

"Jesus The True King" Psalm 144

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Preacher: Matthew Usherwood

[0:00] Psalm 144. Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle. He is my steadfast love and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me. O Lord, what is man that you regard him? Or the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow. Bow your heavens, O Lord, and come down. Touch the mountains so that they smoke.

Flash forth the lightning and scatter them. Send out your arrows and rout them. Stretch out your hand from on high. Rescue me and deliver me from the many waters, from the hands of foreigners whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. I will sing a new song to you, O God, upon a ten-stringed harp I will play to you. Who gives victory to kings? Who rescues David, his servant, from the cruel sword? Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners whose mouth speaks lies and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. May our sons in their youth be like plants full-grown. Our daughters like corner pillars cut from the structure of a palace. May our granaries be full, providing all kinds of produce. May our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields. May our cattle be heavy with young, suffering no mishap or failure in bearing. May there be no cry of distress in our streets. Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall, and blessed are the people whose God is the Lord. So what makes a good leader of a country? Are they meant to do and please whatever the culture demands? Are they meant to run a country with a good fiscal mindset? Are they meant to appease both sides of the political spectrum? Are they meant to appear strong and stand up to tyrants? Are they meant to see a weaker country that has something they want? Precious minerals, oil, lumber, water, land, and then take it? Are they meant to perform their job for the betterment of the people in the country they represent? We are continuing our series, our summer series through the book of Psalms, or through the last book, chapter, book five of the Psalms. And now we come to this Psalm. And the Psalm we're looking at this morning, we are given a glimpse into the heart of what a king should look like. In our context, we will call him either a prime minister or a president. So turn with me to Psalm 144. If you don't have a Bible, it's very helpful to have one, because you can see if we're actually reading what I'm saying up here is actually what's in the Bible. It's very important to have your Bible with you or on your phone or whatever means you have to access scripture. But we're going to look at this Psalm in three ways.

We're breaking it down. And we're going to look at it as point one, the strong and the fragile. And then we'll move in to the second point, and it'll be the pattern of rescue. And then the last point will be a people of peace. So the strong and the fragile, pattern of rescue, a people of peace.

So point one. So let's look at the first two verses. Let's look together. Blessed be the Lord, my rock who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle. He is my steadfast love and my fortress, my strong hand and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me. Now it says right at the top of this Psalm that David is the author.

And he is the second king of Israel, just to have a bit of background. He is considered the best king of Israel, the best king they ever had. One quick read of the history of the kings that follow him of Israel, and you'd be hard pressed to disagree with this. He is the one who leads the people of Israel into many battles. This is the one, this is the main reason why when you read this portion of scripture in the Old Testament, that God does not allow him to make the new temple, to make the temple, because his hands are covered in blood, in a sense, because he's been to war so many times. So Solomon, his son, is tasked in the history of building it. David was a powerful king. No nation could stand before him. But the words he uses here in these first two verses, then following in this psalm, then in most of his psalms, does not sound like the words of a powerful king at all. He attributes his success not to himself. He says, blessed be the Lord, my rock, my steadfast love, my

fortress, my stronghold, my deliverer, my shield, and my refuge. How are you in the sense of this? Because when we look around, we look at leaders and they seem strong, or you read about the kings of old and they seem strong and mighty. Blessed be the Lord, the one who makes covenant with his people. When you hear this, blessed be the Lord. David is praising the God who seeks his people. Not a distant God who only demands for you to be a servant, but one who promises to protect, to care and prosper his people. Not out of demand, but of love for the people he has chosen. When you read in Exodus, you read of the people of

