

Psalm 45

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[0 : 00] Well, what times in your life have you known great joy? What moments have so warmed your heart that you cannot help but smile and laugh from sheer delight?

Perhaps you think of your childhood summer holidays, or an evening spent with your closest friends enjoying a glass of good wine or a mocktail. For some of us, we think of our wedding day, or the day we first cuddled our newborn child in our arms.

And in those precious moments, we experience and glimpse something deep within ourselves. We sense that our hearts, our souls were made for such heart-bursting, deeply overwhelming joy.

And we wish, don't we, it could go on forever. Well, our psalmist this morning is one who knows an even deeper and greater delight.

It's a delight he wants to share with us. It's a delight that our hearts can know too. And it's a delight that will go on forever. So, as we begin, how does a psalmist share his delight with us?

[1 : 08] Well, he does so through a heart-stirring love song. Through a heart-stirring love song. So look with me at the psalm heading, and verse 1. To the choir master, a corn to the lilies, a maskil of the sons of Korah, a love song.

My heart overflows with a pleasing theme. I dress my verses to the king. My tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. Now, I wonder what you think of when you think of love songs.

I have to confess I'm a bit of a Celine Dion, Whitney Houston fan. I love their cheesy ballads, their over-the-top lyrics, their soaring melodies. I suspect I'm not alone in this, so I'd love to find out your cheesy music tastes later on, perhaps.

But perhaps also we might groan a little or roll our eyes cynically when we think of love songs.

They're a bit self-indulgent, we think. Unrealistic.

And musically just a bit tacky. So will this love song then, Psalm 45, be just the same? Well, no, definitely not. For we see verse 1.

[2 : 15] The psalmist's heart overflows with a pleasing theme. So the psalmist, one of the sons of Korah, he's really overjoyed in his inner being. So this isn't superficial.

And his song, his verses, they're not motivated by self-indulgence. These are verses addressed to the king, to the historical king of Israel, the king of God's people.

So this is a love song worthy of royalty and a song that belongs to the king. And William Shakespeare's sonnets, they would fall short compared to the talent of this psalmist.

And so the psalmist can't contain himself. His tongue is like a pen of a ready scribe. He's talented, he's raring to go. So the psalmist is sharing his delight through a heart-stirring love song.

So what then is the pleasing theme that his heart overflows with delight for? Well, have a look at verse 2. We see that it is the king himself whom the psalmist writes his love song about.

[3 : 22] The song is for the king. The song belongs to the king. And the song is about the king. For we'll see here, and this is the first main heading, we'll see here that God's supreme and victorious eternal king is our praiseworthy bridegroom.

God's supreme and victorious king is our praiseworthy bridegroom. So have a look at verse 2. You are the most handsome of the sons of men. Grace is poured upon your lips.

Therefore God has blessed you forever. Most psalms are addressed to God. Unusually here, the psalmist directly praises the king who is a man.

He is the most handsome of the sons of men. He's supreme in physical appearance above all other men. So George Clooney, eat your heart out. And notice verse 2, the king's words, they're full of grace and kindness to others.

So just as, say, water pools down from Niagara Falls, so the king's lips pour out gracious words of undeserved kindness to others. And therefore, because of the king's supreme beauty and his

gracious speech, God himself has blessed the king forever.

[4 : 37] So to be blessed by God means to be in relationship with God, to know God, to experience God's favour. And so this king, the king of God's people, has been blessed by God forever.

God's king is supreme. God's king is also victorious. So have a look with me at verse 3. Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendour and majesty.

In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness. Let your right hand teach you awesome deeds. Your arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies.

The peoples fall under you. Now in many action films, there's that moment, isn't there, just before the great battle, where the mighty hero, he arms himself, he's ready to fight, to lead his army.

So in the final Lord of the Rings film, we've got the king Aragorn, he charges on his horse, sword in hand, leading his army to fight those evil forces of Mordor. And what here too is a picture of a great warrior king.

