

God's Plan in the Major Prophets

God's Plan in Scripture

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It is a joy to be with you this morning. I'm Trey Garner. I am the Pastor of our Children's Ministries here at Faith. I have the privilege of speaking to you this morning. I know that we're going to have several guests in our Sunday Morning Worship Services today who are joining us for our Community Picnic on this day when we especially celebrate the freedoms that we enjoy as citizens of this nation. If you are with us for the first time or if you're relatively new, or if you've been around here for 20-30 years, we want to say that we are glad you are here this morning and especially excited to be able to study God's Word with you.

Let me invite you to turn your Bibles to the Book of Jeremiah 22. That's on page 553 of the front section of the Bible under the chair in front of you. Go ahead and find your way there and hold your place there. I'll join you there in a few minutes. This morning, we are continuing our study entitled "God's Plan in Scripture." It's an overview of the entire Bible in ten weeks. You may recall, that four weeks ago we started with a single word summary of the entire Word of God. We said that if we have to boil the Bible down to one word, that word is Jesus. And if we could only use one word to summarize the focus of God's Plan, there's no better word to use than Jesus. It's all about him. And then we started looking at particular sections of Scripture. Pastor Aucoin guided us through a study of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. Pastor Green provided us with an overview of the historical books of the Old Testament. Last week, Pastor Viars led us through a discussion of the poetical books where we saw that it is God's Plan to help us live in ways that are worshipful, wise and wonderfully practical.

We're making some good progress in understanding God's Plan in Scripture. If you're looking for some extra help to guide your understanding, to get the big picture of God's Word, I would strongly encourage you to pick up a copy of this book, "30 Days to Understanding the Bible," by Max Anders. The resource center off of our foyer has copies available if you'd like to pick one up. It's a very simple but a very helpful resource that'll really strengthen your ability to interact with God's Word.

This morning, we are moving on to the next section of Scripture known as the Prophetic Books. And there are two chief divisions within this section of Scripture: there are the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. Today, we're especially going to focus on God's Plan in the Major Prophets: these are the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. And it's right about there that some of you start to nod off. Don't do

that. This is not going to be some dry, impractical discussion with little relevance to our daily lives; quite the opposite, in fact. I think the principles that we're studying this morning are relevant to the choices that you will make even today.

Before we launch into our study of the passage I asked you to turn to, I think we would all be helped by first getting an overview of the Major Prophets. The term Major Prophets, it isn't meant to suggest that these five books are superior in character to those of the Minor Prophets. It's not like, "Ay, ay, ay, these are the Major Prophets. You gotta listen to these guys." It's not like, "Hey, you know, the Minor Prophets, if you've got time." It's not like that. The reason we call these books the Major Prophets is because they are major in size compared to the 12 books of the Minor Prophets.

All of these books, they have some common characteristics. The primary being is that they are all written by prophets. So, who were these guys, the prophets? What do you think of when you hear the term prophets? I think some of us have this stereotypical image of these mystical gurus who gaze into crystal balls, who are attuned to the vibrations of the universe, who smell just a little too much like incense. The people on the other end of the phone when you call the Psychic Hotline, for those of you that do. That's actually quite a bit different from what a biblical prophet was.

Let's talk about the prophet's role. The prophet was one who was authorized to speak forth the message which God had revealed to him. They spoke what God wanted people to know. And it's important for us to study the prophets, in part, because of what the Apostle Peter says about them in the New Testament. He says, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The prophets were God's spokesman.

How did the prophets carry out the task that they were given? What was the prophet's function? The messages that the prophets proclaimed fell into one of two categories: the first was, foretelling; predicting the future. In proclaiming God's message, the prophet would sometimes reveal things about the coming judgment, about deliverance and events relating to the Messiah and his kingdom. The number of statements about Jesus within the prophets are incredible. Statements predicting that he would be born of a virgin, "The Lord himself will give you a sign, behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son and she will call his name Immanuel." Statements describing his power and his character, "For a child will be born to us. A son will be given to us and the government will rest on his shoulders and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, the Prince of Peace." We also have statements about how he would suffer like in Isaiah 53:5, "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed."

