

Let The King Enter!

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 17 April 2013

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] For a short time tonight, let's turn to Psalm 24. Psalm number 24. We'll read from verse 7. Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

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. We're going to look at the whole psalm, but just to remind ourselves of this wonderful climax, to the psalm that builds up to this great crescendo of praise, where the King of glory is mentioned and set out for us in these rousing, majestic words.

And you recall that on Sunday night of our communion, this psalm was sung as our final item of praise. And it was a singing that was itself vibrant and rousing and heart-lifting.

And so it should be, whenever we sing these words, we should seek to sing them, and seek the Spirit's help in singing them, in a way that would indeed lift up our hearts, and our whole beings, in expressing the truth of these words and praise.

[1 : 33] We don't know when this psalm was penned. We know it's a psalm of David. And it would appear that it was a psalm that was composed in relation to something like what we read in 1 Chronicles, where the ark of God was brought back to Jerusalem.

It certainly seems to be associated with some event like that, and that event would fit very well with the sentiments of the psalm, where the ark as what really then represented the presence of God amongst his people, having had such a long time away from its resting place in the tabernacle, having been taken captive by the Philistines, and here, after one attempt, David having failed to take the ark back to Jerusalem, and the death of Uzzah in relation to that, you remember how that happened, and it was left then in the house of Obadedo, until David then, as we read, then brought it back in the proper manner.

He recognized that they had not done it in the way that God had appointed, and that that was really the reason why what led to Uzzah's death was the fact that David and those others with him had not arranged the carrying of the ark in the way that they should.

And that was God demonstrating in such an amazing way how jealously he guarded his own glory, and the representation of his presence amongst his people was not to be interfered with or gone about in a way that was different to the way God himself had appointed.

That, by the way, but coming up with the ark, there was this celebration and this singing and the arrangements as we read in 1 Chronicles. Now, that could have been the occasion, maybe it wasn't, but it fits with the sentiments of the psalm.

[3 : 25] And we can certainly picture what's in the psalm in our minds because this is a picture of the warrior king who is, of course, itself represented in David, the warrior king coming back from battle, having achieved a great victory for his people and coming into his possessions, coming to the city that has now come under his control and to which he has rights of occupancy and calling to the gates to open to him because he has conquered and therefore he has the right to occupy it.

And that, of course, you translate into the fulfillment of these great things in the work of Jesus Christ who came into the world, faced the enemies of sin, of death, of the devil, of the wrath of God, of everything that was against him and bearing our sin, and through death and resurrection overcame all these enemies that were against him and then ascended up to glory.

And you can picture the scene there as the risen Christ in ascending to glory comes to the gates of heaven accompanied by these myriads of angels as in Mount Sinai, very strongly supported and surrounded and calling on the gates of heaven to open to the victorious conqueror.

Who is this king of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle. Three things about the Lord and the sand reaching that great climax in the final verses.

First of all, verses 1-2 set out the Lord, the mighty creator. And then in verses 3-6 you find the Lord, the holy saviour, the one who promises blessing to those who are themselves able to come by the trust they place in them to take their place in his presence.

[5 : 31] And then finally, verses 7-10, the Lord, the victorious warrior as he comes to occupy this place that belongs to him in the heights of heaven.

The Lord, the mighty creator. You see how it begins. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and all who dwell therein. For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

In other words, you have both possession and position. The way that God has possession of all that he has created and the way that he has positioned the earth and indeed a whole creation, but particularly the world as we see it around us and as we are part of it in the way that he did as described in Genesis chapter 1.

The earth and the fullness thereof. Everything that the earth is able to produce properly, all its fertility, all its productiveness, all its resources, all its minerals, all the things that are there for the good of mankind, that mankind has sadly exploited and abused, but they belong to the Lord. Every aspect of the world, of the creation, the earth and all its fullness, it belongs to the Lord. In other words, when we use the resources of God's creation, we should be using them, especially as Christians, in a way that recognizes who they belong to, where they have come from, and that we are using them, yes, to our advantage, yes, to our benefit, but ultimately, they are for His satisfaction, they are for His glory, they are for His praise.