[5 : 49] The psalmist calls God's supreme king to action. He's to secure his sword to his thigh, ready to fight. And the king, he's the greatest warrior. He is the mighty one who has splendour and royal majesty.

And for what does the king fight for? He fights for the cause of truth, meekness and righteousness. And the king needs no help.

See there, his own right hand that teaches, that achieves, that reveals his awesome deeds. So think of the great leaders that we esteem.

Winston Churchill, Nelson Mandela, the Spice Girls. The causes they fought for were bigger than themselves, were dependent on many others, and success was by no means certain.

But the victory of this king is never in doubt. So verse 4, even as he rides out, he does so victoriously.

[6 : 54] And his arrows, verse 5, they find their target. They are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies. Well, who are the king's enemies?

They're surely those who oppose what the king fights for. They are those who oppose God's truth, God's meekness, God's justice.

And therefore, they are those who oppose God. And the king's victory over them is total. So verse 5, the peoples fall under you.

That is, all the nations of the world will submit to God's king. The scope of this king's rule is astounding. He will rule over all the peoples of the earth.

So let me ask you then, to who are the terms mighty one, splendour and majesty, and a right hand that teaches awesome deeds, who are these terms normally reserved for?

[8 : 04] Anyone? Anyone? Any answers? Who are they normally reserved for? Yeah, but before... Sorry?

God, yeah. God, yeah. They are words to describe God. Remember, this is a son of man. This is a human.

You see, in the Old Testament, often the phrase, a right hand that achieves awesome deeds, is God's action to save his enemies. So back in the Exodus in Egypt, the phrase, God's right hand, a mighty now stretched arm, is God rescuing his people.

So here we've got a man, a son of man, acting in a way that God would act. And let me ask you a second question.

Who in the Old Testament are all the nations to submit to? God, exactly. And we're meant to see here, aren't we, these are astounding words for a king, for a man.

[9 : 14] He's being described as someone who is godlike. Here's a victorious human king who reigns over all the nations. How supreme and praiseworthy God's victorious king is.

And as well as supreme and victorious, God's king is eternal. God's king is eternal. Look with me at verses 6 to 7. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.

The scepter of your kingdom is the scepter of uprightness. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. And the psalmist is continuing to speak to this human king.

He's saying, he says, Your throne, O God. Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. This human king is called God.

And reading this is to shock us, is to amaze us. How can this be? How can this puzzle fit together? It may be the king is referred to as God in the sense he represents God, ruling God's people for

God.

[10:20] But here it's in the context of the psalm. It is very personal, isn't it? It's this human king who is addressed here as your throne, O God. And we know the original kings, the historical kings of Israel, like David and Solomon, they didn't rule forever, did they?

And yet here, this God, this throne of the king, whose God is forever. And not only will this king of God's people reign forever, he won't lead his people into sin.

If you read much of the Old Testament, the books of the kings and the chronicles, again and again, the king of Israel would sin.

And because of that, it would actually lead all the people into sin. And that led eventually to God's people going into exile. But instead here, verse 6, the scepter, that's the symbol of the king's, his rule, his authority, will be one of moral uprightness.

He will obey God's law. And because of that, that will bless all God's people. And this king will lead God's people to obey God. And it's because of who the king is.

[11:37] So have a look at verse 6, what the king loves. He loves righteousness. He hates wickedness. He hates sin. Now how do we know that this king really is God's king?

Well, because the king has been chosen by God. So look with me at verse 7. Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.

So in 1953, Queen Elizabeth II had her coronation. She had a glorious crown, her coronation, placed on her head. And it was to announce her rule for everyone to see.

So in the Bible, for a man to be anointed by oil, by God, is God's declaration to everyone. This man is God's king. This man. So because of the king's moral righteousness, God has poured oil over his head and announces to everyone, this man is his king.

And you see, it's also anointed a great joy and celebration. It's the oil of gladness. For we see here, actually, the king is being anointed for a wedding.

