

The Promised King: The Hope of the Nations

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn to our Bibles and Phil Copeland is preaching this evening and we're going to be looking with him in some words from the prophet Isaiah.

Isaiah chapter 11, very familiar reading, often at Christmas, from one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, Isaiah, one of those three long prophetic books, Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel. And of course, so much of Isaiah is very familiar to us at Christmas time. And we're going to be looking this evening at Isaiah's message and particularly focusing on this familiar passage in Isaiah chapter 11.

And I'm going to read from verses 1 to 10. And here's Isaiah speaking many hundreds of years, some 700 or so years before the coming of Jesus.

The time of great darkness for God's people, Israel, facing many hard things, many devastating things. And perhaps the overwhelming sense of a loss of hope for the future.

[1 : 06] But here is God's word to his fearful people. There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse.

That's Jesse, the father of David, the king. And a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The spirit of wisdom and understanding.

The spirit of counsel and might. The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see or decide disputes by what his ears hear.

But with righteousness he shall judge the poor. And decide with equity for the meek of the earth. And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth.

And with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist. And faithfulness the belt of his loins.

[2 : 12] And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb. And the leopard shall lie down with the young goat. And the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together.

And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze. The young shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra.

The weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. And they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. And that day the root of Jesse who shall stand as a signal for the peoples. Of him shall all the nations inquire.

And his resting place shall be glorious. Amen. May God bless to us these wonderful words of Isaiah the prophet.

[3 : 28] Well please do have the passage from Isaiah 11 open in front of you. That will be most helpful. A passage that is all about God's promised king.

The hope of the nations. One of the great privileges of my job is that I get to meet regularly with many different people throughout the week.

To read and study the Bible with them. And over the past six months. Pretty much everyone that I've met up with. Has at some point or another. All agreed the same thing.

They've said. I'm struggling. We're living in dark and difficult days. And outside of the church. When I've caught up with old friends from Glasgow.

Friends that I've grown up with. Non-Christian friends. They too have said pretty much the same thing. I'm struggling. And these are dark and difficult days. And if we were to look at our city.

[4 : 29] Honestly. I think it's plain to see that many people are struggling. Many are anxious about the future. Because for them. It's so uncertain. And many are gripped with fear.

Probably because there's so much talk. Of death. Everywhere. But of course the fear of death. Friends. Is nothing new in Western society.

Just listen to these words from Dr. John Wyatt. Who is a former specialist in medical care of newborn babies. And this is from his excellent book. Called Matters of Life and Death.

He says this. The growth in health technology. Demonstrates how greatly modern people and societies. Value health. And long life. It shows the extreme measures.

We are prepared to undergo. In order to improve our chances of survival. For ourselves and for our children. To buy. An extra year or two of life.

[5 : 27] Billions of pounds spent every year. On health care and medical research. Tell their own story. Why do public people. Pour money into medical research. Is it an altruistic desire.

To help mankind. Or. Is the public support of research. At least partly. Motivated. By fear. Fear of disease.

Fear of death. The way we spend our money. Is very revealing. And then John Wyatt goes on to quote this. From a distinguished theologian. In Duke University.

Says this. I sometimes point out to my students. That people now go to Europe. To see the great cathedrals. Wondering. What kind of people.

Would build such things. Someday. You know. I think people will. Come to see our major medical centers. Like the one we have in Duke University. And ask.

[6 : 25] What kind of people. Built such things. If they are astute. They will think to themselves. These builders. Certainly must have been. Afraid of death.

And. Dr. Wyatt wrote those words. And he quoted that quote. Well over a decade ago. And you know. I think they're spot on. The fear of death. Has been prevalent. In our society.

For ages. And the events. Of 2020. Have only served. To heighten. That fear. And as a church. Brothers and sisters. We need to be.

So careful. That we are not. Caught up in that fear. Because it's so often. The case isn't it. That when something is. Prevalent in the society. Around about us. It can start to. Weed its way. Into the church.

And affect our thinking. And our hearts. Well how can we. Safeguard. Our hearts. And our minds. Isaiah 11. Will help us. Let me just say.

