord, make me taste by love what I taste by knowledge; let me know by love what I know by understanding. I owe you more than my whole self, but I have no more, and by myself I cannot render the whole of it to you. Draw me to you, Lord, in the fullness of your love. I am wholly yours by creation; make me all yours, too, in love.

Saint Anselm, 11th Century

Spend some time with the Lord & write your own prayer below.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR WORSHIP.

PSALM 96

1 Sing a new song to the Lord!

Let the whole earth sing to the Lord!

2 Sing to the Lord; praise his name.

Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.

3 Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.

Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

4 Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise!

He is to be feared above all gods.

5 The gods of other nations are mere idols,
but the Lord made the heavens!

6 Honor and majesty surround him;
strength and beauty fill his sanctuary.

7 O nations of the world, recognize the Lord;

recognize that the Lord is glorious and strong.

8 Give to the Lord the glory he deserves!

Bring your offering and come into his courts.

9 Worship the Lord in all his holy splendor.

Let all the earth tremble before him.

10 Tell all the nations, "The Lord reigns!"

The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.

He will judge all peoples fairly.

11 Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice!

Let the sea and everything in it shout his
praise!

12 Let the fields and their crops burst out with
joy! Let the trees of the forest sing for joy

13 before the Lord, for he is coming!

He is coming to judge the earth.

He will judge the world with justice,
and the nations with his truth.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR WORSHIP.

REFLECTION

In the days of Solomon, his wisdom, wealth, and power were so great that the people of Africa heard and marveled and came to Israel to worship him. Even the Queen of Sheba came to witness his greatness and declared that it far exceeded all she imagined, offering gifts to him in worship. (1 Kings 10:1-10).

Greatness always inspires this kind of admiration and longing. It's why people still travel to Egypt to see the pyramids or why people from around the world come to the U.S. to try and make their fortune. It's no coincidence that the Magi come from the Far East to see the one born the "King of the Jews." In Jesus, one appeared who is greater than Solomon or David; he is the one who is greater than any earthly ruler - God himself who came to become King of the world. This demands our worship.

Worship at its simplest is ascribing worth to something. Whenever we talk about how great the newest iPhone is or how awesome the game was last week, we're engaging in a form of worship. But God demands first place in our worship. From the very beginning, God commanded that "you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." (Exodus 34:14).

Our hearts were created to worship. Human beings were created for this purpose: to recognize in God and in all his creation the beauty, splendor, and power of God himself, and to glorify him for it. We can't help but worship, but our sin warps our vision and desires and causes us to worship other things.

Though we've seen throughout this series that Jesus is the one who truly restores our hope, peace, joy, and love, we often look to any and every other created thing to provide these things for us first. Nor is it just that we'll find other things to worship - our sin causes us to create false objects of worship. The fallen world worships all the wrong things, but Psalm 96 calls us to recalibrate our tune. "Oh sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord all the earth!" the psalmist cries - a call to put aside the false idols we worship and praise God instead.

God, speaking through this Psalm, is like a parent coaxing on and growing the anticipation of kids at Christmas. Throughout December it feels like Christmas morning will never arrive; they look forward to that day with boundless excitement. And yet, many of us as parents still seek to make their anticipation greater. We have Christmas parties and use Advent Calendars and do all sorts of things to increase the excitement of the season. So it is with God in this Psalm - amping up our anticipation for the coming of Jesus in preparation to enjoy and celebrate it when it arrives.

This Psalm calls us to twofold worship - worship that both looks to what God has done and looks forward to what he will do. Looking back, we see that the King has come. God has restored our worship by revealing himself in the Son, King Jesus, worthy of all our adoration. We still look forward to the day of his second appearing with anticipation. Either way we look, we find reasons to worship.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR WORSHIP.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What kinds of things does the world hold up as being worthy of praise in people? How does God fulfill these things? Are there any that the Bible shows us that are not really worthy of our praise?

What are some specific things that our world calls us to worship that leads us to settle for lesser joys? How can we cultivate a heart that call us to refocus our desires on God?

How does God reveal himself in this Psalm to be worthy of our praise? How does Jesus reveal himself to be these things as we see him in the gospels to be?

How do the humble events of Jesus' birth challenge our ideas about what is truly worthy of praise? How can we embrace what this reveals in our own celebrations of Christmas - how do we celebrate humility and sacrifice in the midst of giving gifts and having feasts?

Now that you've spent some time pondering and answering the above questions, who can you talk through these ideas with? Who can you encourage and share how worthy God is of our praise?

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR WORSHIP.



Angels Worshipping by Benozzo Gozzoli. 1459-60.

Original image located in Chapel, Palazzo Medici Riccardi, Florence. Public Domain.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR WORSHIP.

O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

Prosa in Nativitate Dómini.

Adeste fideles læti triumphantes. Venite, venite in Bethlehem. Rep. Natum videte Regem Angelórum Ve-

94. In Nativitate Dómini

nite adoráte: Venite, adoráte: Venite, adoráte Dóminum, V. Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine gestant Pu-
 éllæ víscera. Rep. Deum verum gé-
 nitum, non factum; venite, adoráte:

Adeste, fideles (earliest printed version) by John Francis Wade.
 Circa 1745. Public Domain.

THE COMING KING RESTORES OUR WORSHIP.

PRAYER

Worthy of praise from every mouth, worthy of confession from every tongue, worthy of worship from every creature, is your glorious name, O Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For you created the world in your grace, and by your compassion you saved the world. To your majesty, O God, ten thousand times ten thousand bow down and adore, singing and praising without ceasing, and saying: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; heaven and earth are full of your praises. Hosanna in the highest.

Nestorian Liturgy, Fifth Century

Spend some time with the Lord & write your own prayer below.