Those are just statements from the Book of Isaiah. The prophets' writings are filled with predictions about Christ that happened 700 years or so before he would actually be born to come and dwell among us. We're going to see more of that in our passage this morning from Jeremiah.

Predicting the future, that was only a small part of what the prophet did. The majority of his ministry involved what we call, forthtelling, proclaiming the teachings of God to the people. Prophets functioned as preachers who expounded and interpreted the Mosaic Law and you say, "Mosaic Law, what's that?" We'll talk about that in just a minute. It was their responsibility to admonish, to reprove, to denounce sin. They called the people to repentance and they brought consolation and pardon. The point of prophecy was not to give some secret knowledge of the future that would satisfy man's curiosity. No, it was to motivate people to faithfully follow their God.

And there is a sense in which this forthtelling aspect of the prophet's ministry is how followers of Christ ought to function today. We're not receiving any new revelation from God, let's be clear about that. God's revelation is complete in the 66 books of the Old and New Testament, but it's every believer's responsibility to steward the truth that God has already revealed in his Word. To live by it and then to speak it into the lives of others, to encourage them to do the same.

That's how the prophets functioned. In order to better understand the message of the prophets, there are some things, I think, that we need to understand about the historical context in which they were ministering. I thought Pastor Viars just did a tremendous job last week of marching us through a timeline of Old Testament events. I'd like us to think about this timeline and the reason for that is because, I think, some people have the tendency to view Scripture as a series of isolated incidents that aren't really connected to one another. That's not it at all. Scripture reveals the grand storyline of God's unfolding relationship with his people and if we're going to understand the ministry of the Major Prophets, we need to understand the context out of which and within which their ministry took place. So, we're going to spend a little bit of time on this.

One of the first big events on the historical timeline of God's people is the call of Abraham in 2165 BC. God initiated a covenant with Abraham involving land, seed and blessing. God promised Abraham a homeland and told him that a people would descend from him and that through his descendants, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. And we see that over the next 700 years God is faithful to that promise and Abraham's family grows. They settle in the land of Egypt but the Egyptians force them into slavery and that brings us to the next big date on our timeline: the Exodus from Egypt and the establishment of the Mosaic Law. God saw his people in Egypt and he delivered them from their slavery using a prophet named Moses. Shortly after their incredible departure from Egypt, God brought them to the foot of a mountain called Sinai where he made another covenant with them: the Mosaic Covenant.

Right here is where we have the official establishment of Israel as a nation and understanding this covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, it's critical to understanding the

Major Prophets. This is what God says in Exodus 19, “Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant,” two important parts of this covenant right there, “then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” What was it that God expected from Israel in this covenant? He expected them to obey his voice, obedience to his commands; he expected them to keep my covenant, faithfulness to him as their God. And what did God promise to Israel? He promised to make them a treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation. That’s a pretty good deal for the Israelites: for obedience and faithfulness they received the special privilege of being God’s treasured possession. What an incredible privilege. They would have the privilege of being the visible representation of the invisible God to all of the peoples of the earth. Get this, this is important: the extent to which they would experience the blessing of God depended largely upon their faithfulness to this covenant. That’s critical information for understanding the Major Prophets.

The next big event occurs when Israel enters the Promised Land around 1400 BC. And just prior to Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land, God made a prediction about them. He predicted that Israel would demand a human king. In Deuteronomy he says, ““When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses.” That’s God’s prediction, they’re going to ask for a king.

The Israelites enter the Promised Land and after living there for 400 years where God himself was reigning as their King, what happens? They do just what God predicted: they cry out for a king. “Now, appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.” Why do they want a king? So they can be like all the other nations. Is that what God called them to be like? Survey says, no. They were supposed to be different than the other nations, to represent God and his ways to the world but that’s not what they want. You see them drifting away from their covenant with God. Israel’s preference for human rule was an expression of their desire to be independent from God’s rule.