[7 : 14] We have a lot of emphasis on the environment, nowadays, and rightly so. The environment is important. But when you detach the environment from God and from the creator, the creatorship of God and from the glory of God, you have something which is pretty meaningless.

Because all you have got left is the environment in relation to men, in relation to human beings. And the Bible here and elsewhere says it doesn't belong to us.

We are stewards of it. It belongs to its creator. It is for His glory and praise. And indeed, you might say that is what lies behind our evangelism, the evangelism of the church, the church's message of the gospel as it's held out to those who are yet unsaved and certainly to those outside of the church.

Because it's based on the fact that the earth and the fullness of it, the world and those who dwell in it are the Lord's. And when we call people through the gospel to repent of their sin, to trust in the Lord, we're really saying very much what the psalmist is saying here.

Actually, in the ultimate sense, you belong to God. You were created by Him. You were created for Him. And we implore you to return to Him, to come back to your Father, to the one who rightly possesses you.

[8 : 45] And then he speaks about how He established it. He founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. Now it's interesting to compare that with the description in Genesis 1, especially verse 9, where you find that God creating, having created all things in the beginning then, brings it into its proper form by taking what was described as the deep and darkness over the face of the deep and the earth without form and void.

And God then arranges that the earth or the material earth, the world as you see it compared to the seas, that they are lifted up, as it were, and the seas we see it and the earth rises above them.

And it's like that that's described. He founded it, the earth, He founded it upon the seas. Because what He has in mind especially is the earth in terms of what we live in, what we actually stand upon, the physical world that we belong to and how that world as we stand upon it, as we live in it, is something that God has arranged to stand above the waters.

But there's more than that to it. That's the literal creation. But, you recall that recently we saw that much of the detail in these chapters of Genesis is actually what's usually called a polemic against paganism.

Because all of these elements that were worshipped by pagans, the earth itself, the moon, the stars, and as Prince Mount Oud, I think it was, made a reference to it, it's so deliberate in the first chapter of Genesis that the reference to the stars is I think what he called a throwaway line.

[10 : 39] It's something that the writer of Genesis is concerned just to show that, well, God created them, he just put them there. and therefore they are far from being worthy of being praised, they are

actually the work of his fingers.

He did it. And he did it for himself. And, when you follow that out and you come to, especially in the Old Testament, where the seas and the deep are very often illustrative of God's enemies and the enemies of his church.

I mean, when you go through, when you go to Exodus and the description of the people going through the Red Sea, it's not just to describe a literal miracle which it is that God parted the seas so that the people went on through on dry land compared with the Egyptians who then drowned in trying to follow them.

That's a description of God dealing with what is figurative or illustrative of the opposition that is against him. Not just in Egypt and in other aspects of Egyptian paganism, but every single enemy, every single opposition to God that can be depicted by the deep raising up its swelling waves, like Psalm 93.

The tumult of the waves as they rise up against all who try to cope with them. But the Lord that is on high is more of might by far.

[12:19] The noise of many waters is or great sea billows are. And then you take that with you into Christ and in the boat with the disciples going across the sea and the storm brewing up and buffeting the boat they were in and the Lord reaching out and speaking to the elements and saying peace be still.

There is God in the person of Christ now as the fulfiller of this Psalm as the king that David himself was but a shadow of. And there he is in his own world.

There he is having come to be a human being in this world that he created and showing that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof that he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

And this great Psalm that ends in such a triumphant note of victory that we apply to the Lord Jesus Christ actually begins on that note of victory as well where it speaks about God having set the earth upon the seas.

It's literally he has established it above the seas or above the waters. So that there's a note of victory right there at the beginning and it prepares you for the great climax that describes the victory in even greater terms.

[13:46] So there is how the Psalm begins the Lord the mighty creator the one who's already referred to as king above all other gods and above the pagan idols.

he is the one who established the work of his hands above them. Secondly the Lord is the holy saviour verses 3-6 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 has not lifted up his soul to what is false or to vanity. Now these are interesting verses because for one thing they do describe certain elements in our attitude and practice of worship.

The very essence of worship is actively set out there for us in these words ascending and standing because that's really what it's saying who can come into the presence of God who is going to be able to come before God and do that in a proper fashion.