[5 : 37] Israel coming out of Egypt, of slavery. God subdues the most powerful king of that land, of that era, and brings the people out, not because they did something to deem it, but because of a promise God made hundreds of years before in a covenant. This is what you think of when you hear, blessed be the Lord. The Lord is the one who makes covenant with his people. No other God of the world religions can do this. You cannot say to any of them that you are my rock, my steadfast love, my fortress, my stronghold, my deliverer, my shield, and refuge. Now, if you've heard me speak before, I do a lot of illustrations using outdoor analogies. I love being out in nature. And the thing I've done a bit of is whitewater canoeing or kayaking or rafting. And the thing about this, there are many dangers within the current, within the rapids that can hurt you as you navigate them. If you do it poorly, you can seriously hurt yourself. And one of the most dangerous hazards is called the keeper. And what a keeper is, is fast moving water moving under a submerged rock. And as it comes over the rock, it creates this spinning thing, this, I'm sorry, this spinning cycle within it. So if you go over that rock or are pulled into it, it keeps you underwater, it spins you, and you lose all sensation of which way is up and which way is down. And the same can happen in waterfalls. If you go over a waterfall, it creates the same motion that keeps you under it, it keeps you, pins you underwater. But also in the chaos of the rapids and in the chaos of the current as it pulls you down, there's these things called eddies. And what an eddy is, is a protruding rock or a bend within the river as you continue on. And what this happens in this is that it creates a break in the current and in the chaos in the rapids. And it creates this slow swirling sensation within the water. And if you get into this eddy, it's like you're in a place of peace. Chaos is around you. But when you're within it, you can regroup and look at the next set of rapids as you go in and navigate them as you go down. See, everything David calls the Lord here can be summed up in a place of refuge.

Like an eddy within a rapid, in a situation that is dangerous all around you, you can be in this place that gives you a sense of refuge. This is what David is referring to the Lord when he says all these things. My rock, my steadfast love, my fortress, my stronghold, my deliverer, my shield, and refuge. And then he continues on within these two verses. He attributes to the Lord as the one who trains his hands and his fingers for battle. His entire strength is what he's referring to here. It's not his skill that he has acquired over many battles, but the Lord working through him. The Lord is the one who gives him the strength. And at the end of verse two, he even attributes to the Lord that he is the one who has made him king above the people that he is king above. He has subdued the people under him.

Everything about his kingship he attributes to the Lord. There's no world leader we can think of that I actually tried to think about this. Liberal, conservative, or king, or queen in our time.

I can think of who's ever said this, who's ever given all the credit to the Lord. Or if they've even alluded to this in some capacity, their actions have not shown it. We begin to see the heart of David as king here. We're given a glimpse into what a heart of the king should be. But where does he get this perspective from? Where does it come from? Well, in the next two verses, verses three and four, we see it. Look with me in verses three and four.

[9 : 39] O Lord, what is man that you regard him? Or the son of man that you think of him? Man is like a breath. His days are like a passing shadow.

Now, the Odyssey, I'm sure many of us here know what the Odyssey is. It was just redone in a movie. And it's got the movie culture abuzz with it. I haven't had a chance to see it yet. And I've heard mixed reviews on it. I look forward to seeing it. But I'll wait until it comes out on Netflix or something like that. But this is a famous Greek story. It's one of the famous, most famous ones. And it takes place, it was written thousands of years ago.

But it's interesting what movies can do, how they can bring these stories back to life. They can make them seem like it only happened yesterday. Or if it's a myth and legend, that it actually happened in real life. Things that seem so ancient to us are a mere breath to the Lord. Just like in winter when you breathe and you see your breath and then it's gone in seconds.

This is what time is like to the Lord. This is what, when he looks, when we look on history, it seems so long. It seems like it goes on and on and you can look back and you can never find the beginning of it. But to God, history is a mere breath. The span of a man's life is mere seconds.

David reflects on this and looks to his kingship in a similar way. He's at the height of success. Yet he could be killed or die at any time. And he is just, he'll just be another name in history.

[11:16] Maybe he thinks to himself one day there will be a Netflix show about him. The strong king is humbled by how fragile he actually is. So he turns to the Lord as the one who makes him strong.

Because he knows his life is a mere breath. So in this moment, David is finding in the Lord a place of refuge during a season of war and chaos.

