

Christ our refuge

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Preacher: Andy Meadows

[0 : 00] Psalm 47, which can be found on page 566 of the Church Bibles. Clap your hands, all peoples. Shout to God with loud songs of joy.

For the Lord, the Most High is to be feared, a great King over all the earth. He subdued peoples under us and nations under our feet.

He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth, sing praises with a psalm.

God reigns over the nations, God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham.

[1 : 11] For the shields of the earth belong to God, he is highly exalted. Morning, I'm Jake. Grand, if you've got a Bible, do keep it open at page 566 for Psalm 47.

We're continuing our series over the summer in the Psalms. A couple more left over the next few weeks. Why don't I pray for us as we look at God's word together. Father, thank you so much for the rest, the summer affords.

Thank you so much for speaking to us all year round through your word. And we pray, please, that you would do that this morning. Amen. Well, who runs the world?

Well, according to Beyonce, girls. I guess sometimes it seems like Trump thinks he runs the world. I guess maybe it's the EU or the UN.

Maybe some kind of secret Illuminati rule the world. Churches all across the country are gathering this morning because like us, they believe God runs the world.

[2 : 27] Some might be tempted to think, that's ridiculous and scoff at the idea that God is king. Some of us might be tempted to doubt it because it does sometimes seem that God is absent, doesn't it?

Or if not absent, weak. But Psalm 47 calls us and all peoples to praise God because he is the one enthroned king.

You should find a handout in your order of service if you want to follow along where we're going. Well, the call to praise God is reasonably clear, isn't it?

A quick glance through again. Verse 1. You can't miss the repetition. Clap your hands, all peoples. Shout to God with loud songs of joy. Verse 6.

We hear it four times. Sing praises to God. Sing praises. Sing praises to our king. Sing praises. And one for good measure in verse 7.

[3 : 38] Sing praises with a psalm. It's emphatic. God's people, singing Psalm 47, call all peoples to praise God.

And we could stop there this morning. The message of Psalm 47. Praise God. But God's word never calls for action without a reason.

So, why sing praise to God? Why should all peoples clap their hands? Verse 1. Shout to God with loud songs of joy.

Why? Why? Verse 2. For the Lord, the most high, is to be feared. A great king over all the earth. Verse 6. Sing praises to God. Why? Verse 7. For God is the king of all the earth.

[4 : 43] Exuberant, enthusiastic, demonstrative praise of God is grounded in and flows out of who he is. Charles Simeon, an old theologian, he wrote, Praise without understanding is blind.

But understanding without praise is lame. Praise of God without knowing him is disconnected and vague at best.

But knowing God, understanding who he is, that not leading us to praise him is worse. Because God is a great king over all the earth, we praise him.

Consider how you'd act if you met the queen. You'd revere her, respect her, bow, curtsy. You certainly wouldn't turn your back on her. We'd honor her, wouldn't we?

Because of who she is. And so God's people sing praises to God in Psalm 47 because they recognize who he is. He's the Lord, the most high, the great and awesome king of all the earth.

[5 : 57] So they praise him. I wonder if we often think God is quite abstract and small rather than fully appreciating who he is.

He's king over all the universe. He rules the cosmos. But maybe the question comes from our own hearts as we suffer and we doubt or from our friends as they scoff at the idea that God is king and worthy of praise.

Or maybe the question comes from the surrounding nations in Psalm 47. Sure, sing praise to God, you say he rules, but how can you be so sure?

What kind of king is he? Is he even there? And it's a legitimate question because as enemies consider Israel and as we look across London and the world, it doesn't always look like God is king, does it?

This is where Psalm 47 comes into its own because it doesn't simply make unfounded claims about God but it helps us to see who he is and what he's done.

[7 : 14] Firstly, we're to praise the king because he's ruled and reigned all through history. Psalm 47 calls all peoples to look back and check out God's track record.

Verse 2, he's a great king over all the earth. How do you know? Well, verse 3, he subdued peoples under us and nations under our feet.

He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. From the beginning and all through the Old Testament, God has been protecting his people, fighting for them in battle, giving them victory and he's been guarding his people, delivering them through trial and tribulation to the future that he has for them, to their heritage.

Consider for a moment Moses and God's people in the book of Exodus in slavery under the oppression of Pharaoh and the Egyptians until God acts.

He subdues his people's enemies and brings them safe out of Egypt. Pharaoh's army washed away in the sea and then he leads his people to the land he had promised them.

[8 : 41] They're choosing, delivering their heritage because they deserve it? No, because verse 4, he chose to love Jacob and he promised to love Jacob's descendants.

Years ago, Steve, a friend of mine, met a massive bodybuilder who happened to be called Billy and despite them having nothing in common, they became great friends.

