

The King opens the gates to Heaven

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Date: 21 January 2024

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[0 : 00] If you would please open your Bibles to, if you have one, to Psalm 24. A Psalm of David.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. The world and those who dwell therein. For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? 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.

He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

[1 : 15] Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty. The Lord, mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the King of glory. The King of glory.

Lord, in all seriousness, we always need your help. We need the physical energy, but we need the spiritual light to hear your voice and to see what you're saying and to believe.

And so I ask for your help. I pray that, as Isaiah talks about, that you send forth the rain and you will achieve your purpose.

I pray that your word would just shower upon us all this morning so that you might grow each of our faith. Lord, I pray for an outpouring of your spirit to believe your word deeply in our hearts.

[3 : 00] Lord, I'm conscious as always of how weak my own words are, but your words are strong.

They're living and active. And so I pray that you'd be piercing each of our hearts this morning. Lord, I pray that you'd give us humility. There's some enormous pictures of who you are and what you've done.

And I pray that you would help us not to be asking whether you cause us offence, but whether we cause you offence. And so I pray all this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, can you be confident that you can get close to God, near to God, as near as a dear friend, a friend you can talk to face to face, a friend you can confide in, and they can confide in you? Are you confident that you can get that close to God? Now, I'm guessing one brother will be hearing that question and thinking, of course.

[4 : 18] God is so loving. Jesus is gentle and lowly. He wants us to pray and sing and expect him to do great things for us. Of course we can get close to God.

And I can imagine another sister thinking, responding to the same question instinctively, but God is so high above me.

He is so holy. My thoughts about him must just seem so belittling of him compared to his actual greatness. I'm so keenly aware of how unclean my daily actions are.

It seems a bit presumptuous to say that I can get close to this God. One church is going to sing songs, song after song, of how close God is to us.

He's near to us. He's gentle and he's loving. And another church sings songs and it's mourning sin. One church's sermons have the aroma, oh, God is loving.

[5 : 26] It's just the subtext you take away every week. Another church's sermons, the aroma is God is great. He is holy. I think Christians, we react differently to this question.

I suspect we, by personality maybe, maybe upbringing, I'm not sure, but past teaching, we naturally lean to one side or the other.

To God's intimacy with us or God's greatness, his otherness. I want us to consider some of the seeming paradox that we get in the Psalms.

So Psalm 2 says, Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Does your head just struggle to compute that?

Mine does. Rejoice with trembling in fear. Now, it could be a trembling of, wow, this is just incredible.

[6 : 39] But there's also a fear. There's also a reverence. Or in Psalm 25, the friendship, and that word friendship is that close confiding in friendship of face-to-face friends.

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him. Our psalm today gives us wonderful pictures of confidence to draw near to God, but it first does that by removing any false confidence.

And David himself, who wrote this poem, who wrote this song, he needed to be stripped of a presumptuous false confidence. It's possible he wrote this psalm around the day that should have been the greatest achievement of King David's reign, and he achieved a lot.

It should have been the greatest achievement. They were bringing the Ark of the Covenant to God's holy mountain Jerusalem. God's promises of giving the promised land are being realised, and the Ark of the Covenant symbolising God's commitment and presence with his people.

On top of the Ark of the Cherubim, so angelic creatures that God is enthroned over the hosts of heaven. So it represents his authority. He is God.

[8 : 09] It represents his commitment. It's a covenant. It represents his imminence. He's coming to be enthroned on Jerusalem. And David organises a parade. There's singing. There's trumpets.

He gets 30,000 of his soldiers to march in this parade. And he himself is dressed in his royal clothes. And it says that he danced with all his might.

I don't know what that looks like, but he danced with all his might before the Lord. But then the cart carrying the Ark, as Israel were just cheering in this great procession, the cart carrying the Ark, it stumbles.

And one of the men charged to lead the Ark, Uzzah, puts out his hand and touches the Ark to stabilise it, and immediately he falls down and dies.

And the trumpets stop. David stops dancing.