How do we engage in the worship of God? How are we unable to come before God? What do we think of us we come before God to worship him? Well take these words ascend and stand and it's not at all accidental that in so much of the Old Testament you find the people described when they go to worship as going up.

[15:17] They go up to Zion. Zion is placed above them. Zion is placed in a way that they have to ascend up to it. And that itself is illustrative of what it should be for our own souls.

We don't just have our praise as it leaves us our worship as a spiritual offering to God then ascending up to where he is. We actually ascend in the sense of our attitude of our mind of our hearts.

We come before God in a way that lifts up our soul as it says there in verse 4. What a wonderful description that is. You don't just lift up your voice.

You don't just lift up your words. You lift up your soul. Because you recognize that when you come to worship God, you're worshipping upwards.

You're worshipping the high holy Lord who is our Savior. We stretch out our souls and it's upwards.

[16:29] Our worship is never on the horizontal. It's never downwards. It's always upwards. Who shall ascend?

And then after ascending we stand. because after we've gone up to God we stand in his presence. We are conscious of being in the presence of God having actively in our souls and our thinking and our attitude and our practice having gone up to God.

We then stand in his presence. We're in the presence of majesty and the presence of the Holy One and the presence of our Creator of our Savior of our King of the King of Glory.

And that is so much a balance in the scriptures to the way we bow before him.

And that too is appropriate. When you ascend up to the King when you then stand in the presence of the King you don't stick your chest out you bow in his presence.

[17 : 40] You acknowledge his superiority you take your place in acknowledging that you are there by his will and by his provision and at his invitation and he is the King and you are his subject.

We never forget that in the we must never forget that in our worship of God. wherever we are worshipping him even if it's just on our own we ascend to him we stand before him and then we bow we take that position that belongs to us and then he answers to us who who is in this position of coming before him he who has clean hands and a pure heart who does not lift up his soul to what is false well that tells us something about the kind of people we need to be in order to be able to ascend and to stand before God and be accepted in his presence and our offerings of worship to be acceptable to we need to have clean hands and a pure heart it's a really simple way of describing how we need to be holy in our outward actions but also in our inward attitude what needs to be holy starts from within and from the holiness of the heart, from the cleanness cleanness on the purity of the heart, it's from that that the clean hands, the outward purity of life actually exists, now this is of course in the way it's put in the Bible, always very challenging for us, because it's really setting out, in terms of looking at the bare words in themselves it's setting out sinlessness it's setting out perfection clean hands a pure heart, well if that's literally the case as we are in ourselves, none of us can come to ascend to the hill of God and stand in his presence that's the beauty and the wonder and the sufficiency of our

Lord, this is God our saviour who has provided for us the means by which we come the one in whom we come and even the youngest person here tonight understands that in the Lord Jesus Christ God fully approves of them even though they're able and you and I have to say of ourselves that our hands as we see our lives are not clean neither is our heart pure we still have bad thoughts and a wrong attitude and sinful actions but the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin and God tonight looks upon us as if we never had sin in the righteousness of Christ that's what we're promised in verse 5 he will receive blessing from the Lord this person who is like this and the righteousness from the God of his salvation before you come to that he says here who does not lift up his soul to what is false now what is it to lift up your soul we've said it's an attitude of ascending in our thoughts and in our mind to God it is that but there is at the very heart of it something called trust something which belongs to faith because if you go to the next psalm you'll find that these two things are brought together to you oh Lord