Some time later, Steve found himself in the wrong part of town and was confronted by a gang of youths. Pretty convinced he's going to get beaten up until a massive bloke walks in and shouts, Oi! Back off! He's with me! Billy. Good timing. The youngsters quickly scatter, subdued and Billy, in delight, helps his friend, proceeds to escort Steve to where he was supposed to be, protecting him, guiding him all the way. And in a much greater way, God protects his people from enemies and delivers them to their heritage.

[9 : 55] He does it because he loves them and he's able to because he's king of all the earth. Now, the words of verse 5 are almost word for word taken from 2 Samuel 6 verse 15.

And in this poetic psalm, they serve as a beautiful reminder to God's people. They'd have sung verse 5, God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of the trumpet.

They were remembering their forefather, David, as he celebrated and danced at what was essentially a coronation ceremony. as the Ark of the Covenant, the place where God dwelt with his people, was delivered into the heart of David's city and put in its rightful place, enthroned.

It was a declaration, a proof, our God is with us and he is king. Who runs the world?

Girls? Trump? The UN? The EU? Some sort of Illuminati? No. Look and see. God ruling and reigning all through history.

[11 : 15] He's king. He runs the world. And I guess the question is this. Will the surrounding nations in Psalm 47 and will we acknowledge God as the one true king?

Will we praise him for who he is? I mean what could be better than living under the rule of a king seen to protect his people?

A king who time and time again rescues his wandering sheep. Who would you rather have as your king? Psalm 47 doesn't settle on looking back though because what about the current day in Psalm 47 where it doesn't look like God rules, where pagan gods seem to flourish, where surrounding nations wage war.

We'll see secondly we're to praise the king because he rules and reigns now. The call is verse 6 sing praises to our God.

Why? Verse 7 because God is the king of all the earth. verse 8 God reigns over the nations. God sits on his holy throne and there's no sense here of past tense.

[12:42] It's an emphatic declaration for now. God reigns on his throne now and verse 9 gives us a hint at how the psalmist can be so confident of that.

God sits on his holy throne and verse 9 the princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham for the shields of the earth belong to God.

He is highly exalted. The shields of the earth there in the second half of verse 9 refer to the weapons and armies of surrounding nations and the reality is because God is exalted because he is the ultimate king.

All those powers belong to him. And the princes of the peoples in verse 8 gather not for a nice meeting but because they understand and acknowledge who this God is.

It's like they've heard the call of Psalm 46 verse 10 just above. Be still and know that I am God and so they've put down their weapons in acknowledgement that God is their true king.

[14:02] They submit to him. They gather under his throne as one people the people of the God of Abraham. God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12 that through him the world would be blessed and through him would come one great nation.

And so despite the way things might look despite the question is God really ruling. Those singing Psalm 47 together in the temple they'd have looked around and they'd have seen a number of people in the temple gathered from other nations come together under God evidencing he's fulfilling his promise to Abraham even now.

Take Nebuchadnezzar as an illustration. Daniel 1 paints the picture of this pagan king the ruler of Babylon who comes and besieges Jerusalem ravaging God's people.

And yet three chapters later Nebuchadnezzar has been humbled. He's grasped the vastness of who the true God he waged war against is and he praises him.

How great are his signs. How mighty his wonders. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

[15:31] And Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God the true king and he gathers under his throne a specific example of verse 9 happening. God the king is slowly but surely fulfilling his promise to Abraham.

to bring from him one great nation to be one people under one king. It's happening and Psalm 47 sings its truth to all peoples.

Our God reigns. Come praise him. Nowadays if we're in any doubt that God reigns that he's doing what he's always done and he's fulfilling his promises to his people.

Psalm 47 would have us see even now through the church God is gathering to himself one people. We might worry about church buildings closing but if we look across London we'll see churches being planted and peoples putting their hope in the one true king.

Slowly but surely the global church is growing as God calls people from all nations to gather under his throne. And we sat here this morning Grace Church Dulwich we're an expression of the truth that God reigns and rules now.

[17:00] We are his people gathered as one body to worship the one true king. So picture the scene the sons of Korah have authored Psalm 47 and they've given it to the choir master and he's got the music ready and the people in the choir lead those in the temple singing loud joyful clapping their hands singing calling all peoples to come and sing praise to the true God the one king.

Well what about us here then in 21st century London what do we do with Psalm 47? Wonderfully the truths are the same but with the privilege of the New Testament we can shed a bit more light on the psalm.

See all through the Old Testament God the king acted protecting his people subduing their enemies and he guided and delivered them to his chosen heritage for them. the king enthroned fulfilling the promise he made to Abraham drawing to himself one people.

But in the New Testament we get a fuller picture of how God will finally bring about his promise to Abraham. As Jesus God the Son steps into history he comes and he subdues his people's ultimate enemies.

At the cross he defeats sin and evil enemies and as he rises from the grave he tramples on death. He tramples under his feet.

[18 : 42] And all the while he's securing his people's heritage preparing a place in eternity for all who gather at the cross. Jesus is God with us.

Subduing enemies choosing heritage for his people and in his ascension Jesus is enthroned on high exalted as king given the name above all other names.