[9 : 22] There's a silence. And people must have eventually gone home just afraid, maybe disillusioned.

We're told David was angry with God. They asked this question. Who is able to stand before the Lord?

This holy God. Who is able? So wild. It's a good question. It's the right question.

It's the opposite of presumption. The celebration that is at the end of this psalm today, it won't grab you.

It won't grab hold of you unless you come face to face with how great this king is. We get three main pictures of how great this God, this king is.

[10 : 26] First, we survey his realm. And we find that he's all-creating. Then we go up to his capital city from which he is ruling.

And we go in and we ask who is there, who's allowed to be there. And we find he is all-holy. His realm, he's all-creating. What's he like?

Who can live in his realm? He's all-holy. And then finally we see a triumphant parade because he is all-victorious.

So that's where we're headed. So first, we're going to survey his realm. He's all-creating. So far, like, if you've been living under a rock, unless you've been living under a rock, you'll know about the floods, far north Queensland, last month or so.

Like, the water's just overwhelming the land. It destroys roads, destroys infrastructure, destroys crops for the season. It ruins family homes and businesses, threatens people's lives, especially the most vulnerable.

[11 : 40] All life is disrupted. Emergency services are coming in. Life has stopped. Like, it's just, it's crisis time with the waters overwhelming. Like, army helicopters, resources are all deployed because the waters are covering the earth.

I think that gives us a glimpse of the Jewish picture from Scripture is the chaos of the waters.

It destroys life. It represents, it's a metaphor, it represents the destructive powers, often the spiritual powers, that destroy life in God's world.

So I think that's why, in verse 2, when we survey this king's realm, he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

That upon can be through it, above it. It's recalling Genesis. Genesis, the chaos that wants to destroy life, God has established solid land.

[12:48] He is above it. He is all sovereign over any power that would take away life. He has established land. He's the one.

He created the solid earth to be full, to be fruitful. He's the one who gives life. All the people want it. He made them.

He made us. That's the kind of God he is. Pushing back anything destructive so that we can have life. He wants to bless.

And he's not just a local deity for ancient Israel borders. He isn't restricted to these walls in this church. Whether people acknowledge this king or not, every person belongs to him.

It's in him we live and move and have our being. He created us all. We all belong to him. You think of some of the nations where the gospel hasn't reached yet.

[14:00] They're his. They belong to him. And this is the theological bedrock of why it is right to tell people about Jesus.

We can feel ashamed sometimes like we're invading on someone's life. We're not invading. God isn't invading someone's land or life.

They belong to him. It's all his. We're all his. He's taking back what's his. Every heart belongs to him.

Every family belongs to him. Every gift, every resource is from him. It's crazy.

I think it's, I'm trying to think of a stronger word than crazy. Self-destructive, I don't know. For people to reject the one who gives life.

[15:09] And yet the world is full of such rejection. And what's more incredible as we look at the next few verses and the next picture is that despite this rejection, Yahweh moves towards his world and sets a meeting place.

He creates a meeting place. He wants to be met. Yes, he's present everywhere. But in a sense, he's going to be especially present on his holy hill. He wants to be known.

He wants to be approached. So the next picture we get is this king's capital where he has told us to meet him.

The biggest issue of my life and your life is whether we are in good relationship with this king. If he is the source of all blessing, do you want blessing?

I do. If he's the source of it all, the biggest question is, are you good? Are you on good terms with this God? Who may ascend God's place?

[16:19] Who may stand before him? Can I come in? Who does this king welcome?

What we see here is that this king is all holy. He's separate from anything that's destructive to life, anything that's not good.

The person whose deeds with their hands are clean. They're not stained by blood by harming people.

They're not filled with bribes. But you care about justice. They're not clenched in anger, quarrelling, we're told in Timothy, but lifting up holy hands in unity, in prayer, for worship.

They're the kind of clean hands. They're the kind of people who are here in this wonderful society. It's not just external deeds he cares about.

[17:34] He requires a pure heart. We all look at the outside. We can't really... We get glimpses through people's actions and especially their words, what's going on in our hearts.