[12:52] The king is getting married. After all, this is a love song. It is a wedding song. For God's supreme and victorious eternal king is our praiseworthy bridegroom.

So look with me at verse 8. Your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces, stringed instruments make you glad.

Daughters of kings are among your ladies of honour. At your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir. So back in April 2011 now, it was the royal wedding of Prince William to Kate Middleton.

It was that moment of great national celebration, wasn't it? I know I particularly enjoyed having a day off work. Well, to remember, if you watched it on TV, the royal wedding was a great celebration of beauty.

The aisle of Westminster Abbey was decorated with trees. All the guests put on their glad rags. And these exquisite melodies of the choir of Westminster Abbey just filled the air.

[13:58] And yet, who was the centre of attention? Who was the one all eyes were waiting for, all eyes were fixed upon? Well, it's the one who's the centre of attention at all weddings. The bride in her dress.

And yet, in Psalm 45, this royal wedding song, who's it been all about? Who has been the one worthy of praise and admiration? Well, it's the king himself here.

His robes, verse 8, they're all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. So, imagine the fragrance of your favourite perfume or the aromas of a summer rose garden.

They are only a tiny glimpse of the stunning fragrances of this king's wedding robes. And here, we also get a glimpse into the heart of the bridegroom himself.

Verse 8. From ivory palaces, stringed instruments make you glad. The king himself, he is absolutely overjoyed.

[15:05] He is so delighted to be at his wedding. Why? For among the many honourable guests, at his right hand stands his bride, his queen wearing the rarest of gold, the gold of Ophir.

God's supreme and victorious eternal king is our praiseworthy bridegroom. It's quite a glorious picture, this, isn't it, that the psalmist has painted for us.

And isn't this a king whom the world longs for? Whom we long for? The leader who would truly bring justice to the world. One who would be victorious over wickedness forever.

One who speaks words of grace and kindness. One who warms our heart with his beauty and power. And surely we think this picture is too good to be true.

We've never met anyone like him. Well, actually, we have. As we turn to the New Testament, we find the puzzles of this psalm solved for us.

[16:14] So turn with me now to Hebrews and chapter 1 and verses 8 to 9.

And here we see Psalm 45 quoted. Psalm 45 is fulfilled in Jesus.

So Jesus is God's king. And Jesus is both fully man and fully God. Jesus is this divine, eternal son. Jesus is the man in Psalm 45 who is also God. And if you pop up to verse 3 of Hebrews, chapter 1, this Jesus, so chapter 1, verse 3, this Jesus, Hebrews says, is the radiance of the glory of God. The exact imprint of his nature. And he upholds the universe by the word of his power. Jesus, who, verse 3, after making purifications for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

[17:44] So Jesus is the one who's victorious. Jesus is God's supreme and victorious king and our praiseworthy bridegroom.

So back in Psalm 45, how should the king's bride respond to King Jesus? Well, his bride must forget her old identity and rejoice in her king.

She must forget her old identity and rejoice in her king. So Psalm 45, verse 10. Hear, O daughter, and consider and incline your ear.

Forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your Lord, bow to him. Now imagine a couple get married.

They move into a house together. And yet each day the wife goes back to her parents' house for dinner. Then she decides, well, all her belongings, her clothes, her books, her paperwork, should probably be kept at her parents' house too.

[18:54] And well, then she decides to spend every night sleeping at her parents' house as well. Wouldn't that be strange? No doubt the husband would be more than a bit put out.

His wife doesn't belong under her parents' roof anymore. She has a new identity and a primary loyalty. And yet here the bride needs a psalmist to speak to her.

The psalmist urges her, forget your old way of life, your old identity and loyalties. And she needs to be reminded she's no longer to live under her father's authority.

Instead, she's to consider how amazing the king is. The king who desires her beauty. The king she's to bow to as her lord and protector.