Isn’t that just like us? Don’t we do that? But God in his unfathomable grace gives them what they ask for. We see Israel’s first king is placed on the throne in 1037 BC. The first king is a man named Saul. Even though God allows Israel to have a king, that doesn’t mean the king gets to do whatever he wants. The king has some major responsibilities and God laid those out back in Deuteronomy, he says, “Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life that he may learn to fear the Lord his God but carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right or to the left so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.”

Think about that. Why would it be important for a king to know God’s law? It’s because of who God’s people were commanded to be: a kingdom of priests, a holy nation

representing God to the world. Their responsibility was to fulfill their covenant with their God and that didn't end when they got a king. I think we should note this is a very different model than the model of American leadership. I know that we are all very thankful for the liberties that we enjoy as citizens of this nation; we're thankful to those who have fought and died to secure those liberties for us. And it's right for us to celebrate that at this time of year and we also ought to be thankful for the men and women elected to lead our nation and God's Word encourages us to pray for them. But I think it's a fair point of contrast that in this country, our system of government, it doesn't call our elected officials to be spiritual leaders. That doesn't mean that they can't be or that any of them aren't; that's just not the constitutional expectation that was the expectation in Israel. Israel's leaders were called to be shepherds who would administer God's justice and lead the nation in righteousness. Their job was to help the people live in ways that were worshipful and wise.

Saul, their first king, didn't do such a good job at that but then came the reign of David around 1,000 BC. And David is considered the greatest of Israel's kings. He certainly wasn't perfect, but perhaps better than anyone else, David sought to lead his people to serve and honor the Lord. Solomon followed David and then it was after Solomon's reign that a terrible tragedy occurred: the nation was divided in 931 BC. The ten northern tribes, they broke away from the two southern tribes. The northern tribes retained the name of Israel while the two southern tribes, they took the name of the larger of the two tribes, the tribe of Judah. And much of the remaining portion of the Old Testament is written during these next 400 years. It's during this period when things really unravel for the nation of Israel, when their rebellion against the Lord, their rejection of his authority, the refusal to fulfill their side of the Mosaic Covenant spins out of control.

Remember what they were supposed to be: they were supposed to be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation that would serve as the visible representation of the invisible God. They were supposed to influence the pagan nations around them to serve and follow the one true God. Instead, they became the ones who were influenced. They started to neglect God's commands; they started worshipping false gods, the false gods of the nations around them. They made sacrifices to these gods, sometimes even human sacrifices. The bottom line is, they forsook their covenant with God. They refused to be obedient to God. They refused to be faithful and they placed themselves in a position that the Lord could no longer bless.

Eventually, what we have is the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to Assyria around 722 BC. The record of the southern kingdom is somewhat better but Judah's sin eventually catches up with her and we see the fall of the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon in 586 BC. And it is into this culture of idol worship and rebellion that God sends his prophets to call the people back to himself, to remember their calling to honor their covenant with God.

I want to show you a chart. I'm not going to go over every aspect of this chart but if you'd like to study it further, it's available on our website at faithlafayette.org/preview. I just want to give you a big picture summary of the Major Prophets; we'll just spend a

minute or so on this. First, we have the ministry of the prophet Isaiah and Isaiah records Isaiah's ministry to the people of Judah more than 100 years prior to the exile in 586 BC. and the Lord's giving them plenty of time to respond to the message.

Then we have the Book of Jeremiah. It's written about his ministry to the nation of Judah and his message to the surrounding nations during the years immediately prior to the exile and there's this urgency to Jeremiah's message: "Repent for the time is coming near."

Then we have the Book of Lamentations. It's also written by Jeremiah to the people of Judah but it is written immediately following the fall of Jerusalem and this book urges God's people to recognize that God's judgment is just and it encourages them to learn from their chastening.

Then we have the Book of Ezekiel. It's written to the Jews that are already held captive in Babylon and the first half of Ezekiel takes place before the fall of Jerusalem and focuses on God's judgment for sin. The second half consoles the exiled Jews with the promise that God would restore his people to their homeland.