But we look at the outside. God sees the heart. He doesn't just want obedience. He wants us to love obedience.

Isn't that challenging? He wants us to love it. He hates superficial religion. People who honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him.

He hates it. Like, you are most welcome in this church. Please keep coming. But if your heart isn't in it, just know that you're not welcome in his heavenly presence.

You're most welcome here. Don't get me wrong. Don't get me wrong. He cares about our heart. He sees what we're lifting up our souls to.

[18:50] It's an interesting phrase. Lifting up. It's... What are we... What are we putting our confidence in? What are we giving our life to? What... What in our inner life that only you and the Lord really know?

What are our thoughts captivated by and our hopes and our affections? Is it... Is it all coming... Centered on him? Is everything in our life integrated into him?

He is the source of all life and blessing is creator.

And so when we trust in something else to give us blessing, it talks here that it's lifting our soul, our life up to what is false.

If he is the source of blessing and we're looking to something else to give us blessing, it's not real. It's empty.

[19 : 52] It's false. It can only disappoint. If you... A good sign of... To know when this is happening... Well, one of the signs is...

When you lose that thing and it feels like you're drowning... That's because the... That could be. That could be because the oceans of idolatry...

You've lifted... You've given your life to something else. And so, of course, the oceans are coming in... And flooding you. This place is filled with people who...

They're lifting up their soul. They're trusting in him to give life in abundance. So this God... He only accepts purity of inner and outer life.

Clean hands and a pure heart. Now, this isn't just some arbitrary standard of perfection. This isn't arbitrary. These people, we're told in verse 6, Such is the generation of those who seek him.

[20 : 59] Who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Their goal in all this purity is him. I want to see your face, God.

I want to know you. It's a relational goal. This isn't arbitrary. It's because he is holy.

To enjoy him requires holiness. It's for people seeking his face. Even in our digital age, we've got messaging.

We've got FaceTime. But people who have only talked on that, they might meet each other finally. And they might say, Great to finally meet you. Or, like, I've got a rule that sometimes I break, but if I need to have a deep conversation with someone, don't send an email.

Bad idea. Face to face. It's how we know one another. I think it's... So when Scripture...

[22 : 04] The Psalms use this metaphor a lot. Seeking his face. It's obviously a metaphor. God is spirit. But it's knowing him just more fully.

Like, it's just captivating you. It's an emotional term. It's gripping you emotionally. And your thought life and your desires is to seek his face. Like, doctrine isn't enough for you.

You want the doctrine to grip you. You want to see him. Like, it's one thing to know that God is holy in your mind.

It's another thing to sense his holiness. That you start to hate sin for his sake. Like, you just sense his holiness.

Now, I don't know any Christian living in a constant state of that. But the people who belong here are seeking that. It's one thing to know in the abstract, God loves you.

[23 : 07] And God is loving. It's another thing for that love just to grip you. That you don't... You're not so needy. You're actually wanting to live a life of pouring out love.

Because his love has gripped you. I think that's why Jacob is mentioned. That's what Jacob wrestled God for, we're told in Genesis.

He's wrestling God. Even though he came away limping, he was never the same again. He didn't let go of God until he got the greatest blessing, which was seeing his face.

Knowing God more, enjoying him. So there's no religious pretense in this place. Everyone accepted here cared deeply about the inner and outer holiness for his sake, to get his face.

This is the place to be. It would be such a wonderful society. So are you confident you currently stand in such a place?

[24 : 31] Bo mentioned David Litchfield, confidently approaching those ancient gates, which when we stand before this great king, are you confident those ancient doors into his new creation are going to open for you?

Have you ever seen depressed gates? It's an interesting image. We're shown in verse 7.

I think we're meant to picture these gates that are just, they are the worst gates you have ever seen. They are rusted. There's mould growing on them.

It's as if they're just depressed and sunk over, no confidence. They're growing in ivy. Why?

Because they have been shut for a very long time.

Who can come into this place? I deserve to be shut out. In the darkness. No peace.