[7 : 23] Back then. In the 8th century BC. The people of Judah. Were about to face. Dark days. Days that are far darker. Than the ones. That we were. In just now. And what they were about to face.

Was totally self-inflicted. Go home tonight. When you've got time. And read Isaiah 1 to 5. And you will see. That the majority. Of the people of Judah. Had rejected the Lord.

And they'd sunk down. Into unbelief. They had spurned. The grace of God. In his mercy. And they'd broken. Covenant with him. Idolatry.

And lawlessness. Were rife. Across the whole land. And as a result. The land was full of violence. And bloodshed. And injustice. And the people. They were still carrying out.

Their religious services. And ceremonies to the Lord. They were still. Going to the temple. And so forth. But from the way. That they lived. Their everyday lives. It was clear. That their hearts.

[8 : 16] Were actually. Far from the Lord. And this. Rejection. Of the Lord. Was true. On all levels. Of society. Even the king. King Ahaz.

Showed himself. To be a true unbeliever. In chapter 7. In the immediate context. In the run up. To our passage tonight. He shows himself. To be an utter. True. Unbeliever. And instead of.

Trusting in the Lord. And listening to his word. He disregards the Lord's word. And places his trust. In things that are less. Than God. As you know. God. The Lord. Sends his prophet.

After prophet. Isaiah. Isaiah being one of them. To warn his people. Calling them to turn back. Again and again. And yet. They refuse. And so in response.

Being faithful to his covenant promises. The Lord announces. In chapter 7. That he's going to discipline his people. He's going to punish them. The Lord says to them. I'm going to raise up.

[9 : 13] The Assyrians. I will sovereignly. Make them into the big. Superpower nation. Of the day. And I will use them. As a rod of anger. To strike. My people.

The people of Judah. So the Lord has basically promised him. That one day. In Jerusalem. All the streets are going to be deserted. No one is going to be out. Everywhere will be dead.

The marketplaces will be dead. Everyone will be in their houses. Huddled up on their sofas. Shivering together. Watching. The 24 hour news channels. Getting update after update. On the ferocious progress. Of the Assyrian army. And they will hear. That walled city. After walled city. Had fallen. And the Assyrians. Are firing out. All sorts of cruel punishments. And sadistic torments. Upon their some. 200,000 captives. And eventually. Having taken away. Most of Judah. The Assyrians. [10:08] Will surround. The city of Jerusalem. And hold it. In a chokehold. That's what's coming. Dark. Dark days.

But was there any hope? Was there any hope? And what about the. What about the true remnant of faith. At that time. The small group of true believers. Who'd remained faithful to the Lord. In Jerusalem.

Was there any hope for them? Or was it all over? What about God's great plans of salvation? Were they dead in the water? Well in Isaiah chapter 11.

The Lord says to his people. Oh yes. There is astounding hope. Let me give you hope. And Isaiah live in. The Lord gives his people. A glimpse of where.

The whole of history. Is headed. And he graciously assures. His faithful people. That ultimately. He will save them. And more than that. He will completely renew.

[11:04] The whole of the created order. And he will establish. The perfect kingdom of peace. And goodness. On the earth. And it all centers around. This one individual.

His promised king. And I'd like us to look at this section. Now really under two questions. And we're going to run through the text. So that we're clear on what is being said. About this king.

And then we'll think about the implications. For us today. So here's the first question. And it's this. Simply what type of king is he? What type of king is he?

Well God's promised king. Is a king. Like no other. In fact the things that Isaiah. Proclaims about this king. Are mind blowing. Let's just look at verse one. There shall come forth.

A shoot from the stump. Of Jesse. So Isaiah. Takes us back. Not merely to David notice. But to the stump of Jesse. Jesse. David was the one who arose from Jesse.

[12:02] And so the shoot from Jesse. Will be. A new David. But it's clear that the royal line. At that time when the king arrives. Will seem to be nothing.

But a stump. I don't know when was the last time. You saw a tree stump in the ground. They don't look very promising. They don't look very promising. A stump. Just. It just looks like.

The tree has been. Defunct and demolished. And it has been. Hasn't it? And yet strange things. Can happen around stumps. In a garden.

