

The King of Glory

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: 26 June 2016

Preacher: The Venerable Daniel Gifford

[0 : 00] It's really a great privilege to be part of this confirmation service. And I was going back when I was seeing all these candidates being confirmed to my own confirmation, which happened to be when I was about 12 years old.

And these days, a lot more adults are being confirmed than children, partly because of the importance of catechism for everyone. It was great to see so many youth being confirmed today. When I was confirmed, I remember that the bishop, he had our full formal names. And I went and kneeled before him, and he looked at my name, and he said, Daniel.

And I looked up at him, and he said, Stay out of the lion's den. And so I ended up starting my full-time ministry in the Diocese of New Westminster.

So I'll have to tell him I didn't listen to him. But this is a very significant thing that we have been part of today, because the thing that has happened here with these confirmands, the people who have been confirmed, is that they have really committed themselves to follow Jesus, to say, I am giving my life over to Jesus, and I want to minister in his name in my life.

[1 : 18] And they're asking for your prayers, the bishop's blessing, the Holy Spirit, to strengthen them for serving, for serving a king, the king of glory that we heard about in Psalm 24.

And so it's very good for us to ask the question, as we are going to look at this psalm, why do we worship? Why is it that we would give our lives to serve a king of glory, the king of glory?

And the short answer is in that title. It is because God is glorious. And we've been hearing about the glory of God in our John series, and also starting now in the Psalms.

All these psalms are psalms of glory. So I invite you to turn in your Bibles, and they're in the pews in front of you, to Psalm 24.

And you can find it on page 458 in those, and we'll probably need to share Bibles as well. But I want to say, as you're turning to that, that it's really important to know the context of this Psalm 24.

[2 : 27] Because it's in the context of really a big service. But it's a very boisterous service. It is one with lots of action in it.

And it starts at the bottom of a hill in Jerusalem. And in that, in verses 1 and 2, there is a call by the whole congregations to know that God is the one who has created the world, and the world, the earth, and all that is in it, the fullness of it, belongs to him.

And then they move up. And a question is asked of the whole congregation, well, who may ascend this holy hill? Who can go up to the place where God's presence will be?

And the answer is that it's those who have, as Bishop Trevor was telling the children, clean hearts, clean hands. In other words, people who live out a holy life.

And then it ends, this liturgy, with this joyful call to open up gates. We're going to talk about that in a moment. But to open up gates so that the King of Glory can actually come in and dwell.

[3 : 44] And years later, the gates of Jerusalem literally will open up symbolically. And what's happening here is that the people of God are renewing their understanding of God's glory and their commitment to live for the one who lives with them.

And that's why it's so appropriate to this service. Because just as these confirmation candidates are renewing their faith and their commitment to serve, that is what's happening in this psalm as well.

And I want to look at this briefly. We don't have a whole lot of time. But I want to look at three aspects of God's glory that show forth and shine out in this psalm.

The first thing we see is that God is glorious because he creates the world. And secondly, we see that God's glorious because he is holy, but he is personal as well.

And then thirdly, we see that God is glorious because he is the King, the King of Glory. And so let's look at those three things briefly. The first thing that David says is that the earth is the Lord's, all the

fullness thereof.

[4 : 54] And the fullness of the earth is all that is good in the world, all that is good in the lives of men and women and boys and girls and what is glorious in the world itself.

Because God made the world as the place to know him, the place to love him and to know his will. And there's really no contradiction whatsoever between the God who creates and sustains the world and good science, a science that studies his handiwork.

Because God's creation is beautiful. It is complex. It is ordered. And the thing that is wonderful does hear the testimony of Christian scientists who see that complete compatibility between science and God owning the world and creating it.

Many world-class scientists love the Lord Jesus Christ with all their heart, mind, and soul and believe in him, including scientists in our own church.

Two of the very best scientists Canada has produced died in the last couple of years, Carl Erdman and Phil Hill. And they were men who were not only brilliant scientists, but they were strong in their faith.

[6 : 18] And they would over and over again talk about how the science that they know and understand so very well and are teaching at the very highest levels in the world, that science is perfectly compatible with the God who owns the world and has created it.

They strongly believed what David is saying in verses 1 and 2. And today, on this beautiful day in Vancouver, it's very hard to miss the beauty and the goodness and the majesty that reflects God's glory.

