

No Greater Love

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon 'No Greater Love' explores God's immense love for humanity and the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ, especially in the context of the Christmas season.

Duration: 29:52

Scripture: Psalm 45:2-7, Psalm 45:13-17, Zephaniah 3:15, Zephaniah 3:17, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Incarnation Of Christ", "Gods Love"

Description

In this sermon, Pastor Brian begins by reading from Psalm 45, highlighting the beauty and grace of the king. He then transitions to discussing the upcoming celebration of the birth of Jesus, emphasizing the significance of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. The story of Mary, the shepherds, and the wise men is retold as a beautiful reminder of the hope, love, and joy that Jesus brings. Pastor Brian concludes by acknowledging that although Jesus came 2,000 years ago, the promised peace on earth is not yet fully realized, but there is hope for a future where love, peace, and joy will triumph over hate, war, and sorrow.

Transcript

And now shall we turn in our Bibles to Psalm 45. I'll read the first in the unnumbered verses, and Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even-numbered verses. And shall we stand as we read the Word of God? My heart is indicting a good matter.

I recite my composition concerning the King. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Thou art fairer than the children of men.

Grace is poured into thy lips. Therefore God hath blessed thee forever. Gird your sword upon your thigh, O mighty one, and with your glory and with your majesty.

And in thy majesty write prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness. And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies.

The peoples fall under you. Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter.

You love righteousness and hate wickedness. Therefore your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions. All thy garments smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia out of the

ivory palaces whereby they have made thee glad.

King's daughters are among your honorable women. And at your right hand stands the queen and the gold of Ophir. Hearken, O daughter, and consider and incline thine ear.

Forget also thine own people and thy father's house. And so the king will greatly desire your beauty because he is your lord. Worship him.

And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift. Even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favor. The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace.

Her clothing is woven with gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework. The virgins, her companions that follow her, shall be brought unto thee.

And with gladness and rejoicing they shall be brought. And they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

And I will make your name to be remembered in all generations. And therefore people shall praise you forever and ever. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you for these passages of Scripture that speak of your relationship with us. You, the wonderful groom, and we, the church, the bride of Christ. And now in that glorious day when we see you face to face and we are joined together with you forever and you pour out and lavish your love upon us even as we seek to pour out our love toward you.

Lord, we look forward to that wonderful day. Blessed now we pray the study of your word. Open our hearts now unto your truth.

In Jesus' name, amen. And you may be seated. Well, as Carl said, if a test was given to you today on the book of Zephaniah, how well would you fare? How well do you understand the prophecies of Zephaniah? I would encourage you to come on out this evening.

Pastor Skip is going to take us through the book after the study tonight. You'll be able to give some solid answers concerning this book of Zephaniah. But today, this morning, I'd like to draw your attention to the third chapter of Zephaniah.

And beginning with verse 15, he declares, the Lord has taken away your judgments. He has cast out your enemy. The king of Israel, the Lord is in your midst.

In that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem, Do not fear, Zion. Let not your hands be weak. For the Lord your God in the midst of you, the mighty one, will save.

He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you with his love. And he will rejoice over you with singing.

Next Sunday is the day that has been set aside throughout the world to celebrate the wonderful event of the coming of our Savior into the world. That day when God became flesh and dwelt among us, and those that were here beheld his glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Throughout this next week, we will be telling and retelling the beautiful story of the young virgin named Mary, who had been chosen by God as the special instrument to be that instrument through which God would bring his

son into the world.

The story of the shepherds who were directed by the angel, the stories of the wise men who were led by the star to come and worship the Son of God that was born in Bethlehem that day. It's a beautiful story. It never grows old.

With the telling and the retelling, it just brings a new thrill, a special blessing. And it brings us the hope for the love and the joy and the peace that God had promised, and how that the day will come when love will triumph over hate, where peace will triumph over war, and where the joy will replace the sorrows. He came 2,000 years ago, but even to the present day, we do not yet see the peace on earth, goodwill toward men that were promised to the shepherds by the angels that night.

Longfellow wrote, I heard the bells on Christmas Day, their old familiar carols play, and wild and sweet the words repeat of peace on earth, goodwill to men. I thought it is how the day had come. The belfries of all Christendom had rolled along the unbroken song of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

And in despair, I bowed my head. There is no peace on earth, I said. For hate is strong.

It mocks the song of peace on earth, goodwill to men. Then pealed the bells more loud and deep. God is not dead, nor does he sleep.

The wrong shall fail, the right prevail. With peace on earth, goodwill toward men. Then ringing, singing on its way, the world revolved from night to day, a voice, a chime, a chant sublime of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

Some have suggested that the translation of peace on earth, goodwill to men was a wrong translation, that it should better be translated, peace on earth to men of goodwill. Most of your modern translations do translate it, peace on earth to men whom God favors. It is true that the only peace on earth that I know is in the heart and in the life of that person who has surrendered their life to Jesus Christ.

