

# Jesus Brings Renewal

Last week we read from James chapter two. In that chapter James talks about not playing favorites. He talks about if a rich man in nice robes and a poor man in rags comes into the church the it would be wrong to give the rich man the attention and the best seat etc. Now this might seem like a small thing, but there is a bigger issue behind it. Imagine you are one of those people. You have a hard time getting a job because you don't look the part. You can't get justice because you can't pay a lawyer. The police and others assume the worst about you because of the way you dress or the way you look. Imagine you have been dealing with this your whole life and now you come into church, you come to Jesus, and you find the same attitude. The people at the church give the best seat to the rich man and ignore you.

The Psalm we have before us this morning speaks about this same issue. "Don't put your trust in princes." You want the king, you want the judge, you want the government to always be fair and always do the right thing? Don't hold your breath. Its not going to happen. This world is unfair. Injustices happen all the time.

However instead of bemoaning that fact. Instead of a song of complaint, life's not fair. Instead of calling for a revolution, we must overthrow the tyrants and set up a new government. Instead of any of that the Psalmist sings "Hallelujah" praise to Jehovah. He sings praise to Jehovah that the time of renewal is coming, that the Lord will not show partiality, that he is the watcher of the downtrodden.

**Psalm 146:1-10** Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! <sup>2</sup> While I live I will praise the LORD; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. <sup>3</sup> Do not put your trust in princes, *Nor* in a son of man, in whom *there is* no help. <sup>4</sup> His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish. <sup>5</sup> Happy *is he* who *has* the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope *is* in the LORD his God, <sup>6</sup> Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that *is* in them; Who keeps truth forever, <sup>7</sup> Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners. <sup>8</sup> The LORD opens *the eyes of* the blind; The LORD raises those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous. <sup>9</sup> The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow; But the way of the wicked He turns upside down. <sup>10</sup> The LORD shall reign forever-- Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!

In the Greek Septuagint this psalm is prefaced with the words: A Hallelujah (praise Jehovah) from Haggai and Zechariah.

Haggai and Zechariah were prophets of the Lord after the return from Babylon.

Some of you may remember that the nation of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians. The people were taken from Judah into Babylon for 70 years. After 70 years God, who always works everything for the good of his people, caused Cyrus to issue a decree that allowed the Israelites to return to the own land. The people returned but were very disheartened by the task of rebuilding the nation and the temple. God sent his prophets Haggai and also Zechariah preaching to the people a message of hope. Be strong, stand firm, trust in the Lord.

These two prophets along with the King of Zerubbabel, had a very difficult task. They had to rebuild not just a temple but a nation. They had to bring back people from all over the Persian Empire and unite them. They had to do this while the nation to their north, Samaria was attacking and persecuting them.

As they are trying to rebuild this nation, the message of this psalm is very pertinent. Haggai and Zechariah are reminding the people don't trust the king Zerubbabel. Don't put your trust in us the prophets, but look forward with hope to the coming of Christ. He is the one who will renew all things.

### **This Psalm is Messianic**

The words of the psalm sound as though they are speaking in the present tense, but really the language is extremely messianic. It is looking forward to the time of renewal which will come with the Messiah.

**Psalm 146:7-8 7 Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. The LORD gives freedom to the prisoners. 8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises those who are bowed down; The LORD loves the righteous.**

This is messianic language. This is language that is looking forward to the coming of the Son of David who will sit on the throne of David and who will rule in righteousness. Justice and righteousness, these are sure and certain signs of the Christ because this does not happen without him. This world is injustice. It favors the rich and despises the poor.

One of the servant songs of Isaiah, looking forward to the coming of Christ proclaims:

**Isa 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;**

This bringing of justice to the poor and giving freedom and healing is constantly throughout the Old Testament a reference to the coming of the Messiah.

Jesus himself points to these same signs as the signs identifying who he is

**Matthew 11:2-5 <sup>2</sup> And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples <sup>3</sup> and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" <sup>4</sup> Jesus answered**

and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> *"The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

Haggai and Zachariah in the midst of attempting to rebuild the nation encourage the people to rejoice not in the nation that they have, not because they are free from Babylon, but because the one is coming who will truly be able to rebuild the nation.

We also look forward with joy not because we now have a perfect nation, but because the Lord is risen from the dead and will restore all things.

### **The one who created is the one who can renew**

This one who is coming is also the one who "made heaven and earth"

### **6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that is in them;**

He is the one who made all things, and therefore he is the one who is able to renew all things. To fix that which is broken.

In Genesis 1:2 the Spirit of the Lord hovers over the face of the deep. This hovering of the Spirit is in the Hebrew language a picture of the giving of life. He is the wind. He is the life giving breath which breathes on the earth and brings it to life. We have that same picture in Ezekiel when the Spirit comes in the wind and blows on the dry bones and gives them life. Also on the day of Pentecost when the wind fills the house where the disciples are and brings life to the church. Where there was only a handful of disciples now there are over 3,000.

He is the one who made heaven and earth. He gave life. He alone is able to fix that which is broken, to bring renewal to that which is hurt and unjust and bowed down. He brings life to the earth, and life to the church and renewal to those of us who are weighed down with grief or with injustice and with our own sin.

This is the point of this psalm, its not just "praise the lord," rather it is a comparison between the failure of earthly kings and governments and a looking forward to the renewal that will come through Christ. Do not put your trust in princes, that way is going to lead to depression. But happy is the one who puts their trust instead in the Lord, who waits for his justice and his kingdom. We are not going to be happy if we put our trust anywhere else, but we can be happy if we put our trust in Jesus. He sets us free from the sin that surround us and from our own sin as well.

We don't need this psalm or the word of God to teach us that we can't trust earthly governments. We can't trust kings, or presidents or judges, they will let us down.

I have very little personal experience with the American justice system. But in the last year I've talked to three different people who have had personal experience. All of them say the same thing that you must have lots and lots of money to get justice. Those who don't aren't going to get it. The American justice system is probably better than any other that has ever come before it. But it is still broken, its still flawed.

We don't need this psalm or any word of God to remind us that earthly leader, governments, judges, and systems are going to disappoint us. They are not going to be impartial. They are not going to give out fair justice.

We do need this psalm to remind us that Jesus is the only answer. Even in the midst of oppression we can rejoice because God is watching over and will fix what is wrong.

We know that he is watching us because he has forgiven our sins.

#### **Psalm 146:8 The LORD loves the righteous.**

The righteous are not those who live perfect lives, but rather those who have been washed in the blood of Jesus

#### **Rom 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

We are the righteous whom the Lord loves because he died for our sins. Our sin creates the brokenness and injustice that surround us but Jesus washes away the sin and fixes that which is broken

#### **He watches over the stranger**

He cares for those whom others forget about. The ones most likely to be ignored and forgotten by others, the widow and the orphan and the stranger.

Remember when God asked Cain, "where is Able?"

Cain replied, "Am I my brother's keeper (watcher)?"

Cain refused to be his brother's watcher. Many refuse to watch out for those who need help. They are not my problem. What others refuse to do, the Lord never fails to do. I will be their watcher and their keeper. I will be your watcher and your keeper. When all others fail us God never fails us.

That is what Jesus came to do. To fix that which is broken.

Haggai and Zechariah knew that the nation they were building would not last and would not be just. They tried their best, but they too were sinners. They also knew the one was coming who would renew all things. He would bring justice to the oppressed and forgiveness to the sinners.