

February 14, 2016
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Psalms
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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KING OF GLORY Psalm 24

The Psalm before us is a song that draws a picture that most people in David's day would have understood quite well. It is the picture of a king leading a procession of some kind into his capital and to his palace where he would sit on the throne.

If so, it was also a picture with which the people of Jerusalem who lived about four hundred years after David would have been more familiar than they liked. In that day, King Nebuchadnezzar sacked Judah and led thousands of captives from their homes in the Promised Land to captivity in Babylon. He could do that because he who wins the battle is in charge.

It was a picture repeated often during the days of the Roman Empire as victorious kings and generals led captives through the city of Rome to the Emperor's palace. That no doubt was fulfilled when General Titus marched back into Rome with citizens of Israel in tow.

Ironically, Paul drew this same picture for us in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus. He pictured Jesus ascending to heaven leading a host of captives. We cannot help but notice in that picture that before Jesus ascended victoriously (in a grand parade as it were), He descended to the humility of the earth. While He ministered on earth, before He won the victory over sin, death, and Satan, God the Son suffered being despised, rejected, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

That is the picture David has drawn for us in three psalms that are often considered together. Psalm 22 promised that Jesus would suffer intensely for our sins on the cross. Psalm 23 pictures Him as our loving, caring Shepherd who leads us to eternal life for His own glory. Now in Psalm 24 we read about Jesus the victorious King in His glory. Some preachers have labeled this triad, "The cross, the crook, and the crown."

In fact, it is quite possible that David wrote this song to be sung while he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. That seems to be the case in light of David's words at that end of his prayer of dedication when he brought the ark to Jerusalem. Say also: "*Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather and deliver us from among the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise. Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting!*" Then all the people said, "Amen!" and praised the LORD. (1 Chronicles 16:35-36).

Before us is a song of praise by which we who love the Lord will be encouraged to hope for the day when we are with Him. It will be a day of experienced, completed victory.

Who Shall Stand When He Appears (vv.1-5)?

Admit first of all that everything belongs to God. David concluded that the earth and everyone on it belong to God. *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein (v.1)*. More specifically, David concluded that the earth belongs to Yahweh. This is the title for God that reminds us that the LORD is self-existing. He is before all things and, therefore, He created all things. Observe that those are the same characteristics attributed to Jesus who identified Himself to John at the beginning and at the end of the Revelation. He said about Himself, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*" says the Lord God, "*who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*" (Revelation 1:8). At the end of the revealing Jesus said, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*" (Revelation 22:13). Because He is before all things, whatever exists has to exist by His command or creative act.

Distilling the argument still further, David concluded that the earth's fullness belongs to Yahweh. The earth's fullness is whatever is on earth. The word *fullness* should cause us to contemplate what we have that was not made from something on or in or about the earth? All the earth's resources, all its wealth in precious metals, gems, oil, belong to God. Everything necessary to sustain us, everything that gives us pleasure, everything physical that we count dear belongs to God. The Creator allows us to use the stuff He made while we are on earth.

It is important to see that the earth is significant not only to the psalmist, and you, and me, but to God also. This ball of dirt is barely

visible in our galaxy. Outside the Milky Way (our galaxy), the earth virtually disappears from view. Yet on this ball of dirt God placed humans who He made in His image. On this ball of dirt God ordained to all the work necessary to redeem the entire creation.

In light of God's plan and work, every human to ever live on earth belongs to Yahweh. We should be delighted that *we* belong to God. This is especially true of believers who God has purchased for Himself at infinite price. But by virtue of the fact that God is Creator, He also owns even people who reject Him—which makes their rejection so grievous.

We are God's because He is Creator. As Creator, *He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers (v.2)*. This is a poetic picture of the dry earth rising out of the waters of the seas and rivers. Isn't that how it happened according to the creation story?

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so (Genesis 1:9).

It takes incredible faith to believe that the astonishing mass, extent, and intricacies of the universe simply evolved. At least many in the scientific community have come to the conclusion that some kind of major act of energy (they call it the Big Bang) spun everything into motion. Maybe you are impressed with the discovery at the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory last week. Researchers there believe they have discovered proof of a significant aspect of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. In a layman's nutshell, the discovery seems to indicate that mass moving in spacetime creates waves of gravity. Researchers believe that by gathering and studying the gravitational waves they should be able to figure out where the universe started. Simply put, they think this will lead to the discovery of the "Big Bang." I wonder if the Big Bang really wasn't the Creator saying, "Let there be . . ."