Until you surrender your life to Jesus Christ, you're at war with God. You're fighting against God, who is seeking to draw you unto himself. And as long as you're fighting with God, you're not going to experience or know the peace of God within your heart.

Peace on earth, goodwill toward men. Yes, it does exist in the hearts of those who have surrendered unto God in this battle that men fight against God. But, here we find that the prophet Zephaniah is prophesying of the second coming of Jesus.

Now, there were so many prophecies, over hundreds of prophecies that dealt with the first coming of Jesus. His being born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin, and the miracles of his birth, of his life, prophecies of his death and resurrection. But there were also and are also hundreds of prophecies that speak of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Zephaniah is one of those prophets. And here in chapter 3, verses 15 through 18, are prophecies of the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The prophet declares in verse 14, Sing, O daughter of Zion.

Shout, O Israel. Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughters of Jerusalem. According to the prophet Zephaniah, when Jesus returns, it will be a time of singing, of shouting, of gladness, and the rejoicing in our hearts.

Why? Because the King of Israel, the Lord our God, will be with us in the midst of us. And he will establish God's kingdom here on the earth. They will beat their swords into plowshares.

They will beat their spears into pruning hooks. And they will study war no more. There will be peace like a river.

And righteousness will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. It is interesting that the first time that Jesus came, that as they were crucifying him, they crowned him with a crown of thorns. And to me, that's quite interesting.

A crown of thorns. They mocked him as they said, Hail, King of the Jews. But where do thorns come from? Why is it that there are thorns on the earth? Back in the book of Genesis, we read that when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and God announced to them the consequences of their sin, telling Adam that even the ground would be cursed, and by the sweat of his brow, he would have to earn his bread.

But the ground would be cursed and thorns and thistles, God said, it will bring forth. So in reality, thorns came as a part of the curse of the earth because of man's sin. And when you think of it, Jesus in the first coming came to die for man's sin, to take away sin.

And thus, it is rather appropriate that he should be crowned with a crown of thorns. There was an interesting conversation between Pilate and Jesus. When Jesus was being judged, John 18, 33 tells us that Pilate entered the judgment hall again, and he called Jesus.

And he said to him, Are you the king of the Jews? And Jesus answered and said, Do you ask this of yourself? Or has someone told you about me? Pilate said, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and your chief priest have delivered you. Tell me, what have you done? And Jesus answered and he said, My kingdom is not of this earth. For if my kingdom were of this world, then my disciples would have fought to keep me from being delivered to the Jews.

Pilate then said to him, Are you then a king? And Jesus answered, You ask if I'm a king? To this end, I was born. And for this cause, I came into the world. So Pilate put the sign above the cross.

In Hebrew, Latin and Greek, Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews. He was born to be a king, but he did not receive the kingdom in his first coming. But at his second coming, the angels will declare, The kingdoms of our world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

And he shall reign forever and ever. We read that on his vesture, there is written king of kings and lord of lords. Zephaniah prophesies that here in verse 14.

Sing, O daughter of Zion. Shout, O Israel. Be glad and rejoice in your heart, ye daughters of Jerusalem.

For the king is dwelling in the midst of you. In verse 17, he goes on and he speaks of the king. He said, The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty.

He will save, he will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in his love and he will joy over you with singing. And so several things told us here about our king.

During that coming again, when we will be with him to reign here on the earth, he is mighty. In the prophecy of Isaiah concerning the Messiah. He said unto you, a child is born unto you.

A son is given. The government will be upon his shoulder and his name will be called wonderful counselor. The mighty God.

He is mighty. Jesus said to his disciples, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Surely we cannot comprehend that.

The power that he has all power in heaven and in earth. By his word, the universe was formed. When you think of this vast universe with its billions of galaxies and stars and the orbits of the galaxies, the stars, the planets.

Truly, he is mighty. The prophet said he will save. He will save man from the consequences of their sin.

The Bible tells us that the wages of sin is debt. Those wages have never been reduced. The Bible tells us the soul that sins shall surely die.

But he will save you from the consequence of sin. Jesus said, I have come that you might have life and that more abundantly. Jesus said, I've come to seek and to save those who were lost.

He will save us from the consequence of our sin. But he will also save us from the power of sin. Jesus said, therefore, if the sun shall make you free, you will be free indeed.

In Romans eight, Paul wrote for the law of the spirit of life in Christ has made us free from the law of sin and death. Save you from the consequence of your sin. Save you from the power of sin that holds you in bondage.