Now in London and throughout the world in Christ God is drawing together one people the church the true people of Abraham and one day Christ will come again and God will completely fulfill his promise to Abraham.

He'll gather one people around his one throne just as we see in John's vision in Revelation 7 verse 9. John looks and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation from all tribes and peoples and languages standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb.

One people one throne around it praising the one true king. The king who has ruled and reigned all through history the king ruling and reigning now and forever.

[20 : 25] So what is called of us this morning? I have three specific things to suggest. You can think about some more ideas in discussion time afterwards. Firstly, who will you declare loyalty to?

Maybe you're here and you're just looking in on the Christian faith, considering it. God, through Psalm 47, he calls to you, come.

There are all kinds of things we might live for, swear allegiance to, but there's only one true king. Will you gather under his throne?

Will you put your hope in him? Maybe you've been loyal to God the king, you've been praising him faithfully for years and years. And to be honest, you're just about ready to give up.

You're discouraged, disappointed and being swallowed up in darkness. Please, let Psalm 47 lift your gaze to the king. He's a great and awesome king.

[21 : 30] And he sits on his throne as we sit here. So hold on to that truth. I find that so helpful to remember in the midst of darkness, in grief and pain, in our broken world of depression and anxiety.

See, if chaos reigns, if random rules, darkness is terrifying. There really is no light at the end of the tunnel.

But if this king, the god of the bible, is on his throne, it might just seem like a tiny prin prick, but there is hope.

There is light at the end of the tunnel. So for you this morning, cling on, and it might just be a tiny whimper, a small voice, but look to your king and praise him.

Secondly, some implications for our evangelism. Into our culture of post-truth, of believe whatever you want, as we join in as God's people, singing Psalm 47 with our brothers and sisters through the ages, we do verse 1.

[22 : 48] We call West Dulwich, Tulshill, Hernhill, West Nord, East Dulwich, London, people at the school gate, in the office, on the tube, see the one true king enthroned.

Come and praise him. And we needn't feel that that is an odd thing, or an intolerant thing. As I try to tell others about who God is, I'm not trying to convince them of something crazy or outlandish, though they might think so.

I'm simply telling them the truth. We're calling people to see what's true, inviting them to come and worship the true king at the heart of reality.

thirdly, implications for our praise of our king. It's hard to read Psalm 47 and not be confronted by the call to enthusiastic, wholehearted praise.

Shout to God with loud songs of joy. Clap your hands, all peoples. And I guess we don't clap our hands or lift our voices half enough in rejoicing that God is our king.

[24 : 00] In day-to-day life, in the gym, at work, at park run, with our children, and with our young people, and with our neighbours, if you are anything like me, you'll be slow to praise God, slow to call others to see who this great king is.

I was thinking, what might it look like tomorrow evening at football when one of the lads asks me what I got up to at the weekend? Will I say I got to preach at church about Jesus? Will I enthuse about who God is? Pray that I would. And I guess we don't clap our hands or lift our voices half enough on a Sunday morning either.

If you're anything like me, you arrive at church sometimes frustrated, distracted, planning lunch, thinking of the week ahead. But if I remember who our great God is, enthroned on high, the king, reigning and ruling over the cosmos, how we should praise our God.

Shout to God with loud songs of joy. And it's praise that's demonstrated too. Clap your hands. I wonder if sometimes our cultural backgrounds hold us back or our temperaments keep us quiet or maybe we're embarrassed.

[25 : 29] Psalm 47 doesn't seem to make exceptions for reserved British culture or our inhibitions. I'm not suggesting that we dance in the aisles, though if you want to, I would be encouraged if you did.

I just wonder, what would it look like for us to demonstrate our praise of our king with great joy and enthusiasm, not for the sake of it, but because we've understood who he is.

I was at a conference a while ago and a friend of mine was a few rows ahead of me, a very reserved young chap. And as we sang, I could see his joy.

And as he sang brilliant words about our great king, his hand went up in the air as if to say, yes, I'm in, this is my king.

He was simply demonstrating his praise of his king. And genuinely, that image has been with me for years. What an encouragement it was to see my brother praising his king with such enthusiasm.

[26 : 41] So Psalm 47 calls to us, clap your hands, Grace Church Delitzsch, shout to God with loud songs of joy. Why?

Because the Lord, the most high, is to be feared. He's a great king over all the earth. How do you know? Well, he subdued evil and sin at the cross.

And he secures an inheritance for us that will never perish, spoil or fade. He is exalted, enthroned on high now and evermore.

A king over all. Oh, how we should praise him. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, thank you so much that you haven't left us in the dark guessing what you're like, but you have revealed yourself to us in your word.

And you've revealed to us that you're a great king. And so we pray, please, that you would teach us and help us more and more to understand who you are.

[27 : 49] And would you have that fuel our praise? as we see you're a great God, would we praise you with great joy? And would we call others to come and see our great God and join in praising him?

Amen. Amen.