

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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SERIES

Good King, Bad King, The King

PART

7

TITLE

A Shallow King

SCRIPTURE

2 Chronicles 24:1-22



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Good morning. It's good to see you all. My name is Daniel Savage, and I am one of the pastors here at Providence. And as always, it's a joy to open the word together and to continue in this series. We're doing a series right now thinking through some of the lives of the kings in the Old Testament. This morning, we're going to examine the life of King Joash, which is in 2 Chronicles 24. That's in the first half of the Old Testament. If you get to the Psalms, you've gone too far. 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles. That's where you'll find it. In the first service I said Corinicles. I think I was combining Corinthians and Chronicles into one, so I'll try not to do that again. 2 Chronicles 24.

Now, a few things that stand out as interesting in the life of Joash, one, that the title of the sermon this morning is A Shallow King, because what we're going to see in Joash's life is that he starts out strong but he topples in the end. He fades in the end. And it's because he reveals that he didn't have the roots that were necessary, and so we're going to look at his life. But the other thing that stands out and the thing that dominates this narrative that we're about to read is the work that he does to restore the temple. That is really important. It's hard to really overstate how important this was, the idea of restoring the temple in Israel was like restoring the people's access to God. God dwelt among the people in the Old Testament in this temple, and He had prescribed in great detail how they were supposed to approach Him and how they were supposed to interact with Him and how they were supposed to worship. And all of this had been abandoned in the last few generations of wicked Kings in Israel.

And so, Joash temporarily restores the people's access to God, which will point us in the end to a better king who will restore eternal access to the Father that we enjoy, and that is Jesus. So before we read in 2 Chronicles, let me pray one more time and ask the Lord for His help. Heavenly Father, be with us now. As we humble ourselves before Your Word, we ask that You would reveal Yourself to us. Lord, we have eyes that are dull and ears that have trouble hearing, and our hearts are quickly hardened. God, would You help us to hear today and help us to see? Would You reveal Yourself? And most of all, would You exalt Jesus before us so that we might be drawn to Him as He is lifted up? God, be with us now, I pray. In Jesus' name. Amen.

2 Chronicles 24 starting in verse one, let's read it together. Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for 40 years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest. Jehoiada got for him two wives, and he had sons and daughters. After this Joash decided to restore the house of the Lord. And he gathered the priests and the Levites and said to them, 'Go out to the cities of Judah and gather from all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that you act quickly.'

"But the Levites did not act quickly. So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief and said to him, 'Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant of the Lord, and the congregation of Israel for the tent of testimony?' For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and had also used all the dedicated things of the house of the Lord for the Baals. So the king commanded, and they made a chest and set it outside the gate of the house of the Lord.

And proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to bring in for the Lord the tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel in the wilderness. And all the princes and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished.

“And whenever the chest was brought to the king’s officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was much money in it, the king’s secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. Thus they did day after day, and collected money in abundance. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to those who had charge of the work of the house of the Lord, and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the Lord, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the Lord. So those who were engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it.

“And when they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the Lord, both for the service and for the burnt offerings, and dishes for incense and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the Lord regularly all the days of Jehoiada. But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died. He was 130 years old at his death. And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and his house. Now after the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king. Then the king listened to them. And they abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs.

“Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the Lord. These testified against them, but they would not pay attention. Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and he said to them, ‘Thus says God, “Why do you break the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has forsaken you.”’ But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord. Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah’s father, had shown him, but killed his son. And when he was dying, he said, ‘May the Lord see and avenge’”

We pick up this narrative, what’s going on here, and the history of the people of God in verse one, and we read that Joash is the king at seven years old. Which raises the question, how did we get here? I’ve met a lot of seven-year-olds, and I’ve yet to meet one that was ready to be the king. And so, what we should see among other things in this first verse is that God is showing His commitment to keep His promises. That’s the first point, if you want to write it down, if you’re taking notes this morning, God shows His commitment to keeping His promises. Now, let me show you why I think that is. Now, in reading the previous chapters, you find that the line of David is really hanging on by a thread at this point. Jehoshaphat was the king that followed Asa, who we talked about last week. He was mostly a good king. It says about him that he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but it goes downhill from there.