Because God created everything and everyone, all owe thanksgiving and obedience to Him. All of nature obeys the voice of its Creator. Only humans who He created in His own image refuse to acknowledge Him and submit to Him.

And yet to some of those humans comes that promise that those who are the King's people are blessed. But that is not everyone. Not everyone can stand in the King's presence. David wondered, *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place (v.3)?*

The question regards those who approach the LORD. Who shall ascend the LORD's hill? The verb translated *ascend* is very common in the Old Testament, showing up about 900 times. In the bulk of those uses, the word clearly refers to ascending, going up, or approaching. The word would certainly describe what the people of God did when they ascended the hills to Jerusalem. And while the pilgrims walked the roads up to Jerusalem to attend the feasts where they worshiped God, they sang these songs of ascent. Which brings up an important point: This Hebrew word is of the same root as the word for burnt offerings or sacrifices. Therefore, this question is, "Who shall go up to worship the LORD?"

A second question David pondered is, "Who shall stand in His holy place?" This word is so common that in its root form it is found over 1,000 times in the Old Testament. It means to rise up, which is a bit broad or vague. It can refer to standing up to an adversary, or showing respect. However, the word is often found in a context of engaging, as in engaging an enemy or even engaging a person unto marriage. Therefore, the question David posed is, "Who can engage God?" This too is a description of worship.

The implication is that some people cannot do this. The question implies that not just anyone can approach God in worship. Not everyone has the privilege of engaging God in the relationship we call worship. Modern religionists are aghast at such a suggestion. Huge buildings are bursting these days with worshipers of all sorts, all manner of lifestyles, rocking and gyrating in worship. Right. But what modern religion identifies as worship is not at all what God defines as worship.

To worship the LORD creator is to approach Him with deepest respect, bowing to Him with a humble heart, and rejoicing because of the grace and mercy He has showed us. Entertaining human flesh and stirring human passions is not at all the same as worshipping God. A mere human who is in rebellion against the Creator cannot even begin to approach Him and engage Him in worship. Worship is the privilege of a particular kind of people.

Only the generation who seeks the King enjoys His blessing (vv.4-6). Notice in these verses the various characteristics that identify the kind of people who the King allows in His presence to worship. That generation is sincere. It is, *he who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully (v.4)*. This is the description of people who are granted access

to worship the Creator. Sincerity is the overriding characteristic of these people.

The first description of sincerity is that true worshipers maintain clean hands. Most commonly this statement would speak of removing defiling activity. Isaiah challenge God's people: "*When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil*" (Isaiah 1:15-16). Clean hands refers to what most people considering normal and acceptable living. It is the same kind of trait Paul expressed when he wrote, *I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling* (1Timothy 2:8).

Second, true or sincere worshipers maintain a pure heart. This is removal of internal defilement. It is possible to look squeaky clean on the outside but be full of all kinds of offenses against God on the inside. Pharisees were masters at this. Too easily we forget that impure, wicked thoughts are as damning as they actions they fantasize. James required us to, *Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded* (James 4:8).

Third, true or sincere worshipers refuse to trust what is false. To *lift up your soul* is to entrust it to someone or something. There are so many false objects of faith. We can trust our ability or common sense rather than God. We can trust the financial portfolio instead of God. We can trust our physical well being rather than God. We can trust other people (loved ones) rather than God. We can trust the government instead of depending on God. We cant trust a religious organization or a creed but not God. And many professing people of God actually trust one or many such things instead of depending only on God.

Fourth, true worshipers are transparent. They do not *swear deceitfully*. To swear deceitfully is to make a promise you never intend to keep. People who refuse to engage in this sin, say what they mean and mean what they say. They keep their word. They are quite unlike normal humanity.

Looking at this list of qualities found in a true worshiper might be overwhelming. But, consider an even more complete list of sincere worshiper traits that David also gave us. *O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly*

and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved (Psalm 15:1-5)

Have you every tried to maintain purity of actions, a pure heart, complete faith in God, and perfect transparency to do all you say? It is humanly impossible! So who could ever be qualified to approach and worship God?