Finally, you have the Book of Daniel. Some of the best stories in all of Scripture are contained here in the Book of Daniel. It's written both to the exiled Jews as well as to the Gentiles, to proclaim the power of God and to encourage submission to a true king who rules sovereignly over every nation.

That is the overview of the books of the Major Prophets. But, I want to break it down even more for you. In fact, if you want a summary of the message of the Major Prophets, I can give that to you in one word, are you ready for that? If you're ready for that, turn to the person sitting next to you and say, "I'm ready." Do it again. That's better. The message of the Major Prophets: repent. Repent. Do you need me to say that again? Repent. Say that with me, "Repent." Some of us may want to get in the habit of just saying that out loud to ourselves. You say, "Why would I need to do that?" You know why you need to do that.

The word "repentance," it means "change of mind." It literally refers to a change in the direction of your thinking. You're headed in one direction; you're walking down a dangerous path filled with all kinds of temptations, all kinds of sins and you say, "No, I'm not going in that direction anymore." And you turn around. I talked to the kids in our Children's Ministries about this and the illustration I use with them is that of a walk down a path in the woods. And you're walking down that path, it's enjoyable, it's shaded, you're having a good time walking down that path and all of a sudden, this panther jumps out at you. And you say, "What's a panther doing in the woods?" That's not important. This panther jumps out at you and what are you going to do with that panther? You'll get close to that panther, you'll hug that panther, you give it a little nuggi, that crazy panther. No, you're not going to do that! You're going to run in the opposite direction as fast as you can. You're going to do that if you're smart. You're not going to get close to that panther lest it devour you.

That's how we need to respond to temptation. That's how we need to respond to the sin in our lives. And the reason so often that we don't, is because we have a very low view of sin. We have a low view of the holiness of God. We don't take it seriously. We don't understand just how much God hates sin and how much he wants us to be removed from that. To repent, we have to go in the opposite direction of sin; we have to turn.

With that understanding, let's go to our text. Finally, we're going to get there. This passage takes place in the southern kingdom of Judah just prior to 586 BC when Jerusalem would fall to Babylon and the prophet Jeremiah is commanded by God to go to King Zedekiah. He is the last of Judah's rulers and he makes one final appeal. Look at Jeremiah 22:1, "Thus says the LORD, 'Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and there speak this word and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, who sits on David's throne, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates. Thus says the LORD, 'Do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor. Also do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.'"" The implication here is that Judah hasn't been living this way. The king has failed to lead his people in righteousness; they have been violating their covenant with God, worshipping idols, mistreating the very weakest among them, resorting even to the sacrifice of their own children.

Verse 4, "For if you men will indeed perform this thing, then kings will enter the gates of this house, sitting in David's place on his throne, riding in chariots and on horses, even the king himself and his servants and his people." The Lord in his mercy is saying that there is still a chance for Judah if they'll turn. He's appealing even to Zedekiah's sense of self-preservation.

Verse 5, "But if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself,' declares the LORD, 'that this house will become a desolation.' For thus says the LORD concerning the house of the king of Judah: 'You are like Gilead to Me, Like the summit of Lebanon.'" Gilead and Lebanon were beautiful forested areas, places that would be precious, places that you would preserve. And God is saying that even though Jerusalem and his people were precious to him, he can't allow their sin to continue.

He goes on, verse 6, "Yet most assuredly I will make you like a wilderness, Like cities which are not inhabited. For I will set apart destroyers against you." That's the Babylonians. "Each with his weapons; And they will cut down your choicest cedars And throw them on the fire. Many nations will pass by this city; and they will say to one another, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this great city?' Then they will answer, 'Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD their God and bowed down to other gods and served them.'" Jeremiah goes on to talk about the downfall of the three previous kings of Judah and how their failure to shepherd the people resulted in their removal from the throne.

For the sake of time, let me ask you to turn over to chapter 23 and we're going to look at verse 1 there, "Woe to the shepherds," he's talking about the kings, the leaders that had the responsibility to care for God's people. "'Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!' declares the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning the shepherds who are tending My people: 'You have scattered My flock and driven them away, and have not attended to them; behold, I am about to attend to you for the evil of your deeds,' declares the LORD. 'Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply.'" Their judgment won't last forever.

