

Built to Flow (Psalm 72:1-4, 12-14, Acts 2:44-45)

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[0:00] So, yeah, good afternoon church. How are we doing? Good. Lovely to see all of you, a few new faces.! But yeah, we welcome you, you know, in the name of the Lord. So, we'll start off with, you know what, let's, shall we move on to the next slide?

And I'll talk about, oh wait, I do have the clicker here. Hang on. Right, yes. So, today's sermon is about the care path, which I'll talk about.

The title is Built to Flow. Now, let me start with a story with you. The last place I rented was this old house, you know, built in the 60s.

So, downstairs there was a huge room, actually pretty decent. But, well, some of you may remember when Cyclone Gabriel hit, there was a massive rain, right?

And the water in the ground had nowhere to go, and that room got flooded. Carpet entirely soaked, even the hallway was flooded. So, I had to get to, you know, one of friends, right? Call him over to get a, like a, you know, wet vacuum.

[1:16] And together we were trying to suck all the water out, right? It was at night, at 10, I still remember. But the water just kept seeping in, non-stop. The room was basically unusable.

And then, later on, you know, our number three baby arrived, and we just needed more space. So, we moved on. And then, we moved on to a brand new townhouse, where the first tenants, fresh build, guess what?

The sink downstairs won't drain. I was thinking, right, you've got to be kidding me. This is new build. So, I called my landlord to send us a plumber. And when he came, it was like in full operation.

He brought, like, rods, cameras, and a massive pump machine. You know what he pulled out? The builder's sand and grit that had fallen into the pipes during construction, blocking the whole thing.

Now, whether it is an old house or brand new one, the pipes can still get blocked. And I wonder, would that be the same with us being a Christian?

[2:28] Whether you're brand new to faith, or you've been walking with Jesus for decades, sometimes our spiritual lives get a little bit clogged up. Now, our lives get so packed with stuff.

Work pressure, mortgage stress, rent, kids' extracurriculars activities, WhatsApp groups blowing up every single day, every single hour, endless scrolling, social media.

It all piles up until we're completely jammed. We're like a dam, holding everything back, and nothing gets through. Now, today, we're looking at two passages, Psalm 72 and Acts 2.

At first glance, they don't seem related at all. One is a prayer for God to raise up a righteous king. The other is a picture of how that king's people actually live.

But together, they show us something powerful. When we truly know the king who cares for the poor, our lives shift from being a dam to being a pipe, so that we can let love and resources flow freely.

[3:43] So, let's read from the Psalm again. Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son of your righteousness.

May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice. For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help.

He will take pity on the weak and the needy to save the needy from the death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence. For precious is their blood in his sight.

And of course, we know the Acts verse very well now. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Now,

a bit of background here.

Psalms 72 is a final psalm of Book 2 of the Psalter. It is a soaring, poetic prayer for a good king, painting a picture of peace, justice, and society flourishing.

[4:54] Now, the heading says of Solomon, but many scholars believe the ideal king described here goes well beyond Solomon. If you look at verse 8, it says, his rule extends from sea to sea and even to the end of earth, right?

And all the nations bow before him. That's a wish well beyond what Solomon actually achieved. So, the Jewish tradition has long read this as a messianic psalm.

It's pointing to the ultimate king still to come. And Acts 2 is the scene right after Pentecost. The spirit comes down.

Peter preaches 3,000. Come to faith. And Luke gives us a snapshot of how these brand new believers live together. So, these two passages, one ancient, one new, they're telling the same story.

In God's kingdom, resources flow. Because the heart of the true king is always turned towards the poor.

[6:02] So, let's look at the first point here. Finding the true king, authority rooted in compassion. So, right from the opening line, the psalmist asks God to give the king justice and righteousness.

And that word in Hebrew, tzedakah, doesn't just mean playing by rules. It means actively making things right. We're talking about fairness, integrity, and going out of your way to lift the vulnerable. Now, think about this. If you are at the school doing a group project, there's always that one person who doesn't quite guess what's going on. Maybe they're new.