Now, considering how amazing the picture we've seen of God's king as the greatest of men, wouldn't it be utterly foolish for her to ignore him? Instead, she is to rejoice in her king, her marriage to him.

[20:00] And it's because of her marriage to him, she actually receives great blessing and honour herself. Look with me at verse 12. Now, a number of years ago, some friends of mine were getting married.

On their John Lewis gift list, they had some pretty gifts, some useful gifts. They also, bizarrely, I thought, had listed a £30 toilet brush.

A bit excessive, perhaps? £30 for a toilet brush. Well, yet, yeah, yet for the king's bride, there's no expense spared.

See, because of her marriage to God's king, she's going to receive the greatest wealth of the world. Tyre was an ancient city famous for its trade and prosperity.

So gifts from Tyre would be like having all the sparkling diamonds and gems of Queen Elizabeth's crowns and tiaras on your wedding list. And the royal bride is absolutely stunning in her wedding dress.

[21:16] The exquisite Oscar dresses, the beautiful catwalk gowns, they don't come close to her robes, interwoven with gold. And all of this, all her honour and status, is because of her marriage to the bridegroom king.

Verse 14, This is it.

This is the moment that the victorious king's heart is gladdened by. This is the moment that all the king's royal court delights in.

Finally, at last, the marriage and union of the king and his bride. at last.

And so the overwhelming joy of their marriage is then followed by this promise to God's king of a fruitful union. Verse 16, In place of your fathers shall be your sons.

[22:32] You will make them princes in all the earth. I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations. Therefore, all nations will praise you forever and ever.

This psalm rightly ends by praising God's eternal bridegroom king, the king who is worthy to be praised by all nations of the earth forever and ever.

Well, knowing that Jesus is God's bridegroom king, who then is the bride, and to what wedding is this psalm pointing to?

Well, turn with me to Revelation. Revelation, at the end of the Bible, chapter 19, and verses 6 to 8. Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters, and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, Alleluia!

For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt, and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

[23 : 43] It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure, for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. The king's bride, here, is Jesus' people.

It is the church. It's us. And so Psalm 45 anticipates the wedding day at the end of this world.

Psalm 45 anticipates the day when evil is utterly destroyed, the day when Jesus' supreme reign is displayed to all, the day when there will be a great wedding celebration.

This wedding is the wedding that all other weddings point to, for it's Jesus' wedding to his bride, the church. So back in Psalm 45, we are the bride in gold of Ophir.

We are the bride at Jesus' right hand. We, God's people, are the bride Jesus delights to marry. And so we are to rejoice in our future wedding day when we will see our bridegroom King Jesus face to face, and we will be with Jesus forever.

[25 : 09] How then should we as Christians, as the king's bride, prepare for that day for our marriage to King Jesus? Well, like the king's bride, we must forget our old identity and rejoice in our bridegroom King.

So, before we were Christians, where did we get our sense of identity or value? And where even now, as Christians, where we tended to look to for status or security other than Jesus, one way to discern this is to ask, what is it that I most, what is that I think most about each day?

What is it that I stew over and worry about? What is it that I most often talk about with my peers?

What is it that makes me lie awake at night? It might be our family, our children's schooling, or our elderly parents.

It might be our job and its pressures that consume all our thoughts. It might be money and our plans for the future, paying off our mortgage, modernising the house, getting the children through uni, or simply making ends meet.

We think, don't we, that if our family, our jobs, our finances were secure, successful and stress-free, then we will be happy. We will find joy.

[26 : 36] But if we look to anything other than Jesus to give us our identity and security, then we won't find joy that lasts. We won't find the true, deep delight of the psalmist that will last forever.

And instead, we will lose our joy for Jesus. Distracted with other things, our souls will become lukewarm and dry towards him. Jesus will be merely an afterthought in our busy diaries and schedules.

Jesus, who is our eternal king and bridegroom. So, as Christians, we must forget our old identity and instead rejoice in our bright green king, Jesus.