Verse 4, "I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,' declares the LORD. 'Behold, the days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land.'" Remember, we said that all of Scripture is about Jesus? The Lord says that a day is coming when the rule of wicked men will end and a righteous king will be revealed.

Verse 6, "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'"

We said that the overarching message of the Major Prophets is repent. In these two chapters, I think, we find three reasons why we ought to heed the message proclaimed by the Major Prophets; why we ought to repent. The first reason is because God blesses obedience. Jeremiah 22:4 says, "For if you men will indeed perform this thing, then kings will enter the gates of this house, sitting in David's place on his throne, riding in chariots and on horses, even the king himself and his servants and his people." Jeremiah tells Zedekiah that if he will repent, if he will lead his people in repentance, then not only will he escape punishment, but he will enjoy the blessings of seeing his line continue, of seeing his descendants sit on the throne of David. Here we get a glimpse of the goodness and the grace of God.

I think a lot of us think of doing good to others only when their track record is spotless, when we can't find anything about them to complain. And even then, we expect them to go above and beyond our expectations, to do something extraordinary to merit our attention. You say, "Oh, I'm not like that." I hope not. I hope not. But, could I ask? How do you treat the other people in your life? At home, do your spouse or your kids, do they have to meet a certain standard before you think of blessing them in some way? At work, is the only time a co-worker hears something from you a time when they've done something wrong? Let me ask you this, this may cut: last time you were in a restaurant, what kind of tip did you leave? Did your server have to do something exceptional in order to merit a good tip from you? And it's just not that way with God. He offers blessing and reward when we strive to do what's right. Praise God for his grace.

Another reason why we should repent is because God judges rebellion. Jeremiah 22:5-6, “But if you will not obey these words, I swear by Myself, declares the LORD, ‘that this house will become a desolation.’” I will make you like a wilderness. You say, “Well, that’s kind of harsh. I mean, why did God have to do that? Why couldn’t God just have been cool, man?” And I am convinced most people in our world, they don’t really understand God. They view him as this kindly old grandfather who has lots of money that you go to when there’s stuff that you want. And if they do something wrong, they sort of expect God to say, “Oh, that’s ok. Don’t worry about it, sonny.” That’s kind of the way some people treat God. What they fail to understand is that God is holy. That’s the attribute that defines him most. His standard is perfection. Let’s just be upfront about this: none of us match up to that standard. We all fall short. We all sin.

Isaiah said, “All of us like sheep have gone astray.” And because God is holy, that means he can’t turn a blind eye to sin. Sin has to be dealt with. I would suggest to you that we wouldn’t want a God who doesn’t deal with sin. We’re not okay when people wrong us, we want to see that wrong addressed. We wouldn’t want a God who says, “Aw, so you got hurt. No big deal. Get over it.” We don’t want that kind of God. And God’s holiness requires that he deal with sin.

There’s a couple of different options for how sin gets handled. We can either repent or God can judge us. We can repent or God can judge us. Either way, the sin gets dealt with. So, my question to you is this: is there any sin in your life that you haven’t handled? Maybe it’s something that you did this week to offend someone in your life and you just haven’t taken care of it yet. It could be something that’s been going on for a long time; something that’s gotten a hold of your life that you just haven’t been able to shake. What are you going to do about it? You can either repent or you can experience God’s judgment. If you choose the latter, I can’t tell you when that judgment is going to happen. It could happen soon or it might not happen until the day when you see him face-to-face but it will happen.

He allowed the Israelites centuries of opportunities to repent before he removed them from their land. Thousands and thousands of chances. He even provided them with prophets who encouraged them to repent. And maybe God is showing grace to you right now. Maybe he put you in this service right now to do a work in your heart. I want to encourage you, don’t run away from it. Repent.