His son, Jehoram, Joash's grandfather, becomes king, and one of the first things that he does, because he's a wicked king, is he has all of his brothers killed to ensure that there's no competition for the throne. As many wicked kings are, he was a paranoid king, had his brothers killed. And it says that he did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. In fact, in chapter 21 it says that he led Jerusalem into whoredom and made Judah go astray. Because of his wickedness, the Lord stirs up the Philistines and the Arabians, it says, and they come down to attack Jehoram, and they end up taking him captive and they kill all of his sons except one, Ahaziah.

So if you're keeping track of these generations, now this is two generations of men that have been completely cut off from the line of David. Jehoram dies in excruciating death of what the Bible calls an incurable bowel disease, and Ahaziah, Joash's father, Jehoram's only remaining son, becomes king and has at this point no male relatives. So Ahaziah, the youngest and only surviving son, becomes king at age 22. In chapter 22 verse three it says that Ahaziah walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly.

Now that is a heartbreaking sentence for a number of reasons, but one, imagine if your name was synonymous in the Bible for a house of wickedness. That's what he's saying when he says that he walked in the ways of the house of Ahab. He's saying that he walked in wickedness. And then the second part is devastating for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly. So Ahaziah becomes king at 22, and he's leading in wickedness. And shortly after becoming king, he's killed when he goes to visit one of the kings of Israel. It says in chapter 22, "And the house of Ahaziah had no one able to rule the kingdom."

So he had kids by this point, sons and daughters, but none of them were old enough to rule. And his mother, Athaliah, the wicked counselor, sees the opportunity and grabs the throne. She wants to reign over Judah, so she has the royal family killed, which is her family, her own son's children, has them all killed. And if this plan of her was successful, she would've completely wiped out the line of David. There would be no one left. But God is faithful to His promises. In chapter 22 verse 11 it says, "But Jehosheba, the daughter of the king, took Joash, the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were about to be put to death. And she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and wife of Jehoiada the priest, because she was a sister of Aheziah, hid him from Athaliah so that she did not put him to death.

"So Jehoiada the priest and Jehosheba, the daughter of the king, took Joash, the only remaining heir to the throne of David, and they hid him for seven years and raised him in secret." And then it says in chapter 23 that Jehoiada the priest took courage and set a plan in motion to put Joash, the rightful king, on the throne in Jerusalem. And the Lord smiled on their plan, and it was successful. And we get to the beginning of chapter 24 and there's a seven-year-old on the throne. This story illustrates a lot of things, but it is an amazing illustration of God's commitment to keeping His promises. In three generations of wickedness and opposition threatened to completely wipe out the line of David, which would've rendered God's promise dead. But here we see that God's been working in the background to ensure that His promises endure.

In fact, back in chapter 21, in the middle of all of this wickedness and unfaithfulness from the kings, it says in verse seven, “Yet the Lord was not willing to destroy the house of David because the covenant that He had made with David, and since He had promised to give Him a lamp to him and to his sons forever.” You see, what we see in this story is even in the midst of all this unfaithfulness from the people, God remains faithful. He is faithful and trustworthy. He keeps His promises. And we see here that He’s able to keep His promises even in the darkest of circumstances. Through decades of human depravity and wickedness and sin, we see that God is working and moving to bring His plans pass.

One other thing that I was thinking about as I was thinking about this story is we see God’s ability to work through a small number of faithful servants. God often uses people to bring about good things. And in this case, He uses Jehoiada and Jehosheba, their courage and their act of faithfulness, to preserve the line of David, which was one baby boy away from being completely cut off. God didn’t need an army of faithful people to do this, He used two. In all of Judah, He needed only a few that would be faithful. So when we are tempted to think that our acts of faithfulness don’t matter, they do. Even the smallest acts, and even if you’re the only one, God can use your faithfulness to bring about His good purposes.

He uses these two to bring about a good thing. The first point of application I want you to write down this morning is let’s remember that God keeps His promises even in the darkest circumstances. Let’s remember that God keeps His promises even in the darkest circumstances. Some of you are looking around this morning at your life and your circumstances, and they are dark. You could be having a financial struggle or a health struggle, a spiritual struggle, a relational struggle. But whatever dark cloud you are facing, the temptation is to think that God has forgotten you or that He’s unable to help you. This story reminds us that God is always working. The people in Judah didn’t know for seven years that the line of David was still alive. They went seven years thinking that Athaliah had cut off the line of David, that God’s promise was over. They had no idea that God was working and moving in ways that they could not see.