Personally, if I was being pressed in on all sides about people who wanted to kill me, I don't think I would have David's perspective here at all. And I'm sure many of us can think the same thing as well. If we're being hard pressed by something in our lives, so chaotic and so dangerous as that, we would not, I'd be really hard pressed to think of that we would have David's perspective.

It's quite profound, his confidence, you see here in his words. But at the same time, it's easy for things to be said and then the complete opposite happens. So we look into the next verses to see how his heart continues on in this prayer.

And point two, pattern of rescue. See, David now looks at the ways the Lord could rescue him. So let's look at the next verses. Verses six to eight. I'm sorry, five to eight.

[12:39] Bow your heavens, O Lord, and come down. Touch the mountains so that they smoke. Flash forth the lightning and scatter them. Send out your arrows and rout them.

Stretch out your hand from on high. Rescue me and deliver me from the many waters. From the hand of foreigners whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is the right hand of falsehood.

Last week, or on Friday, I had the privilege of going to the art gallery. And I haven't been to the art gallery like, I don't know, since like in grade five. And we spent most of our time in the Canadian section and mainly the group of seven because they dominate the Canadian section.

And the thing about the group of seven was a group of seven painters who spent much of their time in the Canadian wilderness in the north of Ontario mainly and then also a bit in BC. And they would paint landscapes of the Canadian wilderness.

And they would spend most of their time there painting these scenes that very few would see of that era. Their goal was to elicit the energy and feeling you would get by being in these places.

[13:48] And many of their paintings are during storms or during high winds and you see it within the paintings. You see the energy, you get the feeling of what they're experiencing and what they're painting.

David, here in this psalm, with his words, is painting a picture for us of a battle scene. But the battle scene is of the Lord fighting for him.

You can feel the energy and the power when he says this. Bow your heavens, O Lord, and come down. Touch the mountains so that they smoke.

Flash forth the lightning and scatter them. Send out your arrows and rout them stretch out your hand from on high. Rescue me and deliver me from many waters.

He's painting a picture of his words as poetry does. You can feel the energy of it as you read these. See the king, this king, David, the powerful king, the one who is in the highest seat, he subjugates himself and says it in his first line that he looks up.

[14:57] He bows. He looks up as a child in a crib wanting to be picked up by the parent. And then the Lord comes down. It's never the other way.

He looks up and the Lord comes down. This shows us something. The Lord that David is praying to for help is the Lord who comes down for his people. As I mentioned earlier, no other God does this or can do this.

There's no other God. this is the only Lord that protects the people. But who are these people that David needs protection from? You see, it says foreigners here.

Some would take this in our modern age as an anti-immigration text. But that's not what David is getting at here. Look again with me at the verses. I'll just read the one verse where it says foreigner. Stretch out your hand from on high. Rescue me and deliver me from many waters from the hand of foreigners whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is the right hand of falsehood.

[16:01] See, in this moment, foreigners is another way of saying a person from another culture. David isn't asking for protection because they're culturally different from him. He's asking for protection because they're attacking him and spreading lies about him and about the Lord, about the covenant Lord.

this psalm is a pre-exile psalm. The people of Israel have not yet been conquered and they have not yet been brought into exile. Jeremiah, who was a prophet during the exile, tells the people of Israel to settle down in Babylon, to build homes, plant gardens, seek the peace of the city. The Bible is not anti-foreigner. The Bible is anti-anything that tries to take your eyes and heart off the covenant God, off the Lord, the one who is blessed.

These people are seeking to eradicate the people of Israel, to tear down their God and to lift up their gods they have made with their hands. David cries out to the only one who can protect him.

Look what he does next in the next verses, 9 to 11. I will sing a new song to you, O God. Upon a ten-string harp I will play to you.

[17:19] Who gives victory to kings? Who rescues David, his servant, from the cruel sword? Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is the right hand of falsehood.