Maybe English isn't their first language. A fair group leader would say, everyone does equal work. Go figure it out. But the righteous leader notices that person is struggling and says, hey, you know what?

Let's work this out together. That's tzedakah, going out of your way, so no one gets left behind.

Now, look at verse 12.

[7:11] There is a crucial word. For, for, he will deliver the needy who cry out. The reason this king deserves honor isn't military strength or a booming economy.

It's because he cares for the poor. This flips ancient culture on its head. And I would say modern culture too. We measure greatness by military power and economic output.

But Psalm 72 says, no, look at how they treat the people at the very bottom. That is true greatness. Now, this reminds me of renting again in New Zealand.

You know, a landlord has a lot of power. They can raise rent. They can aid your tenancy. So, long time ago, many years ago, we once rented a place right next to the school. Super convenient for us. And then, you know, after nine months, we were living so happily. Then the property manager calls. Hey, the owner wants the house back. We were blindsided.

[8:19] Our kids were still small. We just settled in. And I was panicking. And she says, so I asked her, you know, what have we done wrong? You know, why are you kicking us out?

And she says, no, no, no, you have done nothing wrong. It's just that the owners wants to move back in. And I was thinking, hey, if you knew you were moving back within a year, why did you rent all the place in the first place?

Are we tenants are just, you know, being disposable? Now, on the flip side, there are landlords who are genuinely amazing.

Now, there was someone whom I know, serving faithfully as a religious organization for about six to seven years. But the church, oops, it was a church, keep paying him at the minimum wage.

And, you know, even the pastor told him, you know, you're a preacher now, right? You should live by faith. But keep paying him minimum wage. Then he, later on, he gets married.

[9:26] A little one came along. The household expenses goes up. And God moves the heart of a sister in the church who owns a house. She rents him a downstairs unit at about 50 or 60% of the market rates.

So, later on, when God clearly gives him a vision to move on from the church, he tells his boss, the senior pastor, you know, the church underpays me, but God provided through a generous landlord who made up the difference for me.

Look, that landlord isn't naive. I mean, she's, she's using her power to protect someone vulnerable. We are talking about using power and authority righteously.

So, true authority isn't about holding up, holding over people, it's about holding people up. Jesus holds all authority in heaven and on earth.

And what does he do with it? He heals lepers, lifting their health. He eats with tax collectors and prostitutes, lifting their dignity.

[10:44] He takes children into his arms, lifting their worth. He dies on the cross, paying our debts, lifting our dust-like existence into eternal life.

His throne is built upon compassion. Now, I want to actually speak to some decision makers.

in your household. Are you a mom, or dad, grandma, grandpa, or elder sibling? How are we using our authority? Now, some of us grew up where the dinner table wasn't for discussion.

It was for announcements. You bring up something you're struggling with, maybe your anxiety, your doubts about faith, and the response could be, you know what?

You shouldn't talk like this. Just pray more. And after a while, you stop bringing things up. But when someone in authority actually pauses and says, you know what?

[11:48] Tell me a little bit more. How you feel? What are you thinking? that changes everything. It doesn't mean that they agree. It means that you matter enough to be heard.

That's authority used the way Jesus uses it. The purpose of authority is not about control. It's about protection.

Now, Now, we come to the second point. Living as a flowing community, seeing needs, breaking barriers. So, these two verses here paints a pretty stunning picture, eh?

Now, your first reaction would be, everything in common. Seriously? Isn't that communism?

Communism? Especially for those with Chinese heritage. That word carries a lot of baggage.

But what Acts describes here is nothing like a forced redistribution of wealth. It is people willingly, joyfully sharing based on the need of others.

[12:54] Here are the two key words. All and everything. No one is excluded and nothing is being held back.

This isn't just wealthy believers doing charity. It is the whole community pitching in. And look at the verb, to give.