[25 : 58] The gates are shut. For the way, not having clean hands, not having a pure heart, the gates are shut.

But then we hear something. We hear something in the distance. Sorry, I can't do a trumpet, but if Jimmy Miro was back in the church, we'll get...

We hear... I kind of did that to wake you all up. What is he doing? We...

We hear trumpets and these gates are sad, but then we hear this parade coming of singing and dancing and a procession and the gates are commanded, lift up your heads, O gates.

And be lifted... Sorry, kids. I probably scared the daylights out of you then. Be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. And the obvious question is, who is this King of glory?

[27 : 11] Who can... Why can he enter when you can't? Why do the gates swing open for him? It's not David. It's not David. Read Psalm 51.

That's his written confession. I should be shut out. It is not Solomon who built the temple. Like, he gave his heart over to other gods like there was no tomorrow.

Like, by the end of his life, he was lifting up his soul to every other god he could get his hands on. Not David. It's not Solomon. We're told who it is.

It's the creator, the Lord himself. It's the creator coming into his creation. Like a man of war, strong and mighty, mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts, Lord of heaven's armies.

It's recalling Moses and the Exodus. That's what they sung after they went through the Red Sea. I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider, he has thrown into the sea.

[28 : 20] The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise him. My father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war.

The Lord is his name. Because they were saved from all their enemies. And the song ends, what were they saved for? They were saved from the enemies. They were saved that you will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary.

When Jesus came into his world, he came to be a warrior, to fight for his people. He came to be enthroned over the world that is his.

We often speak of what Jesus achieved in terms of forgiveness and absorbing the penalty, so that courtroom picture, and the wrath of God is taken away.

Wonderful pictures, essential pictures, like, don't get me wrong, reconciling us to God. But there's another really prominent theme in Scripture about what Jesus achieved. He goes into battle.

[29 : 34] He's our champion. To fight. To defeat the greatest enemies that keep us shut out.

The power of sin and the power of Satan that keep us lifting up our souls to what's false rather than to the God of blessing.

So Colossians speaks of Christ's cross. Disarming the spiritual rulers and authorities. And he put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. Do you see Jesus as your warrior who has fought for you?

He fights for you. He's defeated Satan, the slanderer and accuser, by the cross. When he slanders God as if he is not good, as if he's the creator who doesn't want to bless and he's slandering God to you, you can say, no, I'm looking at the cross and if he loves me that much, no, I don't believe you. He conquers Satan's slanders. He conquers Satan's accusations against us before God. Look at all David's unclean hands.

[31 : 01] Like, look at his heart. Prone to wander. And God says, get out of my courtroom. My son's blood has conquered.

The slain lamb has conquered. Yes, he's the lion, but he conquers as the lamb. He's defeated Satan.

He's fought for us. Our warrior king has the victory over Satan and sin and so the doors swing open for him because he has clean hands and a pure heart.

Always loving God. So the massive question is, well, the massive invitation and command is for you to tuck in behind him.

the doors swing open for him and he invites you to join his procession. So can you be confident that you can get close to God like a dear friend and join him face to face?

[32 : 10] Well, only if, only if you've been humbled. David himself, the second time he brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem.

This time he humbled himself. He, he didn't presume on how to carry the Ark into Jerusalem on a cart.

Instead, he listened to what God said through Moses. He listened to his voice in his word and he obeyed. he humbled himself and listened to his king.

They made atonement for their sin. Before they made the journey, they sacrificed, they made atonement. He humbled himself and then he stripped his royal robes and linen, a linen garment basically in his underwear.

The king in his underwear so that he would be humiliated so that God would get all the glory.

[33 : 17] He humbled himself. And then in that humility, that's when he danced.

That's when he danced all the way and nothing to spoil it. That's when the trumpets were blasting the entire way. God represented by the ark gladly came in.

The people were blessed. That's when there was great joy when he humbled himself. That's when the triumphal procession came in.

So the way to rejoice is to tremble. The way to be full of confidence of being near to God is to be humbled before King Jesus.