This is often the way that God works, in ways that we cannot see. He is faithful to His promises. He hears your prayers. He is committed to you. And He is faithful to fulfill the promises that He’s made you. You think about God’s promise to David and how it applies to us. In 2 Samuel 7:16 it says, “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” And right now God is keeping that promise that Jesus Christ, a descendant of David, is seated on an eternal throne because God preserved the line of David. He sent His son and has placed Him on the throne to rule and reign forever.

And so, as we see dark circumstances in the world, we can lean on this promise that God is keeping even today. As a war rages in Ukraine, and as others around the world suffer and people in our own church are hurting, we can appeal to the one who is seated on an eternal throne because God keeps His promises. We don’t have to wring our hands in uncertainty, we can appeal to the king. In fact, it is our duty to appeal to the king who tells us that He is always present to help in times of need. And so, we will gather tonight as a church family to worship this king and to cry out to Him and ask Him to act in justice and mercy. We’ll ask Him to

bring peace and to deliver the innocent. We'll ask Him to fulfill His promises. And He will hear us because He is faithful. We gather and pray as a church, and we have a prayer ministry that meets across the lobby in the upper room where the people sign up and pray for an hour at a time during the week. They pray for the nations. They pray for our city. They pray for you because God is faithful. And He hears our prayers.

Now we get into Joash's reign in chapter 24, and we find that he starts out well. He's seven years old, but as early as verse two, we can see that he has a strong influence in his life for good. It says, "And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest." Now you read that sentence, and if you've been reading along through this narrative and reading about one king after another, they're often summarized by that statement. Either he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, or he did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. But you don't normally read something like this, that he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest. It immediately strikes us as an important qualifier. As you read it, it seems like foreshadowing, and that's exactly what it is.

The chronicler is alerting us that these days of Jehoiada are very important, and that the seasons are going to change when he's gone. Another verse to point out, I think, and to think about for a second is verse three. You're reading through this narrative, and you read verse three and it raises a question, or it might have in your mind, you have this good influence, Jehoiada, this courageous priest who cares about the line of David, who's faithful to God and wants the worship of God to continue in the city of Jerusalem, and yet it says that he got for Joash two wives. Now, why in the world is that there? When we read the Bible, you should know that everything that's said in the Bible is not being commended to us as right and good. The Bible is brutally honest, and the sins of people in the Bible are not covered over.

You can understand Jehoiada's reasoning. Jehoiada cared about the line of David, and there's no line of David left except for this one son. And so he's thinking in his human reasoning and wisdom, "Well, we can increase our chances of a male heir if he has two wives instead of one." This is the same mistake that other patriarchs had made earlier in the Old Testament. And so, he's relying on this human wisdom, and he makes a mistake. And it's important as you read the Bible to ask whether or not it's being descriptive or prescriptive. In other words, is it just describing for us what's going on or is it prescribing for us what we should be doing? And in this case, it's descriptive. In fact, it's brutally honest and its description.

The Bible is always this way. It's actually a powerful apologetic for the accuracy of the Bible that these flaws are never covered over. In fact, it would've been much easier for someone to take this verse out. It would've made my job a lot easier this morning. But there's a centuries-old commitment to preserving what is recorded in the Bible because we believe it's the Word of God. The wrinkles are not smoothed out. The blemishes are left uncovered. Why? Because it's God's revelation and it's true. And so, Joash starts out well. It says that he does what is right in the eyes of the Lord. He decides that he's going to restore the temple and right worship in Jerusalem, so he restores the temple tax that Moses had prescribed. They build a chest out in front of the gate, and people are coming by and putting in money. And it says that the people are rejoicing because

the temple of God is being restored. They use this money to repair the temple. In verse 13 it says, “So those who were engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it.”