And one day we will be saved from the presence of sin. For in verse 15 of our text, the Lord in the midst of you. And you will not see evil anymore as we come with Christ.

No more evil in the world for the kingdom of God will rule over the earth. We're then told that he will rejoice over you with joy. The Bible tells us that God loves us and he does not delight in the death of the wicked.

He's not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. And so we are told that the angels in heaven rejoice when one sinner comes to faith in Jesus Christ. Imagine the Lord rejoicing over you with joy.

We do read for the joy that was set before him. He endured the cross, despising the shame. The joy of being able to deliver you from the consequence of sin, from the power of sin, and one day from the presence of sin.

The prophet goes on to say he will rest in his love. I would like to suggest to you that you also rest in his love. Satan often likes to torment us because of our weaknesses, because of our failures, because of our sin.

He likes to make us believe that God isn't interested in us, that God doesn't really care about us because we have failed and we do have flaws. But, oh, God loves you and you can rest in his love. He's resting in his love for you.

Finally, he said he will joy over you with singing. Here again is that Hebrew word Gil, which literally means spin around. That is, as he sings to you, rejoicing over you with singing.

He's singing with exuberance, with joy, the spinning around type of joy. Now, you know, I have sung many love songs to Jesus. I love to worship him by singing to him.

I think of those songs. My Jesus, I love thee. I know thou art mine.

For thee all the pleasures of sin I resign. My gracious redeemer, my savior art thou. If ever I love thee, my Jesus tis now.

Oh, how I love Jesus. Oh, how I love Jesus. Because he first loved me.

And then that chorus, I love you, Lord. And I lift my voice. In fact, let's sing it.

I love you, Lord. And I lift my voice to worship you. Oh, my soul rejoice.

Take joy, my king, in what you hear. May it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear. I love to sing love songs to the Lord.

I love to sing songs that speak of his love for me. Wonderful the love of Jesus. Wonderful he died for me.

I want my life to tell for Jesus. He's so wonderful to me. And as we sang at the beginning, Oh, the wonder of it all.

The wonder of it all. Just to think that God loves me. But to me, this is a rather unique thought.

One day when I meet him, he's going to sing a love song to me. He's going to sing of his love for me. He will joy over me with singing.

Now, I think that Jeremiah has given us some of the lyrics of the song he's going to sing to you. In Jeremiah 31, 3, he said, *The Lord appeared unto me in the past, saying.* Now that word saying is in italics in your Bible, because it means that it isn't there in the Hebrew text.

But it was a word that was added by the translators in order to give a flow and to sort of complete the thought. I think that they could have translated that singing rather than saying. It would read, *The Lord appeared unto me in the past singing.*

I have loved thee with an everlasting love. Therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee. I think that's exactly what the Lord is going to be singing to you when you meet him face to face.

Taking you by the hand, looking you in the eye and saying, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore, with loving kindness, I have drawn thee. Oh, what a day that will be when my dear Savior I see in those mansions of love now awaiting above.

Oh, what a day. Oh, glorious day. Father, how we thank you for the hope that we have for the future.

That glorious day when we do see you face to face, our mighty God, our Savior. How we look forward, Lord, to that meeting as you rejoice over us with joy and help us, Lord, to rest in your love as we wait for that day when you joy over us with singing. Thank you, Lord, that you came the first time to make this all possible by removing our sin, by forgiving our sin.

And Lord, how we long for that day when we will be spared even the presence of sin. We will see evil no more. Lord, hasten that day.

As we look at the world in which we live, Lord, we see the hatred. We see the wars. We see the violence. We see no peace on the world scene. No love. Lord, how we long for that day of your love, your joy, and your peace to rule and to reign over this sad world in which we live.

Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen. Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front for you who perhaps have not yet received Jesus as the Lord of your life.

You who don't have the hope that we have for this glorious day that Zephaniah prophesied. Now, even as the hundreds of prophecies concerning his first coming were fulfilled, you can be sure that these prophecies of his second coming will be fulfilled just as were the prophecies of his first coming. And so we would encourage you to put your faith in the word of God and in Jesus Christ that you might know peace in your life.

The peace that only Jesus can bring. May you have a wonderful week. May God spare you from the trauma of the pressures that people experience this week before Christmas.

May God help us to keep the main thing the main thing and not to become so distracted by what we're going to get Aunt Susie and all that we forget that we're really celebrating the coming of our Savior into the world that he might die for our sins to prepare us for that kingdom of God that shall be established when he comes again. And so may you rest in his love and experience a fresh taste of his love this week as he ministers and as he sings his love songs to you. Listen, see if you can hear him singing of his love for you.

I love you, Lord. And I lift my voice to worship you. Oh my soul rejoice.

Take joy my king in what you hear. May it be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear.

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