You say, “Well, are there any other reasons why I ought to repent?” You bet. Another reason for repentance that we see in this text is because God offers redemption. God is not looking to turn the screws down on us. He wants us to be close to him. Even in his judgment, his purpose is not primarily to punish us, it is to motivate repentance so that we might be redeemed from our sin. And that’s why we read in the Book of Hebrews that “all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful, yet to those who have trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.” God is in the business of bringing beauty out of ashes.

Several weeks ago, Pastor Viars mentioned the creation/fall/redemption motif that we see throughout Scripture and that dynamic is clearly at play during the time of the prophets. God had created a nation from among the descendants of Abraham, the ongoing effects of the fall caused them to rebel ultimately leading to the destruction of their nation. But, through the prophets, God offers them redemption. A redemption that would bear certain characteristics: they would experience security. Jeremiah 23:3 says, “Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture.” They would be returned to their homeland. Chapter 23:4, “they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified.” Isn’t it wonderful that when everything is right between us and our God there is never cause for fear. Rather, we’re able to experience peace, a deep and abiding joy knowing that our sin is covered.

Redemption is also characterized by usefulness. Jeremiah 23:3, “they will be fruitful and multiply.” We’ve seen that from the time man was created. God had called his people to represent him, his power, his character to the world. That was a high calling. He offered to return them to that calling, to live productively in his service, to make a difference in the lives of those that he would place around them. God offers us the very same opportunity. We see that in the New Testament in places like Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

If you are a follower of Christ, one of the reasons that God redeemed you from your sins was to give you a new purpose. He wants you to be part of the ministry that he is carrying out through his church. You say, “Well, what does that look like?” We saw an example of it earlier this week when so many in our congregation responded to our call to help come and get us ready for this inspection at Faith West. Thank you for those of you who served.

Let me ask you: have you made regular service in one of the ministries of this church a normal part of your life? I think we all need to regularly evaluate whether our service for Christ in his church is what it should be. Here’s a good evaluative question I think we should ask: if Christ served me like I’m currently serving him, would things be better for me or worse? If Christ served me like I’m currently serving him, would things be better for me or would they be worse? If the answer to that question is, “Well, yeah, they’d be worse.” Now, I think we need to consider the possibility of stepping up our commitment to him in service. Right now I know that some of you are saying, “I know. You’re right, Pastor. I know I need to grow in that area. How can I do that?” I’d encourage you to get in touch with us this week. We can give you some ways to make changes right away in that area.

In this passage, we also see that redemption is characterized by eternal righteousness. We see in Jeremiah 23:5-6, “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, “The LORD our righteousness.’”

Through this Old Testament prophet, the Lord proclaimed that the days of the wicked kings were numbered. Days would come when a righteous king would be revealed, a king who would reign in wisdom and justice. That king is the Lord Jesus Christ. And the road to eternal redemption runs straight through his cross. Jesus suffered and died for the sins of all people. He rose from the dead, proving that he had conquered sin for all time. And his message to us is the same as the one spoken by the Major Prophets: repent.

Repent. Humble yourselves by acknowledging your sin and embracing Christ as your Savior, as the only one who can forgive you of your sins and grant you forgiveness and eternal life. If you have questions about what all that means, if you're here today and you're not 100% sure that you've done that, I want to urge you to ask Jesus to be your Savior today. I want to encourage you, if you have questions about that, we would love to talk to you this week. Give us a call, send an email. We would love to help you know with certainty that you are on your way to heaven.

Believing friend, does your life give evidence of the fact that your King is the Lord of Righteousness. The Israelites made the mistake of believing that God could bless them in spite of their disobedience and unfaithfulness to him. Could I say to you, don't make the same mistake that they made? Are there things in your life of which you need to repent? I want to encourage you, do business with that right away. And if you need help in doing that, that is one of the reasons why God has provided pastors and deacons to lead this church, why he has placed godly men and women among us who may be further along in their walk with Christ than we may be. If you need help to grow, let's get you connected to someone right away. The Lord wants all of us to be better prepared for the day when Christ returns and the King of Righteousness will reign for all eternity.