It happens to be in imperfect tense in Greek. Meaning, this isn't just a one-off redistribution. It is ongoing.

Whenever a need comes up, they sell. They share. Like a tap. Someone turns it on and the water flows. And what is the basis for distribution?

It's simply as anyone who had need. That's it. Need. Now, that reminds me of something our church loves.

[13:54] Bring a plate. Right? Yeah? Everyone brings a dish, puts it on the table, everyone helps themselves, everyone brings, I mean, someone brings salad, someone may make curry, someone picks up, takes takeaways, or pizza.

Everyone contributes a little bit. Everyone shares. But you know, sometimes our Chinese culture is a little bit funny. You go out for a meal, right? And people will start fighting.

Yeah? Who's paying the bill, right? And the two people, it's like wrestling at the counter, you know, when the poor waitress, just standing there, not knowing what to do. Now, on the other extreme, some people like going Dutch, right?

And down to the sands. Look, you just ordered a lobster, and I only had a pork bun here, right? Maybe we should split the bill. Yeah? Well, there's no need to fight over the bill, no need to go Dutch, just share happily, and generously.

Now, here is a beautiful, Maori proverb. No te dodo, nak ku te dodo, ka ora ai te iwi. With your food basket and my food basket, people will thrive.

[15:15] That's the early church. They're simply saying, well, you don't have enough. I do. Here, take it. It's like, a family, at dinner, mom sees the youngest kid, bowls is empty, so, she gave me something.

There's no calculator needed. And this is the essence of, *kononia*, fellowship. It's not about sitting together, once a week. It is about, what I have, I'm willing to share with you.

Now, I know, many of us, you know, just regular workers, students, we've got rent, mortgage to cover, student loans to pay.

You might be thinking, I can barely cover my own expenses. But, well, everything in common, that isn't about money. Think about it.

If you're good at IT, well, help an auntie at the church to sort out her phone notification. That could be, sharing everything in common. Are you good at English?

[16:27] Maybe we could, you know, help a new immigrant family, fill out, maybe the ILD form, some other government forms. That's resources flowing to them. Go to the car, pick up someone before worship.

That's resource sharing. And, brothers and sisters, I want to pause and speak to those who are still considering faith.

Now, if today is your first time at church, I want you to know this. We are not here because we are amazing people. Honestly, we are often quite selfish and petty.

But, we encountered this person, Jesus Christ, the King of Psalm 72. He had all the glory of heaven, but set it aside.

He came into this world and died on the cross for us because He saw our need, the poverty of our souls, and He decides to come here to rescue us.

[17:31] The Bible says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

That is the gospel. God taking the initiative to let His love flow towards us. If you want to know more about our faith, come chat with me, Pastor William, or many of our leaders here.

Now, moving on to the third point here. Clearing the pipes from hoarding to flowing.

Now, so far we have seen Psalm 72, the King's heart turns towards the poor. We have seen Acts, how the early church living out flowing resources.

And now, what about ourselves? Are the pipes of our lives flowing freely or not? Now, anyone living in New Zealand knows how important roof gutters are in winter.

[18:45] If you haven't cleaned them all year, leaves and dirt starts to build up. On a fine day, you're okay. But when heavy rain comes and water can't drain, what happens?

Mosquito breathe. Water leaks in. Mold creeps up the walls. And what blocks the gutter isn't some massive rock.

Very unlikely, right? those are tiny leaves and grime. One leaf probably won't block anything, but day after day, layer after layer, nothing gets through.

Our lives are the same. What blocks us isn't usually something like a dramatic sin. It's the subtle stuff. perhaps a sense of entitlement.

Hey, I deserve this and I'm not giving this up. Maybe it's a scorekeeping mentality. Hey, I worked so hard for this.

[19:51] Why should I share? Maybe it's a little bit of fear. Look, I don't even have enough for myself. How can I share? Maybe it's a bit of laziness.