On one hand, a particular generation receives from the LORD special blessing to that end. *He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation* (v.5). The LORD Creator is also our God of salvation. He grants salvation from sin's penalty and power when we say the same things about ourselves that He says, and when we trust Him completely to forgive our sins.

He is also the God of righteousness. When He saves us, He cleanses us. When He saves us, He clothes us in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. He helps us know and understand that righteousness. He motivates us to live in that righteousness. He gives us grace and power to become more righteous as time goes on. His incredible blessing is to make us fit to worship Him. It is as the writer to the Hebrew Christians concluded: *How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God* (Hebrews 9:14).

That generation is seeking the LORD's face. *Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob* (v.6). Multitudes of people claim to be seeking God. The people who God saves and blesses with His righteousness truly seek Him. To seek His face is to desire with all out hearts to love Him, walk in fellowship with Him, and become like Him. This is what "love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength" looks like.

On the other hand, there is one who is perfectly qualified in every way, within Himself, to approach the presence of Yahweh the ever-existing God. He is the King of Glory!

Who Is this King of Glory (vv.7-10)?

A simple command alerts us that Someone or something important approaches. Lift up your heads. The command is to *Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in (v.7)*. We see virtually the same command repeated in verse nine: *Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in (v.9)*.

Obviously the command is for gates and doors. Possibly there was a literal lifting up or removal of a gate door when David led the Ark into Jerusalem. But this is a picture of the King of Glory coming to the dwelling of the eternal God. While it is true that God the Son is equal with God the Father, still He returned to heaven and the presence of the Father. He came to earth and was humiliated. In that shame and humiliation Jesus demonstrated what perfectly clean hands look like. He showed us what a perfectly pure heart is. No one ever has or ever will keep His vow like Jesus did. He came to do the Father's will and did not cease pursuing it until it was accomplished.

And having done all the Father's will, the King of glory ripped open the veil in the temple to picture the lifting up of the holy door that separated us from God. For Him the ancient gate has been lifted off its hinges and the door to heaven has never been shut since that moment.

The reason for the command is so the King may enter. The King of glory entered the throne room of God's temple in heaven. He sat down at the right hand of Yahweh, the LORD. He now pleads for us on the basis of His shed blood. Our sins are forgiven, our hands are cleansed, our hearts are purified, and we worship Him.

Now we come to the amazing revelation that the LORD is King. Oh! We thought Jesus was the King. He is! Then that means Jesus is equal to Yahweh. They are two parts of the same God. He who fought sin on earth is that King of glory who is strong and mighty in battle. *Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle (v.8)!*

King Jesus battled the war with the flesh and won. He was tempted like we are but without sin. No doubt because He was perfectly innocent, His battle with the flesh was far more intense than ours is. King Jesus battled the enemies in humanity and won. They mocked Him, argued with Him, rejected Him, and finally killed Him.

They saw His body placed in a tomb, wiped their hands and said, "Finally, that's the end of him." But King Jesus burst out of that tomb and the enemies all went to their eternal defeat. King Jesus battled Satan and all his hosts of demons and won. King Jesus battled sin and won. King Jesus battled death and won. He is strong and mighty and He is our King and Savior.

The King of glory is also the LORD of hosts. A second statement from David sounds almost like the first statement he made. *Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory! (v.10)*. This King of glory is the ruler over the hosts, the armies of heaven. He is the King over all that is glorious. He is the King characterized by the glory of the triune Godhead.

And the King of glory is King Jesus. He alone meets all of the characteristics of one who is allowed to approach the eternal God and enter His gates. Through His work of atonement, He grants to us the grace to be made righteous so that we can approach the eternal God. Because He has completed this work, we are able to be mighty in battle with Him.

Paul encouraged us with these words about the battle: *For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)*. "If the earth is His (1,2) and He is holy (3-6), the challenge to the 'ancient doors' is not an exercise in pageantry, but (as in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4) a battle-cry for the church." (Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary*, "Psalms 1-72," Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973, 115.)

The world refuses to accept Jesus as King, but He is. Weak Christians live like they are kings, but Jesus is really their King. Strong Christians long to be in the presence of the King to worship Him. One day we will be in His literal presence forever to praise the King.