It's to be in awe that this king wouldn't fight against you, he would fight for you. Wow. So 2

Corinthians 2 describes Christians this way.

[34 : 27] 2 Corinthians 2.14 That's an interesting picture of the church, isn't it?

We're in this triumphal procession behind Jesus. Jesus So have you joined this procession?

Like only you know that between you and the Lord. Many within the walls of Christianity will open their spiritual eyes on that final day only to find the gates shut.

Don't let that be you. Don't let that be you. To be one of Christ's people isn't to, it's not about playing the part expected of you in church culture.

It's not about am I doing all the right things? Am I doing all the right things? No, it's an awareness on your soul that you deserve to be shut out. But you look to Jesus and he's fought for you.

[35 : 52] And you have tucked him behind his victory and you're confident behind him, celebrating in him. I think one of the most powerful scenes in the Lord of the Rings is, if you haven't watched it, it's your fault.

No spoiler. One of the most powerful scenes is when Aragorn is crowned. And it's his day.

Like he's got all the power now. He's got all the authority and he bows to the hobbits. It's a powerful scene. He humbles himself to these hobbits.

I don't know if you've seen it. It is a powerful scene. I think it's powerful because it's got an echo of the gospel. The king has humbled himself.

Why would you not want to bow the knee to such a king? So have you joined this procession? And church family, are we like David in his underwear?

[37 : 12] Don't take this grossly. Are we humbled? Are we stripped of pretense?

Are we of self-merit, of comparison, of wanting to get the attention? And are we dancing? Are we singing?

Are we as a church characterised by joy and triumph and confidence because of the victory Jesus has won for us? Because that's we need to be for the fragrance of the knowledge of Jesus to be spread through us?

Wouldn't it be great if you're walking past this group of teenagers and they must have had a bath in perfume. It just hits you. It just fills your nostrils.

Let's be like that as a church. It's going to be an aroma that some people hate. For other people, it's going to be an aroma that draws them in. People will see our community and smell the aroma of our community and they'll decide off that whether they take our doctrine seriously.

[38 : 38] Yes, we currently live in the shadow of the valley of death. But Psalm 24 balances that. we're in procession.

Hebrews 12, remember who we are, church. We are currently, spiritually speaking, we are gathered in the heavenly Jerusalem where angels are in festal gathering.

That's where we are because Jesus has opened the gates. We're in. That's where we are. We know that at the end of our lives, those gates into the new creation will be open for me, for us.

We've got much to rejoice in. Now I know some will be struggling with depression, so I'll just urge you to surround yourself in this community.

Let us sing for you. Let us pray for you while you can't. And the Psalms encourage you. Your soul, you will praise him again. We are in joyful procession.

[39 : 55] that's when we will spread the fragrance of the knowledge of him. So are you in this procession? Are we dancing and singing? And are we seeking his holy face?

You can't choose to focus on God's greatness or his nearness. You can't choose between them. And scripture's not saying it's somewhere in the middle.

It's both. It's both. To neglect one or the other is to rob Jesus of his victory. The path to confidence and joy in his presence is to pursue holiness.

It's to pursue holiness. But the goal of that holiness is to seek his face, is to enjoy him. It's we're to rejoice and tremble.

So have you joined the procession? And are we singing and dancing? And are we seeking his holy face?

[41 : 08] Let me pray. Lord, thank you that you promise that those who seek you will find you because, Jesus, you've done it all.

So I pray that for all of us that we would genuinely seek to know you more. Lord, I pray that you might help us as a church.

Keep us from dividing what your word keeps together. Keep us from, keep us pursuing holiness, but not seeing it as this external, abstract requirement, but seeing it as the path to enjoying you.

And Lord, I pray that you would give us more and more of those sweet moments individually and as a church where we just sense you in such a deeper experience of who you are.

So I pray that you'd do that so you'd encourage us to press on in this joyful procession until we finally see your face and we don't need preachers and we don't even need your scriptures because we will know you fully.

[42 : 39] Lord, encourage us and keep us going so that we just spread that beautiful aroma. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.