Ah, we'll get to it later. And day after day, our pipeline gets clogged and God's grace flows in but can't flow out.

What would happen? Our lives get moldy. We could turn bitter and our mind closed off. And that's why we need to regularly clean our gutters.

But how? We ask the Holy Spirit for help. Where is the blockage in our lives? Am I holding on to time and money too tightly? Are we holding on to resentment?

Or are we clinging into our own security or insecurity? Now, how many of you feel like we're not quite enough?

[20:59] At school, you may need top grades because your parents sacrificed so much. At work, you hustle twice as hard to be taken seriously, especially when you're new to the job.

So, we start to hold on tight to everything, our energy, our time, our money, our reputation, because if you let go, it would all fall apart. That instinct to grip tight, it is very real, especially when you watch your family work so hard for you, for everything.

Now, I would like to encourage us to think about a few things. Let's shift from a passing-through mindset to a steward mindset.

So, God brought us here for a purpose. Let's ask, what would you like me to do with what I have to bless this place, Aotearoa, New Zealand?

Maybe you are an incredible cook. Make something for your neighbors, and that's resource sharing. Second, let's be honest with our own needs.

[22:14] In our culture, we hide struggles, but your honesty gives brothers and sisters a chance to put love into action. If you don't speak up, how can they help you?

And we can get involved in a small act of service. Maybe just greeting people at the door, washing cups after the service, setting up tables.

If you shift from being served to serving, and you find your life starts moving and flowing. So, the question for us is, are the pipes of our lives flowing freely today?

And may each of us become a channel of love. And like the sermon title I said today, as Christians, because of God, we are built to flow.

Now, the sermon today is also part of the Baptist World Alliance X2 movement towards 2033. What I share today is the care path.

[23:24] When our king takes initiative to care for orphans, widows, and they're vulnerable, what about us? So, the Alliance suggests three stages.

First, to walk. Help an individual or family in need at least three times a year. If you could run, run. Volunteer with a group of people to do good, especially to help at risk children, orphans, widows, and others in need.

And even so, you can become a leader. help to organize people to accomplish targeted acts of service. Now, this isn't about running before you can walk.

Let's take it step by step. It's about taking one little step forward by the grace of God. So, are we ready to walk, run, or to soar?

What action should I do? Honestly, we'll never feel prepared. Sometimes, we just have to dive in and then grace will start to flow.

[24:36] Like Moses stepping into the Red Sea before it splits, not the other way around. maybe you're thinking, I don't even know when to start and how to start.

So, I would like to play you a video clip. Maybe it will give us some idea. Right? Well, usually Thai videos are funny ones, right? But this one is actually a very heart melting one.

Nice. Look, the guy in the clip isn't afraid of being taken advantage of. He simply gives everything according to his ability.

He does it day after day, caring for all the people, even dogs, that he encounters. That is gospel in action. The king of Psalm 72, the one who cares for the poor, he's already come.

He is Jesus Christ. He pours his love into our lives. Not so we can damn it up, but so we can be pipes, letting love flow freely.

[25:46] So, are the pipes of our lives clear today? Is there anything blocking them? If there's something, don't be afraid.

Ask the Holy Spirit to clear the blockage. The moment you're willing to open up, he will get to work, and the living water will flow again.

Let's bow ahead and pray. dear Heavenly Father, we come before you.

Thank you for speaking to us today through your word. Lord, we confess that so often we look more like dams and pipes.

We hold on to our money, our time, our comfort, and refuse to let go. Forgive us, Holy Spirit.

[26:44] Come and clear our blocked pipes. Sweep away the score keeping, the resentment, and the entitlement. Lord Jesus, you are the King of Psalm 72, the one whose heart breaks for the poor.

though you were rich, you became poor for our sake. Help us follow your example, to use our power to protect, use our resources to bless, and our lives to bear witness to your love.

We also pray for the friends here who don't yet know you. Reveal your love to them. Let them know you see their need and are willing to lift them up to.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.