

“Worshipping the King of Glory – Part 2”  
“The Presence of God”  
Psalm 24  
(Preached at Trinity, April 25, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Psalm 24** is a psalm of majesty and glory. It is a psalm that directs our eyes to the loftiness of God. As I pointed out last time, it was probably a psalm written to be sung as the Ark was being transported from Obededom to Jerusalem.
2. **Psalm 24** recognizes God in all His sovereignty and perfection. It is an invitation for God’s people to worship Him in a manner that recognizes His glory. It is divided into three parts:
  - Verses 1-2** – a declaration of God’s majesty and dominion upon the earth.
  - Verses 3-6** – a recognition of God’s perfect holiness – they describe God’s people coming into the holy city and ask the question, “Who is able to come?”
  - Verses 7-10** – describe God coming to His people.
3. Last time we limited our focus to the first section, **Verses 1-2**  
God is the almighty Creator that created all things by the word of His power. He created everything as a manifestation of His divine being and He did it for Himself.
  - A. As Creator God has full possession over all things
    - a. God has the right to govern and order the affairs of all people
    - b. God has the authority to establish His Law and He has the authority to enforce it. When He casts sinners into hell He will be acting in a judicially correct manner. In other words it will be legally correct.
  - B. All of this authority has been delivered into the hands of Christ as our Mediator
    1. Jesus Christ has absolute power and dominion over all things
    2. Where is He today? He is on His throne. What is a throne but a symbol of dominion?  
**1 Peter 3:22** – “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”
4. David’s purpose in these first two verses is to present God in all His enormity. He is a big God, infinite in all His being. And He has infinite dominion. He is the Divine Creator, Possessor of all things and the God who rules with absolute authority.  
This God is worthy of worship.
5. The second part of this psalm is a recognition of God’s perfect holiness – **Verses 3-6**  
This infinite God must be approached with holy reverence.
6. Although God is the God of the whole world we are not to assume that all men have immediate access into His presence.
  - A. **Verse 3** deals with this question – “Who has a right to come into God’s presence? “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?”

1. The hill in the collective mind of Israel referred to Jerusalem
    - a. It directs our attention to Mount Zion which was another name for Jerusalem
    - b. Ultimately, however, it refers to the dwelling place of God
  2. Hebrew poetry is characterized by parallelism which is seen clearly in this verse.
- B. **Verse 3** is simply this: Who has the right to come into the presence of God?
- I. The first question we need to deal with is what does David mean by the presence of God?
- A. One of God's attributes is His omnipresence  
**Psalm 139:7-10** – “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*.<sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning, *and dwell* in the uttermost parts of the sea; <sup>10</sup> Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”
1. God cannot be confined to space or location
  2. In the general sense of God's omnipresence, it is true that God's presence is not limited in any way
- B. It is true that sin shall never dwell in the presence of God, yet we know this isn't true in an absolute sense
1. Surely God is present during the commission of terrible acts of wickedness
    - a. A child dies after being abused by his mother's boyfriend, yet God was there
    - b. A Christian is tortured and killed for his faith  
God is there
  2. We find in Job that Satan came into the presence of God  
**Job 1:6** – “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.”
    - a. The sons of God may refer to either the angels in heaven or to a gathering of the saints upon the earth. I hold to the latter.
    - b. Either way Satan spoke in the presence of God. Satan is a terrible accuser of God's people
  3. Hell will be a place where men will be utterly abandoned and forsaken. Yet, in the sense of God's omnipresence, God will be present in hell
  4. There are many things that are true of God in a general sense that are not true in a particular sense
    - a. It is true that God hears all things, yet he doesn't hear the prayers of the unbeliever
    - b. We might even say that it is true that God has ordained every word written in the New York Times, yet this isn't the same as God's particular inspiration of His Word.
  5. David is talking about the God's presence in a particular sense  
**Psalm 24:3** – “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?”