David is remembering a time before in a moment when the Lord has rescued him and his people and he holds on to this memory and gives him confidence. He is so confident he thinks of the ways that he'll sing worship to the Lord after the Lord has conquered the people who are pressing in on him.

It's the Lord who will deliver him and I've mentioned I believe two weeks ago about a prayer journal. I highly recommend these because it allows you to see the prayers that you've written and how the Lord has protected you and worked in your lives.

It allows you to be focused on the Lord and to lift praises up as you come to church every week and on every day in your own devotions. It gives you a heart of praise. It allows you to look up instead of looking down.

So he repeats here again in verse 8 sorry in verse 11 what he says in verse 8. He says this Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is falsehood.

[18:32] What's going on here is that he's repeating this that this moment that he's in is present. It hasn't been accomplished yet. It hasn't been resolved yet. A problem that has arisen within evangelicalism we call ourselves evangelicals reformed Christians is Christian nationalism.

And there's a trickle of this in Canada but obviously you see it more prevalent within the states because it's a part of their culture. Now I'm not trying to get political here but because this is a human problem not a political problem we're going to look at it very briefly.

See most presidents of the states have had a spiritual advisor. Billy Graham who's a famous evangelist was a spiritual advisor to many presidents. But he did it in a way that he never lifted the president above God.

The current president Trump has a spiritual advisor and she has compared him to Jesus. He is the one she says who will save the Christian people.

This was said near the beginning of the U.S. and Iran war. And many Christians bought into this. This is a problem that runs through evangelicalism. But we have to say to ourselves and think this when any thought similar of this enters our minds where someone or something is lifted above Jesus we need to pray rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners whose mouths speak lies and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

[20:03] Now it's easy to point a finger at Trump. He's always in the news. It's easy to do it. But I'm not doing it in a sense just to point at a political party. This is a human problem of trying to lift world leaders above the God of covenant.

Above the Lord. It's gone on for thousands of years and will continue on until Jesus returns. This is a human problem no matter what side of the line you fall on.

So now we move into the last part of this psalm. Point three. A people of peace. Look with me at verses 12 to 15. May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace.

May our granaries be full providing all kinds of produce. may our sheep bring four thousands and ten thousands in our fields. May our cattle be heavy with young suffering no mishap or failure in

bearing.

And may there be no cry of distress in our streets. Blessed be the people to whom such blessings fall. Blessed be the people whose God is the Lord. Again we see the heart of a king of a true king and it's for the people.

[21 : 25] the prayer focus is on family and the next rising generation not on dreams of empire. He prays for the sons to be healthy and strong. He prays for the daughters to be the very picture of statuesque elegance and strength.

And after he moves into this prayer this section of peace after focusing on the people's families the people he is above he looks at material wealth. but as a blessing from the Lord not one that is earned but one that is given.

And it's wealth that benefits the community not just the individual storehouse of those the Lord blesses. It's the one that if you read about it's talking about granaries and fields and cattle many of them.

This blesses the community because it provides food in this context. He prays for a healthy kingdom not one of defeat or cruelty and ends with those who call the Lord their God be blessed. This is the heart of a true king. But David is human and you read the story of David and he fails at this quite well. He fails miserably at this. He is far from perfect.

[22 : 38] But David points to the true king continuing down his line of succession the true king is prophesied to come and this king has come.

It's come in the form of a baby and lived a perfect life and that is Christ. In Philippians chapter 2 Paul is writing in jail and he says this have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus after becoming a servant lowers himself from his status of God and becomes a servant God makes him the king of the universe after he is risen and ascended into heaven he is the one who points to the future hope the hope of when people and things the war against people will be no more if you are here and Jesus is your Lord and Savior have hope and sing praises sing blessed be the Lord because there is a time when no longer things will war against you to take your eyes off of the Lord but if you are here and you don't know Jesus know that he had died for you that he rose for you and ascended into heaven for you he is the king the true king and he is the king that will return and care for the people who are under him