How do we do this? How do we rejoice in Jesus in our day-to-day lives? Well, we can learn from the psalmist here. He deliberately focuses on Jesus, not on himself.

And as he focuses on Jesus, his heart is warm to praise Jesus. So we too rejoice in Jesus by focusing on Jesus, not ourselves.

[27 : 48] And this must surely start with how we approach God's word. So when we open God's word, whether in our quiet times, at growth group, listening to sermons, we're not first of all to think, how will God's word help me with my worries?

But instead think, what am I learning about Jesus here? What is God's word teaching me about Jesus's character and action? What is God's word teaching me about the world's need of Jesus? What is God's word teaching me about how to respond to Jesus? And this focus on Jesus will do us the greatest good as our hearts are warmed to our bride and king.

And as we see Jesus more clearly, God's word really will then help us with all that we are concerned about. Delight in Jesus is a work of God, the Holy Spirit, who works through his word to stir our hearts in praise.

As they continue to follow the psalmist example, we can also use the words of scripture in our prayers to praise Jesus. We can use scripture to praise Jesus.

[29 : 03] So why not pray the words of scripture like Psalm 45? When you pray, use them in your prayers. Why not commit some of these verses to memory?

And then in our day-to-day lives, we can pray them as short, quick prayers. So when you're cooking the supper, we can pray, thank you, God, that Jesus is victorious over his enemies.

When walking down the corridor at work, we can pray, praise you, God, for Jesus, who's better than all other men. When driving to pick the kids up from school, take a moment to say, wow, God, thank you that Jesus' throne is forever and ever.

When lying down to sleep at night, we can say, thank you, God, that we're one day nearer to our wedding day with Jesus. And we can also help each other to delight in Jesus more, just as the psalmist is helping us.

It's not very British, is it, to show delight and open emotion. Culturally, we prefer to hold back, not appear too sincere or corny or too vulnerable.

[30 : 12] So amongst each other, in our conversations, even perhaps on a weekend like this, we don't often talk about Jesus himself. We might talk about church, might even talk about the Bible, but not focus on Jesus or show open delight in him.

So let's, let us be brave, let's be intentional, take that step of talking to each other and to our families and children about Jesus more. So say at tea and coffee later today or tomorrow morning after the sermon at church, we can say things like, I was amazed, I was amazed to see that Jesus is.

Or, it was challenging to think that Jesus, isn't it encouraging that Jesus, or when we see each other socially, let's ask each other, what have you been reading in your quiet times?

What have you been learning about Jesus this week? Why not suggest reading a couple of verses together there and then? We can use social media too.

I have some friends who send me scripture verses from time to time and that always, so timely, points me to Jesus and helps me delight in him in the midst of my circumstances.

[31 : 29] And how about for us, when we return home later today and our family and our friends ask us, how was it at the barn? Why don't we think of one thing that we can tell them that we learnt about Jesus?

See, there's nothing greater than delighting in our bridegroom king. There is no one greater than him. And though we delight in him imperfectly now, we do have that glorious wedding to look forward to when our hearts will deeply and openly delight in Jesus forever.

The king of Psalm 45 is our bridegroom king. This psalm is a love song that we really can sing. God's supreme and victorious eternal king, Jesus, is our praiseworthy bridegroom. So delight and rejoice in Jesus.

Shall we pray? Father God, we thank you for this fabulous, fantastic, overwhelmingly amazing picture of your king, Jesus, in this psalm and that he is the bridegroom king and we, your people, are his bride that he delights in.

[32 : 47] That because of him we are at his right hand in this place of honour and this most amazing, beautiful gold of Ophir that thank you that because of Jesus we have such a great privileged place with him in eternity.

Father, we just pray as we go about our lives now, please help us in the busyness to rejoice in Jesus. Help us see what that looks like. Help us remember this psalm in the middle of the day, in the middle of the hecticness and we pray we would grow in joy for you and encourage others to rejoice in Jesus too.

for your glory. Amen.