The big takeaway from the first part of Josh’s reign is that he restores right worship in the city of Jerusalem. You notice that little phrase that there were sacrifices made all the days of Jehoiada the priest. In other words, all the days of Jehoiada, the people were worshiping God as he had prescribed them to do. Incredible gift. And these incredible things are done and this progress is made, and then you read verse 15, and it presents an ominous note. It says, “But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died.”

And as you’re reading this narrative, verse two ought to be ringing in our ears, “Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.” Well, now the days of Jehoiada are over, and we’re left wondering what is going to happen now. We don’t have to wait long, verse 17 tells us, “Now, after the death of Jehoiada, the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king. Then the king listened to them, and they abandoned the house of the Lord, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherah and the idols, and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs.”

We read the Old Testament and it teaches us who God is. The point of the Bible is God is revealing Himself to us. That’s always the main point. But we also see a reflection of ourselves in these stories. And before we look at what it’s teaching us about God, we should consider what it reveals about us. That we see a man who walked faithfully with God as long as his mentor was alive. In fact, he devoted his life to restoring the temple. He went to great effort, he put a lot of energy into restoring this house of the Lord. And then as soon as Jehoiada dies, he receives the praise of men. They sing his praises in his ears, and it’s enough for him to abandon it all. He falls away. It should cause us to pause and consider what are the roots of our faith? What do we really believe? If you’re a student, you should ask yourself whether or not your faith is your own. When you leave for college, what are you going to build your life on? What is most important to you? Even the adults in the room, we should examine our hearts to find the foundations of our faith. What is it that we are rooted into? Is it someone else’s faith, or is it ours? Because what we see in Joash is that shallow roots quickly fail us in times of trouble.

Now, what does it reveal about God? The second point, if you’re taking notes this morning, is that God shows His commitment to justice. God shows His commitment to justice. Joash abandons the house of the Lord and serves idols. And it says, “And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs.” In verse 20, “Zechariah the prophet, he comes, and he says, “Thus says the Lord, ‘Why do you break the commandments of the Lord, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has forsaken you.’” And when that plays out just a few verses beyond, what we read through chapter 24 in verse 22, if you should look at verse 23, it says, “At the end of the year, the army of the Syrians came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus. Though the army of the Syrians had come with few men, the Lord delivered into their

hand a very great army because Judah had forsaken the Lord, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.”

If you’ve been reading through the Old Testament, you know that this is the inverse of so many stories that we’ve read before, where the people of God were depending upon God. And even though they had a small army and they would come up against a vast force of the enemy, they would overcome them because God was with them. And yet here we see the opposite. They have forsaken God, and so even though they have a vast army and their enemy comes up upon them with few men, it says that they were delivered over into their hands because they had forsaken the Lord. And God reveals to us in these stories that He’s committed to justice. You can’t forsake God and actively disobey Him and expect Him not to respond. This is a theme throughout the entire Bible, It’s not just the Old Testament. In Galatians 6:7, it says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. For whatever one sows, that will he also reap. God is a righteous judge. He is perfect in holiness and justice. He will not overlook a single sin, a single injustice.”

As we think about the justice of God, it should do two things for us. It should provide for us both encouragement and warning. It’s an encouragement for us when we face injustice in this life. When people sin against us, it is a comfort to our souls. How is it that Jesus is able to pray for the men who are crucifying Him when He says, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they’re doing.”? He’s able to pray that because He understands the perfect justice of God. He knows that His Father in heaven sees every injustice, and He will balance every scale, which frees Him to forgive because He didn’t have to be the judge. Like it says in 1 Peter, He was able to entrust Himself to the one who judges justly.

The reality of God’s justice helps us to sever the roots of bitterness that grow in our relationships. When someone sins against you, you aren’t responsible for making sure they pay for their sin. There is a righteous judge who sees every wrong that is done. I recognize this morning that some of you have been sinned against in some in devastating ways. And as I was preparing and thinking about the justice of God, I was thinking in particular about some of you have been sinned against in these ways. My encouragement to you is that you would spend some time thinking about the justice of God. No sin will go unpunished, no injustice will be left unattended. And following in the example of Jesus and entrusting yourself to the one who judges justly will free you from the burden of having to be both the judge and the juror for those that have sinned against you. You are not the only one who knows about their sin. God knows. And you can lay it upon Him and trust that He will see to it, that it is brought to complete justice.