That my wife and I. Used to have down in England. When we moved in. There was a stump in the ground. And the tree had obviously. Just been chopped down. I think days before we'd moved in. And it looked dead.

It had just been axed. But let me tell you. Over the next three years. When we lived in that house. It was just amazing. To see all sorts of new life. Come bursting out of this stump. New shoots sprouting up.

[12:56] All over the place. And that is what's being pictured here. The promised king will come at a time. When the royal line and the nation. Will look pathetic. Powerless.

And the king himself. When he comes. He will only look like. A twig. A branch. He will look weak. And have humble origins. He's just a shoot.

But then just jump on to verse 10. At the end of our passage. And notice that this king. He's not only described as the shoot. That comes from Jesse.

But he's also described as the root of Jesse. So not only will this shoot come from Jesse. But this king. Will also be Jesse's root. His source of life.

And origin. He was there before Jesse. Friends. I don't think we should downplay this at all. To me it seems that Isaiah is telling us. In a poetic way. That we are dealing with far more.

[13:52] Than simply a human king here. Looks will be deceiving. When this king appears. He won't look like much to the human eye. But in reality. He will be divine.

As chapter 7 says. He will be Emmanuel. God with us. In the flesh. And in verse 2. We're told that this human divine king.

The shoot and root of Jesse. Will also be perfectly equipped. To rule and to reign. Look at verse 2. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him. The spirit of wisdom and understanding.

The spirit of counsel and might. The spirit of knowledge. And the fear of the Lord. So this king will be spirit filled. It will rest upon him.

And Isaiah describes the spirit of the Lord here. In three lines. And his gifts. In three pairs. And I just want to work through these three pairs. Just very quickly. So we know what Isaiah is telling us.

[14:51] A. The king. Will have the spirit. As the spirit of wisdom. And understanding. So that is wisdom. But this king will also have the ability. To use that wisdom.

In isolating. And selecting. The right option to follow. In a word. Discernment. This king. Is never ever going to be guilty. Of making a wrong decision.

Or taking a wrong turn. His decision making. Will be impeccable. And totally trustworthy. B. Says the spirit of counsel.

And might will be upon him. And this implies. That the ability. Not only to form suitable plans. But also having the power. To carry out such plans.

In other words. This king. Will never fail to deliver. On his wise ways. He'll never let you down.

[15:46] Then point C. He's going to have. The spirit of knowledge. And the fear of the Lord. And that implies. That this king. Knows the Lord God. Intimately. And he is driven. By a reverence.

Charged. Faithfulness. To him. This king. Is the complete opposite. In other words. Of King Ahaz. Is mentioned in chapter 7. And in fact.

This coming king. The way he's described here. He's going to outstrip. Even the greatest. Of Old Testament kings. In Israel's history. He will be King David's.

Greater son. And in verse 3. We're told that. His delight shall be. In the fear of the Lord. That is in his heart. This king will be.

Completely consumed. With pleasing the Lord God. And obeying his word. You know. As we look back. Through history. We can see. Loads and loads. Of rulers. And authorities.

[16:38] Who have utterly abused. Their positions of power. To gain stuff. For themselves. But not with this king. Not with God's king. He will do nothing.

For selfish gain. He will never abuse. His power. He will only use. His power. To please God. And therefore. This king. Will only ever bring about. Blessings.

For the people under his rule. And his reign. This is the type of king. That you want. To be ruled by. He'll be perfect. The perfect king.

And more than that. I think Isaiah. Is really telling us. That this perfect king. Will also be. The perfect human being. The spirit filled man.

Par excellence. The one who will finally achieve. The human righteousness. And holiness. That the rest of us. Have failed. To achieve. So what type of king is he?

[17:35] Well in short. He will be the king. That this world. Desperately needs. The type of king. You really want to be ruled by. The type of king. That you want to be united to. By the Holy Spirit.

For to be united to this king. Will be to share in his righteousness. And holiness. And to receive. Nothing but blessings. From him. Well that is our.

That is our first question. This evening. What type of king. Is he? Well here's the second question. What will this king do? What will this king do? Please look at verse three. Again.