- II. There are several ways that we can apply the particular presence of God
- A. One way to look at the presence of God is in terms of His provisions of grace
1. Theologically God is both transcendent and immanent
    - a. By transcendent we mean that God is above, beyond, and above His creation
    - b. By immanent we mean that God is near
    - c. In other words the transcendent God is actively present in His creation
  2. In this fallen world God's presence should be nothing but wrath and judgment. God's presence is sometimes described in terms of His wrath  
**Psalm 68:2** – “As smoke is driven away, so drive *them* away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.”  
**Jeremiah 4:26** – “I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place *was* a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, *and* by his fierce anger.”
  3. Instead of wrath and judgment, however, this fallen world enjoys God's mercy and grace
  4. By contrast, in hell there will be no presence of God in His goodness – only wrath and judgment. In this sense we say hell will be a place void of the presence of God. It will be a place where the lost will be utterly forsaken.
  5. This isn't what David is talking about here.  
 Even the most wicked share in God's common grace  
**Matthew 5:45** – “he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”
- B. David is talking about the presence of God in the sense of the full experience of His worship – of communion with Him.
1. We can see this illustrated with Moses and the burning bush  
**Exodus 3:5** – “And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest *is* holy ground.”
    - a. Wasn't God also present throughout the wilderness of Midian
    - b. But Moses was being invited into the revelation of God's holiness and of communion with God.
    - c. To worship God demands holy reverence – take off your shoes  
 Moses
  2. To enter the presence of God in worship demands a proper understanding of God's holiness.
  3. In the general sense of His omnipresence God was present every where but the Holy of Holies was different. It was the holy presence of God where He would be approached without holy reverence and most important, in a manner He has commanded
  4. We worship in a building that used to be an office building.
    - a. God has always been in this building, just as He has occupied every space in the universe. He is omnipresent.

- b. In addition, every person who ever entered this building was in the presence of God, just as every human being stands before God daily.
- c. But when we meet here for worship everything has changed. Now we are approaching God in His holiness. Not every one can come before God in this sense.

III. As David asks this question we have to remember that sin has caused an infinite divide between God and man. While God has possession of all men, because of sin He is the God of no man.

A. So the question is asked

**Psalm 24:3** – “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?”

1. The same question was asked in **Psalm 15**

**Psalm 15:1** – “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?”

Who is able to approach God?

2. The answer is clear. God can only be approached by a man of absolute perfection

3. No natural man can meet this standard. All are eternally separated from God. But God has shown us mercy through His Son who is perfect and who offered Himself in our stead.

**Ephesians 2:4-7** – “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, <sup>5</sup> Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) <sup>6</sup> And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: <sup>7</sup> That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

4. Who can approach the throne of God? Only those who are in Christ Jesus. In terms of justification, the temple veil has been torn. We now have access into God’s presence.

B. But we must still guard against approaching the throne of God presumptuously or irreverently. There is great danger in approaching God without holy reverence.

1. This is clearly seen at Mount Sinai

**Exodus 19:12-13** – “And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, *that ye go not* up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: <sup>13</sup> There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether *it be* beast or man, it shall not live”

2. Earthly kings were often unapproachable to the common people. To enter the presence of the king without his permission often brought death.

a. Pharaoh was unapproachable

- b. Queen Esther knew she could not enter into the presence of the king unless she was summoned  
**Esther 4:11** – “All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, *there is one law of his to put him to death,*”
- c. If earthly kings are given such respect and honor, men who are sinful wretches, mere dust in the sight of God, how much more should we tremble in the presence of God?
3. Who would be so bold as to approach such a King as God? We have to remember this King is thrice holy  
 David answers his question  
**Psalm 24:4** – “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”
- a. David is describing both the inner character and the outward actions of the true worshipper. Those who follow Christ have lives characterized by holiness
- b. By “Pure heart” David is describing our inner holiness -- a heart pure of corrupt desires and sinful lusts. A heart set apart unto God. Jesus described it on the Sermon on the Mount:  
**Matthew 5:8** – “Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”
- c. By “clean hands” David is speaking of outward actions. He is merciful and loving, honest and just.  
 “hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”  
 (vanity = falsehood)
- d. Vanity or falsehood can refer to the deception of idolatry.  
 The one who approaches God must not have other idols in his life.
4. The answer brings in the full realm of holiness – justification and sanctification
- C. David describes the blessings of such people  
**Psalm 24:5** – “He shall receive the blessing from the LORD”
1. What is the blessing?
- a. What are you seeking? Wealth, power, prestige
- b. The holy man receives precisely what he was seeking  
 Communion with God
- c. Spurgeon: “Does the world satisfy thee? Then thou hast thy reward and thy portion in this life; make much of it, for thou shalt know no other joy.”
2. And he receives holiness  
 “righteousness from the God of his salvation.”
3. God demands holiness and gives us holiness.  
 We wear the holy garments that He has provided  
 We don’t ascend the holy hill by our own merit but by God’s grace
- D. These verses are best understood in reverse order
1. We are not declared righteous because we have clean hands  
 We have clean hands because we have been declared righteous  
 We are not saved by our actions but by God’s actions

2. Who shall approach the Holy Hill of God?
  - a. It is those who have approached through Christ. They have received the righteousness of God.
  - b. Those who have received the righteousness of God through justification are those with clean hands and a pure heart

Conclusion:

1. Will you spend eternity in the presence of God? The question is do you live in His presence now?
2. This world is the antithesis of communion with God.  
NAS **James 4:4** – “You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”
3. God demands absolute commitment to Him and He enables absolute commitment. He demands holiness and He gives holiness.