And the thing that's wonderful to know is that Phil and Carl are in the glory of God right now and many of the questions that they came across that were unanswered are answered today.

And they had more questions than most people would have had, I think. There's a bit of a surprise in verse 2 because David says, God has founded the earth upon seas.

He's established it upon the rivers. And there's a deeper meaning than science here because the seas and the rivers in ancient times represented chaos.

[7 : 28] They represented death. You think of the flood. You think of what was happening in creation where there was just chaos before God came and brought order to it in the creation. And so we're reminded in this prayer that God took what was chaotic and formless and dark and he very powerfully brought beauty, goodness, and order into creation.

And that's what we are seeing today all around us. And that is why we can know this God who owns this world that in our own situations of chaos, situations of darkness we experience, situations of evil, that God alone is the one who can bring order, who can create goodness, and who can shine hope into us.

Because all of those things are part of the world that belongs to him. In fact, nothing, nothing in the world and in our lives or in the lives of anyone else is outside his ownership.

That's the truth of these first two verses. So, everything from a very personal worry or uncertainty and we heard some of that in the testimonies today of going through school and experiencing the challenges of going through all of those different grades.

something that is very personal. What God is belonging is owning that. It belongs to him. But also worldwide anxieties, you know, like the chaos of Brexit, which is now being called re-Grexit, is, that is something that is under God's good ownership.

[9 : 16] all goodness is from him, but also all the sin in your life, in the lives of others, all the chaos in the world, it is his to forgive, his to reconcile.

All darkness and evil is his to overcome. And therefore, God wants his very best in every part of your life. That's how these two verses come home to us.

because worship is really asking him, how can I serve you in all of my life? Nothing is separate from him. My work, my times of joyful relaxation, my home, my church, all of this is in God's earth.

So how do I take care of his good creation? How do I take care of his city of Vancouver? If you worship this God, you have a thankful confidence that you can serve God in all of your life, in a world that belongs to him.

And that's what confirmation candidates today are confirming and committing themselves to, a life where God is owning all of it. So that's the first thing that David says about God's glory.

[10 : 34] And second thing he says of glory is that God is both holy and personal. This is how we see God's glory. Look at the first verse of this section, verse 3.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord, the person who's leading says? And who shall stand in his holy place? You see, the glory of God is that he is holy, which means he is pure.

There's no evil or sin or anything imperfect in him. He is pure power, pure love, pure goodness, pure justice, pure beauty, pure majesty.

We could go on and on and on. But when Isaiah had a vision of God's glory in heaven, it was filled with holiness, which is all of those things.

And in this picture, if you remember, heavenly creatures are calling to one another. And what do they say? They say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory.

[11:37] And the response of Isaiah is actually horror. He is frightened. He says, woe is me, for I am lost. I'm a man of unclean lips.

I dwell in the midst of a people with unclean lips. For my eyes, they have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. You see, he knows that not even the smallest impurity can approach the holiness of God. God. And this is what David understands as well. And that's why he prays in verse 4 that the one who comes to God is he who has clean hands, which means outwardly your relationships are right with one another.

And a pure heart. In other words, your inward thoughts are pure. Who doesn't lift up his soul to what is false. Literally that means who doesn't set their heart on things that are empty.

Things that are empty. And he doesn't swear deceitfully. In other words, there's nothing deceptive about that person. Now the question that I ask you and I ask myself is do any of you have perfectly clean hands?

[12:47] Do you have constantly pure hearts? Do you ever trust in what is empty instead of God? I think in our culture we have more opportunity and temptation to trust in what is empty than ever before.

Are you ever deceptive? Well, David is a wonderful person to be writing this because he knew his own impurity, his own deception. And he's really praying that his people and he himself need that purity if we're to have this incredible gift of God dwelling with us.

And that's why I don't know if you know this but the temple and the tabernacle were an amazing gift from God to the Hebrew people. An amazing gift because the temple was a symbol that absolutely assured God's people that God was truly present with them in their city and that he had made them his people.

Every time they looked at it they knew that was true. And that's why it was so meaningful. And it was actually shocking as well when Jesus said I am that temple.

Destroy this temple. I will raise it up in three days. Because he's saying that he is God come from heaven to dwell with people.

[14:08] And then when he died and rose and was exalted to heaven he gave his Holy Spirit to actually make us small temples. People who God the Holy God comes to live in because he personally loves us.