He shall not judge. By what his eyes see. Or decide disputes. By what his ears hear. In other words. He's going to rule in truth. One commentator says this.

This king's discernment. Goes beyond the apparent. And superficial. Gets down below the veneer. And the spin coating. And decides matters. With uncanny accuracy.

[18:35] He will rule in truth. There will be no lies with him. No fake news. And he will also rule in justice. Verse four. But with righteousness. He shall judge the poor.

And decide with equity. For the meek of the earth. Or this could also be translated as. He shall judge the helpless. And in uprightness. He shall decide for the afflicted. In other words.

Here is a king. Who will rightly put things right. He will establish justice. In a just way. And what great news. This would have been.

For the Lord's faithful people. The remnant of people. Who are in Jerusalem. Surrounded by Assyria. About to be blasted. By Assyrian cruelty. What great news it was for them.

The Lord will bring justice. At the end of the day. Because it is not right. That those who trust in the Lord. And honor him. Are persecuted. And the Lord.

[19:31] This king. Will put a stop to that. It is great news. For the persecuted church today. The Lord's suffering people. Throughout the world. I read the other day. Of just Christians. Who were

brutally massacred. In Indonesia.

By the local IS division. Well when this promised king. Comes and establishes. His rule on the earth. In all its fullness.

He will vindicate. His helpless. And afflicted people. And justice will be done. And in the end. All those who have opposed. And persecuted his people. They will face his power.

Look again at verse four. He shall strike the earth. With the rod of his mouth. And with the breath of his lips. He shall kill the wicked. Standing in the way of this king.

And opposing him. Is futile. Because his kingdom. Is unshakable. Unstoppable. And ultimately. All opposition. Will be swept away. Like that.

[20 : 29] But then just look at verses six to eight. As we see that this. King. When he brings in his kingdom. He will also transform. The created order.

Let's have a read of verses six to eight. Again. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb. And the leopard shall lie down. With the young goat. And the calf and the lion. And the fattened calf together.

And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze. Their young shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra.

And the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. You see the very strange images here aren't they? But the point that's being made here.

Is that predators will no longer be hunting down their prey. Instead they will live in harmony. And in peace with each other. The bear will swap his lovely sirloin steaks. For a salad.

[21 : 26] Wolves will swap their lamb chops. For a bit of leek soup. In fact the other night. I must have been reading this bit of Isaiah. Before I went to bed. Because I had a dream the other night. And all I could see in the back of my mind.

Was my two little boys in my back garden. Playing with a massive lion. And a massive panther. I think it was. For some reason. I don't know why. But I just imagined my son Ben.

Just saying no lion. You sit down there. And you panther. You go and play over there. You're going to be the baddies. And you're going to be the goodies. We're going to play cops and robbers. But that's the imagery that's used here.

It's amazing. Remarkable. And if you were to read the commentaries. Like I've done over the past week. You'll find that these verses. Have caused masses of debate. Why? Because people can't be sure.

Whether this is a literal image. Or a figurative thing. Is this literal? Is this actually going to happen? Or is it symbolic? Which will it be? You might ask me. The short answer is.

[22 : 23] I don't know. But what we can be absolutely certain of. In these verses. Is that the curse of sin. Is going to be removed. The curse of sin.

Will be removed. And the whole world will be made new. By God's promised king. And just notice that little detail again. Picture my boys in the back garden. But just notice the little detail. Three times in verse six.

Twice in verse eight. We're told that little children. Are described as exercising dominion. Over creatures. And at no danger from predators. Surely that's a poetic way of saying.

That mankind will once again. Have dominion over the created order. Mankind will rule over the earth. With this promised king. And remember back to Genesis 1.28.

That is what mankind was made for in the beginning. When God made Adam. He said be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over all of the creatures. Have dominion over the earth.

[23 : 22] Always under my rule. Said God. And that is what we see here being restored. It's the world. As it should be. Now just look at verse nine.

They. That's the king's redeemed people. Shall not hurt or destroy. In all my holy mountain. For the earth shall be full. Of the knowledge of the Lord.

