

Psalm 80
Advent Midweek 2
December 9, 2020 Shepherd of the Mountains, Pinetop, AZ
"Jesus: King of Guilt"

INI

The sermon this evening is based on verses from Psalm 80:

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth. ^(verse 1)

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved! ^(verse 7)

You brought a vine out of Egypt;...it took deep root and filled the land. ^(verses 8-9)

Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved! ^(verse 10)

Excuses, excuses, excuses. Everyone has them. No one wants to hear them. But we continue to come up with them. When we are caught, when we are found out, when the shame pours in and we are confronted with our guilt, our go-to move often is excuses—uttered aloud to justify ourselves before others, to convince them...or uttered silently to ourselves to convince ourselves that what we were not wrong, or that it wasn't so bad after all.

But eventually, hopefully sooner rather than later, we realize that can't escape the guilt, that we need to acknowledge our guilt, that we need to offer it up in an acknowledgement, in a plea for forgiveness, in a prayer.

Psalm 80 is a prayer of God's people. They had fallen out of favor. They had messed up, and they knew it. They got caught up in worldliness and false gods and became careless with God's Word. Their enemies had beaten them.

Psalm 80 is the prayer of refugees, of God's people of the Northern Kingdom who fled to Jerusalem when the Assyrian army took over the north. Their homes were gone. Their places of worship were gone. Their government was gone. Everything they had built up—all the things they'd put their trust in instead of God—every last false thing that had distracted them from their heavenly King who gave it all to them. Gone.

And so, they ran. They did the only thing you can do when all the structures, all the stable things you rely on, are disintegrating around you like quicksand. They ran home. To Jerusalem. To the temple. No more excuses. And mourning underneath their sorrow's load, they write this psalm. They pray this psalm. They weep this psalm. **"Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved!"** ^(verse 7)

It's a prayer, a plea. *Come, Lord! Act! Do something about this, we beg you. There's nothing we can do. We need you to save us. Please come, restore us.*

It's an appeal to the King—and not merely some earthly king sitting on a throne of gold, but heaven's King, the King of the universe, yet right there in their midst, in the temple, sitting on the cherubim of the ark, calmly perched upon the most powerful angels, worshiped by them. That King.

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel." ^(verse 1) *Hear us. Listen to our cry and our plea for mercy. No, we don't deserve it. We took you for granted. We despised your good gifts. We didn't listen to you. We have no excuse. Nevertheless, hear us—because of who You are. Because You are that kind of King. A merciful King. A sparing King. A forgiving King. Hear our cry.*

You made us, brought us out of Egypt like a choice vine, planted us in this land. We are Your creation, Your vineyard—but we failed You. We despised Your gracious gifts and wise ways. We treated them lightly. We ignored them. We were distracted from them. We wanted other things instead of them. Coveted what other people have. And now we deserve nothing. We're lost. But You saved us before, Lord; save us again. Restore us.

This prayer reminds me of so many other prayers we've heard in scripture. They aren't always labeled as prayers, but that's what they are. The prayers of those who know they are

unworthy, who know that their true King is the only one with power to save, with power to forgive, with power to act for those who are full of guilt and empty of any worthiness.

The centurion in Matthew 8: **“Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.”**

In Luke 15, the heart of a son in a parable: **“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”**

King David in Psalm 51: **“I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight.”**

When the excuses have run out and haven't helped at all, all we have left to offer up is our guilt.

So, God's people called on their King to act. To save them. But nothing could have prepared them for the way their King would come to save them: They did not realize what it would take for Him to answer their cry. But He did.

The King came to His vineyard, came to His own. But His own did not receive Him. They prayed, **“Restore us,”** shouted hosanna to Him, but even in salvation they wanted something different from what God would give. *No, not this way. Get rid of our enemies. Where's the kingdom? Aren't you a king?* So, they yelled **“Crucify.”** The King was cut off. Thrown out of the city. This Root of Jesse, this righteous Branch of David, was cut from the vineyard and finally given His crown. Guilt. And thorns. He was given His throne. Not the tops of the cherubim but the depths of our death, our curse, our cross. Restore us, O God. Let your face shine.

The Father's face shines on you because it stopped shining on His Son. The Father's face shines on you because your King took His throne and crown in the darkness. The Father's face shines on you because your King comes for you. Christ's death in darkness is God's face shining on you. **“Let your face shine, that we may be saved!”** ^(verse 3)

Well...that's all well and good for Him to have done that then, but here we are, in Pinetop, Lakeside, Show Low, mourning beneath *our* sorrow's load. We need salvation now. We need Him to come and save now. Restore us, O God. Restore us.

You have called on your King to act—to save you— but nothing could prepare you for the way your King would come to save you. It is hard to imagine this King of righteousness wanting to enter into my guilty heart and take his seat upon its dark throne. It is far too contaminated, unworthy.

Yet this very night He comes to you. He says: *“Beloved, I am not afraid of your guilt. I am the King of your guilt. Crowned with your guilt. Enthroned upon the wood you deserve. Your guilt is Mine, and My innocence is yours. What you deserve I take; what I deserve I give. You cry out, restore us! Here I am. Forgive them, Father. Forgive them.”*

“Beloved, I come to restore you. Not to burden but relieve. Not to crush but to lift. To take away your guilt. Make it my own. Unite myself to it. Become it. Bury it. I am your King.”

How wholly unworthy I am to proclaim the Word of this King! And for you to sit here in the house and court of this King. We aren't worthy, but that is the kind of King we have. A King in control, not by force but by grace; not by might but by forgiveness, mercy, and love. He is our righteousness, our innocence, our blessedness, and our eternal holiness.

This whole night, He has been preparing our hearts and minds for His coming again. He will come again with clouds descending. And there is only one way to prepare for the Lord: give Him your guilt and receive His grace. He is coming to save. That is the kind of King He is. So lift up your heads! Your redemption draws near! Your King of Guilt has heard your prayer.

It was Israel's prayer. It is your prayer. It is our prayer. **“Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved!”** ^(verse 7) In Jesus' name. Amen.

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