And so the question is how do we live with this Holy God? That's what they're asking. And verse 5 says this. You need to receive something from God.

He says he or she will receive by the way it's the same word as lift up your hearts to the empty. It is they will lift up they will rely on depend on a blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his or her salvation.

Now do you see what David's saying here? He is saying that God has first loved his people. God has saved them. He is the God of salvation. And he gives them his righteousness his rightness his right living and his blessing.

And then David wants them to respond by living a life of purity and a thought life of purity and a life of serving him.

[15:23] He gives that to us. And that's exactly what Jesus came to do. That's what we heard in this confirmation service that Jesus came to save people from their sins to bring them into God's presence and then he says follow me.

Follow me. And each of these people being confirmed are saying I will follow you. I will follow you. Their testimonies that you heard are really about God's grace coming into their life first in their life and wanting to respond to that grace by serving the king in the way that they live and the way they think.

So the personal love and the beauty of God's holiness really draws people to himself. That's why verse 6 says such is the generation of those who seek him who seek the face of the God of Jacob. That's what the confirmed people that's what we are doing. We're seeking the face of God here. Now I'd like to close this sermon from those last four verses and those verses are amazing verses because we've just said look we know that we are sinful people.

We can't ascend the hill of the Lord. We need the forgiveness of sins. We need God to adopt us as his own to belong to him. We need that grace first. We have a desire in our heart to seek him to see the face of God his glorious God.

[16 : 57] The last part of this verse of this psalm says to us that God is glorious because he is our king. He is our king.

So look at verse 7. For many years people came right up to the temple gates after David had started doing this before the temple was done. But before the temple was built and after they would come up and there were actually real gates finally years later.

But they would say this. They would say lift up your heads O gates and be lifted up O ancient doors. Meaning you know there's a door and the cross piece at the top of it is the head of the door.

And they're saying lift up your heads. Get those cross pieces off and just blow open those doors.

They are God's doors and we want to welcome the king of glory in so that he may come in.

And so it was a renewal every year all of the time that the earth belongs to God and he must be welcomed in by his people.

[18 : 04] That they welcome him in as one that they love and want to know and to have in their presence. It's a renewal of that. And I think we're renewing that in this service today.

So the person who is leading shouts out who is the king of glory? And I have to say that I was I had that chorus from Handel's Messiah lift up your heads running in my head over and over again.

It would be good for the chorale to sing that today too as I prepared the sermon. Because this is what's going on. The question is who is the king of glory? And the answer is the Lord strong and mighty.

The Lord mighty in battle. And then in verse 10 the Lord of hosts. What the psalm is saying here is that God leads a strong and a victorious mighty army.

And we're right to be a bit nervous about using military language for God. We've seen what that does in the world. But here David is speaking of God's heavenly army.

[19 : 08] It is one of hosts that you can't number. and Israel couldn't come close to that. Very small small country. But he's speaking of God's heavenly army.

Jesus says the kingdom of the my kingdom is not of this world. And Jesus is the glory of God.

Because throughout the Bible the battle that God wages is against sin evil and the devil.

And that's why Hebrew 9 tells us that Jesus' death on a cross destroys. It's military language. It destroys the one who has the power of death the devil and delivers all those who through the fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

That's battlefield language because it's a real and fierce spiritual war that is taking place in which many people are being brought from slavery of spiritual death into the freedom of serving the one true king.

And we are celebrating today that freedom of serving the king. And we heard today in this service of confirmation that it is our privilege to join the king in fighting the good fight.

[20 : 21] Did you remember what we said? We fight valiantly under Christ's banner against sin the world which is evil in the world and the devil in his power. It's not easy doing this but we struggle we fight in his power the power of the Holy Spirit which is beyond anything that we can imagine and we know that there is victory one day that victory is absolutely certain because we fight under Christ's banner who has won the war on the cross.

So this is why we worship. God is our king of glory. He is strong to save. He will protect you. He owns this world. He will bring you safely into his presence and to serve him is to serve the one who has created you who is perfectly good and holy and who personally loves you.

So may we renew our welcome of King Jesus in our lives. May we call the doors of heaven the doors in our lives all the doors to open up so that the king of glory may come in and that we might serve our king with gladness with joy in Jesus name Amen.