As the waters cover the sea. So when God's king. Fully establishes his reign on the earth. The earth will be made completely holy. It will be one big temple.

One big temple planet. Where the Lord will dwell. In all his glory with his people. Set apart for God. It will be a paradise. Everything that is evil.

And that is incompatible with God's kingdom. Will be done away with. And thrown away. Just think about this. I've said this before to you in the past. But think about it again. It's a thing I like to do.

Sometimes when I've got a bit of free time.

[24 : 21] I like to play a game called. Will they have a job. In the new creation. And I think about different people. And their jobs. And I think. Will that be in the new creation. Well let's play the game shall we.

Just think about police. Well they'll be out of a job. Because there'll be no crime. NHS workers.

They'll be out of jobs. Doctors, nurses. Psychiatrists, surgeons.

They'll all be out of a job. Because there'll be no ill health. Disease. Pharmacists will be out of a job. Because we'll never need any medication again. I won't need my diabetic medication again. Praise the Lord for that.

Pest control rat catchers. Won't go round to the flats. Of members of the Tron staff. Who've had rat problems. In their staff over the past week. Because there won't be any vermin. Or infestation. We will have. Dominion over the created order. And of course. Undertakers. And those people who. Create. Sympathy cards.

[25 : 19] For those who are grieving. They'll be out of a job. Because there'll be no more death. Never again. Will we ever have to say goodbye. To a loved one.

And more than that. Evangelists. Church ministers. Pastor teachers. We will also be out of a job.

We will also be. I see many of you smiling at that. And I hope that's for good reasons.

But anyway. We will be out of a job. Why is that? Well because look. The knowledge of the glory of God. The knowledge of the Lord. Will cover the earth. And if anyone has got a question.

About the Lord. If anyone has got a theological question. Because I take it when. The new creation comes. We will still be learning new things. About God forever and ever. We will never exhaust him. We won't be turning up to a Bible study.

Instead. We will be going to the Lord Jesus. And asking him face to face. Can you teach me about this? We will approach our king in person. It's just as verse 10 says.

[26 : 18] In that day the root of Jesse. Who shall stand as a signal for the peoples. Of him shall the nations inquire. And his resting place shall be glorious. John Calvin.

The great reformer once said. That the world was no doubt made to be. A theater. Of the divine glory. But as we know mankind. Has trashed and tarnished.

This theater. That we live in. When we rebelled. But God's promised king. Will restore that theater. And the whole world. Will once again.

Be an eternal theater. That shall show off. The beautiful glory of God. For all time. And this is where history is headed. This is where everything is going.

No matter how dark. The days may be. In the present. This is God's. Unstoppable plan. For his people. And for his creation.

[27 : 16] And again. Just think. What a colossal encouragement. That must have been. For the true believers in Judah. As they sat surrounded. Quivering in their living rooms. With Assyria. On.

At the walls of their city. This vision of God's king. Would have brought them great hope. So that they could keep trusting in the Lord. Even through the darkest of days.

And friends. Today. I think these verses. Should give us today. Even greater encouragement. And assurance. Because you and I. Can look back in history. And see the way.

In which these verses. Have already been. Partially fulfilled. We can look back. And see the appearing. Of God's king. Born on that very first Christmas. All those years ago.

And when we look at his person. And his life. And his work. As presented in the gospel accounts. We see that Jesus. Is everything that Isaiah said he would be. He is everything that Isaiah said he would be.

[28 : 13] The perfect spirit filled king. The perfect man. The one. Who came. And inaugurated his kingdom on earth. Through his death and resurrection. And when we look at that.

It gives us great assurance. That the promises of Isaiah 11. Will be completely fulfilled. One day soon. When King Jesus returns in power. And in might.

He won't appear like a little shoot this time. He won't appear weak. Or from a humble origin. He will come in glory and in power. And on that day. Our king. Will gather all of his people.

From all the nations to himself. And we will dwell with him. In his glory forever. In his perfect paradise kingdom. And it will never come to an end.

And no matter how dark the days get now. Nothing will stop this. Well there's much more that could be said.

[29 : 13] But let me close by saying two things. Firstly. It might just be that you have come along to a Tron location tonight. Or maybe perhaps you're watching online.

