

Sermon Good Friday

~~WORST. BEST. KING. EVER.:~~ Manasseh

2 Chronicles 33:1–20

Hymns: *LSB* 449/450, 452

During Lent, we have considered the good kings of Judah. Week after week we saw that their reigns have been superseded by the glorious reign of Jesus Christ, the Son of David. Each of those kings was a sinner, but insofar as they ruled with justice and led the people in righteousness, our great King, Jesus Christ, is their perfect fulfillment.

Tonight, we will not consider one of the good kings of Judah.

Instead, we turn to King Manasseh, the worst king ever!

Most of the kings in Chronicles are described as either following in the ways of David or abandoning them. We remarked specifically about Jehoram, who was said to follow the ways of wicked Ahab, his father-in-law. However, Manasseh gets special treatment. ***“He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel”*** (2 Chronicles 33:2).

His deeds are not compared to David or Solomon. They are not even compared to the evil kings of Israel. Manasseh is compared to the pagan Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites (cf Joshua 3:10). Judah under Manasseh returned to the state of wickedness, which prevailed before the conquest of Joshua and the planting of Israel in the Promised Land. And he compares poorly.

“Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel” (2 Chronicles 33:9).

For most of his fifty-five years, Manasseh gave the ultimate example of unrighteousness. Manasseh’s greatest hits include erecting altars to the Baals and Asheroth, which Hezekiah had torn down. He worshiped the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars. He defiled the temple, which Hezekiah had cleansed, erecting altars to the heavenly hosts even in the temple. Yes, in that place where the Lord’s name was to be worshiped were pagan altars. He consulted sorcerers and necromancers. He even offered his children as burnt offerings.

In 2 Kings, it is written that *“Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he made Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the Lord”* (2 Kings 21:16). What more could Manasseh have done to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger?

Therefore, the army of the Assyrians was brought to capture Manasseh. They put a fish hook in his nose and led him away bound in chains. That is, he was treated like a wild animal that needed to be subdued. He was wounded and humiliated by foreigners. King Manasseh lost everything, even as the kingdom tottered.

At this lowest point, far away in Babylon, the king of Judah humbled himself before the God of his fathers. In a foreign land, he finally entreated the God of Israel. Manasseh repented of his sins and sought the Lord’s favor. By what can only be called a miracle of God worked in his pagan captors, he was returned to Judah. He restored God’s altar. However, for the people of Judah, it was too late.

The wicked influences on them had been too strong. We read in the next chapter that the judgment of God will not depart from Judah. Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed.

But what about King Manasseh? God was moved by his plea! What could move God so? Was it his beautifully constructed prayer or earnest words? Did Manasseh promise God something extraordinary to make up for his sins? Of course not. There's nothing that could make up for the great sins of Manasseh. The mercy of God simply flows freely for the repentant. No matter what the sin, no matter when the repentance, the mercy of God is very great. This mercy flowed equally for both David and Manasseh at the ends of their reigns.

Yet satisfaction must be made. Only a perfect sacrifice would atone for the sins of Manasseh. Manasseh had nothing of that caliber to bring to God. There weren't enough bulls or goats in all Judah or even the world to pay for his iniquities.

Indeed, only a perfect sacrifice would atone for our sins. Perhaps our sins are not as public as Manasseh's, but there is nothing we can offer either. Not all the blood of beasts could wash away the stain of our sin.

We look only to Jesus, the Son of Manasseh shed innocent blood for our sins.

The Son of Manasseh offered that perfect sacrifice, not for his sins, but ours. He was the one true Innocent. Yes, the Son of God was tempted, as all men are, but did not sin. Still, the sin of the world was put on his shoulders, great sin which weighs us down and brings us low.

The Son of Manasseh shed his blood to pay for the sin of the world. For children offered up to Baal or the sun god. For the blood of children killed in warfare. For children's lives snuffed out before birth for our convenience. For children who starve because of our indifference.

The precious blood of Jesus was spilled for innocent Jewish blood shed by Manasseh. For Jewish blood spilled by Hitler and the German Nazis. For the many wicked anti-Semites throughout history.

The blood of Christ poured for the thief on the cross. For white-collar thieves of millions of dollars from unsuspecting folks. For common thieves who cheat on taxes or timecards.

For pagans who worship earth and heaven rather than the Creator. For idolaters who worship money and success and forget the Giver of all good things.

The Son of David rode into Jerusalem with great expectation. But soon he was bound and led into the headquarters of a foreign governor. There the King of the Judeans was mocked and bled from wounds on that sacred head. Though he sought relief from his Father, praying earnestly that the cup be taken from him, it was the will of God that he suffer for the sins of Manasseh and us. It was the right time for the sin of the world to be taken away. The hour had come for the Son of Man to be lifted up and glorified. Jesus now would bear the title “King of the Judeans” while hanging on a cross.

After the sacrifice of his Son, God restored the temple. The temple in Jerusalem has been permanently removed, both the temple of Solomon and Herod’s temple. But the temple of Jesus’ body is alive and well. In that temple, Jesus continues to offer us forgiveness through communion in his body and blood. And we continue to worship in the name of Jesus our Lord.

The Son of Manasseh is the BEST. KING. EVER. Not only does he lead his people in righteousness, but he accomplished righteousness for us. Whatever our sins, however long we've been distant from his body, however close we are to death, Jesus' sacrifice has moved God to mercy. The King of Judah has established an eternal kingdom of righteousness through the forgiveness of sins.

On this holy day, let us entreat our Father through the great King Jesus Christ, confidently believing that he is moved with mercy by the sacrificial death of the Son of Manasseh, our Lord and Savior.

Amen