I lift up my soul oh my God in you I trust and that's what Hebrew poetry in the Psalms often has usually called parallelism where you find two lines put together saying the same thing in different ways in a parallel way so that you can say from the likes of these two lines that lifting up his soul is in fact the same as putting trust in God lifting up your soul to God is equivalent to putting your trust in him and putting your trust in him is committing yourself to him committing your life to him putting your life in his hands willingly accepting him to be what he promises to be your God your Father your Saviour who has not lifted up his soul to what is false who has not trusted in what is false nor does he swear deceitfully now that could be on a general sense in our interpersonal relationships and human relationships that we don't promise things falsely or swear deceitfully but it would seem to be again better to look at that in terms of pagan attitudes to idolatry to idols because that's what paganism very often referred to is how it's referred to in the Bible people who follow vanities and the Old Testament is full of references to idolatry as vanity that which is empty futile offensive and what it says is who shall ascend the hill of God who shall stand in his holy place it's this person who has the clean hands and the pure heart through trusting in God and therefore does not swear deceitfully does not take give allegiance to idols or put their trust in them he will receive you can find in fact that same if you want to follow out that point it's interesting that that Psalm 115 which we haven't sung tonight but you remember Psalm 115 is much of it dealing with idols and idolatry and their makers become like them and a description of them having noses but they cannot smell and so on eyes that they can't see and then having done all that having described the futility of idols the

foolishness of idols it then goes on immediately to say oh Israel you trust in the Lord that's precisely what the

[24 : 20] Psalm is saying trust in the Lord is a refusal to lift up your soul to the vanity of idolatry and it doesn't matter what is placed in the place of God instead of God as a substitute for God it doesn't have to be a weak hard figure it can be yourself and myself or something that you have a propensity or a likelihood to put in the place of God or that you tend to look to as a priority as many people do in life well he's saying that's not the way towards the presence of God the acceptance of God it is to trust in him and he will receive blessing from the Lord the one who does that and righteousness from the God of his salvation and notice such is the generation of those who seek him who seek the face of the God of Jacob which is seeking first of all and how we tend generally to think about seeking as a stage before you've come to know the

Lord the Bible in fact does not encourage us to think that way the seeker after God is the one who knows him the seeker after God is not one who's inquiring as to where God might be and how they might come to know God the seeker after God is the one who has God as their God and who seek him in their personal relation with him the seeking out of God the seeking of God as it's put here the generation of those who seek him it actually means those who live in a relationship of personal trust and communion with God that's to say every single person in here tonight is a seeker after God because God has brought you to know himself and therefore you seek him with all your heart seeking that his promises toward you will be increasingly fulfilled and enjoyed and then it says who seek the face of the

God of Jacob and that's probably not the best translation the AD has who seek your face or Jacob I think it's like that certainly in the Hebrew text of the psalm Jacob is really a word that stands on its own so you translate it or Jacob and the word God is not in the original text who seek your face or the face Jacob and the interesting thing about that is why does it refer to Jacob well Jacob became a name for the people of course Israel sometimes they are called Jacob as well but if you cast your mind back to the way that Jacob met with God on a memorable night in his experience where he met with God at Peniel the place that he then came later to call Peniel where he wrestled with the angel and where we read that the angel blessed him there angel first of all said to him let me go I will not let you go said Jacob except you bless me and he blessed him there and Jacob came to recognize that he had met with God God himself who had blessed him and that's when he came to say to call the place Peniel for he said I have met with God face to face and I have lived he had seen the face of God in the way that God appeared to him in that what we understand to have been the angel of the covenant the old testament equivalent of the son of God's appearance and here is the psalmist saying such as the generation of those who seek him the one who are promised to receive the blessing of him who seek your face oh

Jacob who seek the face that met with the face of God the face of God in the blessing of his covenant and you can explore that further yourself we need to move on to the final part of the psalm so there's the Lord the mighty creator and secondly the Lord the holy saviour thirdly the Lord the victorious warrior lift up your heads oh gates and be lifted up oh ancient doors now of course this could be literally applied to the gates of the city of Jerusalem or Zion as the ark was being taken up or as the king came in possession and claimed rights of possession to enter in and take his place but of course we said that this in fact is appropriately applied to Jesus Christ to his victory and to the fact that we sing with the knowledge of Christ having come and faced the strong and the mighty enemies of sin and of death of the wrath of God against sin and here is a description then of the fulfilment of the mighty warrior in

[30 : 04] Christ who is this king of glory the Lord strong and mighty but think of the question that was asked before that who shall ascend the hill of the Lord who is going to gain entrance into the presence of God who is going to do it the one who has clean hands and a pure heart who does not lift up his soul to what is false and just as you find similarly in Psalm 15 so you find here in Psalm 24 that this speaks preeminently in the first instance before it speaks of any mere human being it speaks of the Lord in our human nature who led a perfect life who did have clean hands and a pure heart who did not ever lift up his soul to vanity or turn away from the path of honoring the God who sent him into the world and it's on the basis that he has done that that he has gone to glory that he received the qualification for entrance it's on the basis of that that you and