Or maybe you're not watching this live. Maybe a friend has sent it on to you. And ask you to have a watch of it. Well if that's you. And if you're not a Christian.

If you would say that you're not yet trusting in Jesus. Then it's great that you're here. It's great that you're watching. And I hope that you can see. Why it is that we at the Tron. Why we Christians.

Love Jesus. And why we live for him. He is God's perfect king. And he is our only hope. And let me tell you that our king. He is so gracious and kind.

He's so merciful. He invites everyone. From whatever background. From whatever nation. To turn to him. And to come and join his kingdom. Listen to what he once said in his ministry.

[30 : 11] Jesus said. Come to me. All who are weary and burdened. And I will give you rest. Take my yoke. That's my teaching upon you. And learn from me.

For I am gentle and humble in heart. And you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy. And my burden is light. Do you hear what he's saying?

He's inviting you to surrender your life to him. To build your life upon his person. His work. And his teaching. And he says. If you do that. I will never cast you away.

Quite the opposite. I will welcome you in. With open arms. Into my kingdom. And I will give your soul. Rest. Those of us who are in the tron.

And we are already living under his rule. We can testify this personally. We know his goodness. And his kindness. King Jesus has already given us. A taste of this rest now. In this life.

[31 : 11] Especially rest from the fear of death. And rest from the guilt of sin. And in him. We have a sure and certain hope.

For all eternity. It's breathtaking. And friend. You can have this rest too. It can be yours. If you trust him. If you surrender.

Your life to him. Well finally. Let me say something to us. As a church. This Christmas.

And beyond. Let's make sure. Brothers and sisters. That the eyes of our hearts. Are firmly fixed upon. Our great and glorious king. And upon his second coming.

When he will establish. His perfect kingdom. In all its fullness. And as I said at the beginning. It's so important. That we do this. Because. The fear of death. Especially these days.

[32 : 07] Pervades our society. And our city. And it could so easily. Weed its way. Into our hearts and minds. And drag us down. Drag us down as a church.

And individually. Pull us down into despair. And that is why. It is so essential. That we don't give up. Meeting together like this.

We don't give up. Gathering together. To remind ourselves. And to shine. The light of God's glorious gospel. Into our hearts. So that we don't lose heart.

Because when our church. Doesn't do this. Well that church will. Start to sink into fear. And it will. Mean that we will cease to be. The witness that we could be.

And should be. Friends. The people of Glasgow. Are walking in darkness. Thousands of them. And they need to see.

[33 : 02] The great light of Christ. Shining out brightly. Boldly. And joyfully. From his church. So let's not shrink away. But let's take great heart.

From these unstoppable promises. And let's soldier on together. In the strength of our Lord. And our King. He is with us. And he will help us.

As his coming. Draws that little bit closer. Every day. Well amen. Let's be quiet for a moment. And maybe respond to the word of God. In our own hearts.

And then I'll pray for us. Behold God is my salvation.

I will trust. And will not be afraid. For the Lord God is my strength. And my song. And he has become. My salvation.

[34 : 06] Gracious Heavenly Father. We praise you. That you are the God. Of our salvation. You are the God. Who is faithful. To your great covenant promises. And oh how we praise you.

For sending your promised king. Into the world. To carry out your great rescue plan. For all things. Father we confess. That we don't deserve. Such kindness. And mercy from you.

But we praise you. That in him. We stand forgiven. And right with you. And we stand secure. And in him. We have a sure. And certain hope.

Of eternal life. In his perfect kingdom. Father we pray. That as we wait. For this coming. Of our king. That you would safeguard. Our hearts.

From sinking into despair. And from drifting. Instead we ask. That you will give us. The strength that we need. To keep living for him. And help us.

[35 : 02] As we seek. To make your glorious deeds. Known. In all the earth. For there are thousands. Of people in Glasgow. Who are without Christ.

This Christmas. So please. Would you help us. Heavenly Father. To fill this city. With the light. Of your gospel. So that people might hear.

And believe. And so receive. The rest. That only King Jesus. Can give. And we pray this. In his name. And for his sake.

Amen.