And in this way we find rest in God’s justice. God’s justice serves as an encouragement and as a place of rest for us, but it’s also a warning. It’s a warning to us that we should not make the mistake of thinking that our sins don’t matter. We should not be so foolish as to think that our sin is going unnoticed. Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, “For God will bring every deed into judgment with every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

So we should ask ourselves this morning, what sin have you been committing that you've been slow to confess and repent? What sin in your life have you been justifying or downplaying? What sin have you been lying to yourself about and telling yourself that no one sees it, no one knows? Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. The second point of application to write down and think about this week is let's consider the justice of God and find rest and warning. Let's consider the justice of God and find rest and warning. God is radically committed to justice, which should have all of us feeling a little uneasy at this point.

If God will leave no sin unpunished, it leaves all of us in a very uncomfortable position because the Bible is really clear that all of us have sinned. It says no one is righteous. No, not one. We have all gone astray. We all deserve the wrath of God. But there is good news. The last point I want you to write down if you're taking notes is that God shows His commitment to mercy. God shows His commitment to mercy. Look back at verse 19. Jehoiada the priest has died, and the people have gone astray. They've abandoned the house of the Lord. And it says in verse 19, "Yet He sent prophets," not one, many, "He sent prophets among them to bring them back to the Lord. These testified against them. They went and told them what they're doing wrong and told them to return." It says, "But they would not pay attention."

The Lord gives Joash and the people opportunities to repent, but they refuse. The Lord is just, and He is perfectly so, but He is slow to anger and He's abounding in mercy. He sends prophets among them to warn them and to offer them mercy and to call them to come back. And He's able to offer this mercy. But how is that so? How can He offer mercy if He is radically committed to justice as He's already shown? How can these two things go together? How is it that God can be committed to punishing every sin, every injustice, and yet He can offer mercy at the same time? But the answer to that question is found in only one person, and that person is Jesus Christ.

Paul puts it this way in Romans 3 when he's describing our problem, he says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We are all guilty. We should all be condemned. He says in verse 24, "And are justified by His grace as a gift." So this perfectly just God justifies us. And how does He do it? By His grace as a gift. Well, how does that work? How can you be a perfect judge and yet be justifying people as a gift? He tells us. Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation or a satisfactory payment by His blood to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance, He had passed over former sins, which is a problem for a perfectly just God.

Well, how did it all work? It was to show His righteousness at the present time so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. God's justice demands that our sins be punished, and the just punishment for our sins is death. But God offers us mercy. And how does He offer us this mercy? By offering His son Jesus as the payment for our sins. It says we receive redemption by His blood, His death, His suffering in our place where He took on for us the wrath of God. This is how the gospel works. A perfectly righteous just God demanded perfect righteousness, and you and I failed.

Jesus Christ alone lived the perfect life that God demanded. He was perfectly righteous, in every way sinless, and that sinless son of God died the death that you and I deserve to die, and absorbed the wrath of God in our place so that there could be an exchange by faith. By faith meaning when we believe in Him, His righteousness is given to us and our sin is placed upon Him, and the justice of God is satisfied so that He can be both just and the justifier.

This was to show God's righteousness. This was so that God could keep His commitment to justice. Someone had to pay the penalty, and it was Jesus Christ in our place for anyone who would believe in Him, so that He might be just and justifier. Jesus is the perfect king who brings these realities together. This act of justice and mercy is so great, in fact, so remarkable that it makes Jesus the hero of the entire Bible. This reality of Jesus as the one who makes God both just and justifier is what fulfills all the promises of God. Jesus brings together God's righteousness, His justice, His holiness, and His mercy and forgiveness and patience. This is why every king points to Jesus, because no one else could bring these things together.

Joash points to Jesus in that he was in the Davidic line and he shows us through his very life, his very existence that God was committed to this line of David because he would bring about a perfect king through it. Joash points to Jesus when he restores right worship in Jerusalem and gives the people access to God. He serves as an instrument that brought them back to right worship, just like Jesus. But like all the other kings who came before him, Joash ultimately fails. He fails when his mentor and guide, Jehoiada dies. He's lured away by the praise of the princes and abandons God. He reveals that his roots were too shallow. He reveals that he's not the man that was promised in Psalm 1, who would be planted by streams of water, whose leaves would never wither, and he would always bear fruit.