I follow him otherwise it would be shut in our face but he came he came into this world he took our nature and there you find him we've seen this passage so often as an illustration of Christ facing

death as the great enemy coming to the grave of Lazarus and we read in John's gospel there in chapter 11 that he was stirred within himself and we understand that the stirring was a lot more than just sympathy with the two sisters who had lost their brother that the stirring within himself was the stirring of the Lord of glory looking at human beings as they were represented in Lazarus entombed in the enclosure of death of course his heart would be stirred within him here was the king who had created human beings for fellowship with himself and where are they they're in a grave of their own making they are actually now in the condition that is nothing less than the wages of sin and he comes to that grave groaning within himself stirred within himself facing this enemy death that has done such catastrophic things to his human beings

Lazarus come forth and he who was dead came out bound with the grave clothes ah the earth is the Lord the world and all the people of it even the dead they need to yield to his voice and as he went from that through to his own death how did he die did he die with a little whisper he died with a loud voice it is finished father into your hands I commit my spirit the voice of a champion the voice of a victor the voice of a conqueror the voice that was saying to death at that moment death I am your plagues I am your conqueror then he died physically and he was laid in the tomb and as we heard at our communion on the morning of the resurrection they came to look for his body and the angel said he is not here he is risen the gates of the grave had opened who rolled away the stone well let's ask who opened the gates of death he did the champion did they had to open they couldn't stay shut because he was there and he came out from death to die no more and he ascended up on high and he came to the gates of heaven leading captivity captive and in a triumphant shout he and his retinue could say lift up your heads o ye gates be lifted up o ancient doors that the king of glory may come in who is the king of glory this king of glory the lord strong and mighty the lord mighty in battle he is the king of glory you know the old testament type or picture if you like in many respects begins at the exodus and ends in the ark coming to its resting place in

Zion because there is God beginning the journey of victory and bringing himself and his people to be together in his holy place and the fulfillment of that begins in the manger in Bethlehem in the manger in Bethlehem and through the life experience and the obedience of Christ through his death and resurrection particularly it ends in his triumphant ascension to glory that's the journey ended the king of glory is triumphant from incarnation to glory via death and resurrection this is the king of glory and for all his grandeur for all his magnificence for his indescribable beauty and greatness he's still your friend he lives in your heart he walks with you every day he teaches you through his word he encourages you and comforts you he rebukes you and he guides you and he calls to you come up to where

[37 : 12] I am arise up my beloved come away for the winter is over and gone the flowers appear on the earth the time of the singing of birds has come and that's not just a reference to our leaving this world and going to heaven it's a reference to what begins here to the abolishing of death to the overcoming of sin and you have it in your king of glory and as Paul said we too can more than conquer through him who loved us in Charles Wesley one of his hymns in relation to what's often sung on ascension day in these traditions that have ascension day this is how

Wesley put it and we can finish with these words of his hymn rejoice the lord is king you lord and king adore mortals give thanks and sing and triumph evermore lift up your heart lift up your voice rejoice again I say rejoice his kingdom cannot fail he rules over earth and heaven the keys of earth and hell are to our Jesus given lift up your heart lift up your voice rejoice again I say rejoice rejoice in glorious hope Jesus the judge shall come and take his servants up to their eternal home we soon shall hear the archangels voice the trump of God shall sound rejoice this is the king the king of glory let's pray our gracious

God we give thanks that your word is so rich in all its descriptions even what was written so many hundreds of years before their actual fulfillment are for us images that are so replete with meaning and so full of substance we give thanks oh lord as we worship you tonight for all that you are and for where you are for all that you have accomplished and all that you will yet do we thank you that we have been made willing by you to acknowledge you to accept you to praise you as our king of glory and we pray that you would enable us to carry in our hearts that element of rejoicing always that our king is where he ought to be grant these mercies to us we pray for your name's sake amen