But Jesus, of course, never fails. He is abandoned by not His mentor but everyone around Him. He's left alone, and yet He remains faithful. He rejects the false praise of man and instead seeks the praise of the Father. He is faithful and obedient to the end and provides the ultimate restoration of right worship. He restores us to God forever. Joash started out strong but drifted in the end. But Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He never drifts. He never changes. He is always trustworthy and faithful. He died and rose again so that He could offer us mercy. Jesus restored right worship and restored our relationship to God. And the writer of Hebrews is really clear how we should respond to that. He says in chapter 10 verse 19, "Therefore brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus," this way has been opened up, "we have confidence now to go to God by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is through His flesh."

His sacrifice opened up a way for us to enter into the presence of God again. And since we have a great high priest over the house of God, what should we do? Verse 22, "Let us draw near." Think about that. Think about this invitation that God has given us, that He's created a way and then He said to us, "Draw near to me. Know me. Have fellowship with me." "Let us draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." In other words, draw near

with faith knowing that Christ's payment was enough and that His righteousness now clothes us so that we come into the presence of God with confidence.

What kind of a gift is this? If Jesus died to create a new and living way to draw near to God, what is keeping you from drawing near to Him today? Joash was led away by the voices of the world. He had devoted his life to restoring this way to worship God, and then he was drawn away by voices that told him there was something better. Maybe that's you. Maybe you've been drawn away by lesser things. This morning is a reminder that God is inviting you to draw near to Him. Or maybe you have trouble believing that God could have enough mercy for you. For some reason, it's easier for us to grasp the justice of God than it is to get our minds around the mercy of God. Which is why Jesus, when He came to reveal the Father to us, He spent so much time teaching us about the mercy of God. He told stories about a son who would leave his dad and bring shame upon his family only to realize later that he'd be better off if he went home. And so the prodigal son goes back home expecting to be made a servant in his dad's home, asking if he could just be a hired hand.

And Jesus tells us of a father who sees him coming from a long way off and runs to greet him because he is full of mercy. It's why Jesus was walking through towns and villages and He would look up into a tree and see Zacchaeus, a tax collector, and He would say, "Come down, for I must go to your house today." Because God is full of mercy. That's why when Jesus was healing those around Him and He had had the lame man stand to walk, instead of saying, "Get up and be healed," He said, "Your sins are forgiven." Why did He say that? Because He wanted us to know about the mercy of God, that God's mercy goes far beyond healing someone's lame legs, it is the forgiveness of sins. It's why the Psalmist records in Psalm 103, "As far as the East is from the West, so far does He remove our transgressions from us." Because God is God of mercy.

I've been thinking about God's mercy all week, and it's had me thinking about the hymn that the Gettys wrote called His Mercy is More. Some of you need to listen to that song on repeat this week. The first verse says this, "What love could remember no wrongs we have done? Omniscient, all-knowing, He counts not their sum. Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore, our sins, they are many. His mercy is more."

The last note I want you to write down and think about all week is let's draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. If you're here this morning, you're joining us online, and you're not a Christian, then I would plea with you, receive the mercy of God. Accept the free gift of salvation that's offered through Jesus Christ. He took the punishment for our sins and He offers us His righteousness in return. Look to Jesus, ask for mercy, and you'll receive it. If you are a Christian here this morning, then let's rejoice in the one true king who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Draw near to God by the blood of Jesus Christ and don't let at anything distract you this week or pull you away. Let's pray and thank God for His goodness.

Heavenly Father, the seeds of truth from Your Word have been planted in the soil of our hearts. God, would You cause them to grow? Would You water these seeds and help them to grow and bear fruit in our lives that we might walk in these promises, that we might have faith to believe that You are good, that You keep Your

promises, that You're perfectly just, and that You are committed to mercy? God, I pray that we would rejoice in all that You've done for us, that redeeming love would be our theme, that we would sing of it till we die. God, give us grace, help us now, even as we sing, to remember your goodness. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's stand. Let's sing to the one who never changes.



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