

New Year's Day Sermon

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[0 : 00] Well, for our time we can turn back to their reading in Psalm 24. Just consider this psalm together. In verse 5 it says, He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Such is the generation of those who seek and who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Well, we're entering into a new year and as we do so, we always have that maybe sense of anticipation and maybe trepidation as to what may lie ahead for us in the year before us.

But who is it that is leading us into the year? Who are we putting our trust in? And as we stand at what is often described as the gate of the year, is it the Lord, the one going before us?

Well, this psalm reminds us of what it is to have the Lord going before us and who the Lord going before us is. He is the King. And not just the King, he is the King of glory.

And he is the one that we are to look to as we go forward into this year. Psalm 24 is in the midst of this collection of psalms.

[1 : 22] Really, there's three psalms that you could take together from Psalm 22, then 23, and then Psalm 24. Psalm 23 is always the one we maybe know so well.

We sing it so often. We are reminded there of the shepherd who leads his sheep. And it's very much, as you look at Psalm 23, it's that journey of life through all the different experiences of ourselves as people.

Whether it's through the calm waters or the valleys of the shadow of death, we have that constant promise of the Lord with us. Psalm 23 is a precious psalm in that sense because it reminds us that for those who trust in the Lord, there is that end in sight where goodness and mercy shall follow all the days of our lives, and then we shall dwell in the house of the Lord all our days.

So there's that great comfort and that great assurance in that psalm. But Psalm 23 can leave us with a question. How do we find our way to this place?

How do we come to know the shepherd? Well, it is to know who that shepherd is. It is to know the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who is the shepherd of his people.

[2 : 44] And this cluster of psalms reminds us of who this shepherd is, who this Jesus is, who this Christ is. In Psalm 22, we see there the shepherd laying down his life for his sheep.

Psalm 22 is a psalm that Jesus quoted on the cross. My God, why have you forsaken me? And we see in that psalm just how the shepherd lays down his life.

So he has come that we might have life. He gave his life that we might have that life in full. And then you have Psalm 23, as we've seen there, just that wonderful reminder of the shepherd's leading, the shepherd's care.

But then we come to Psalm 24. And then we see here the shepherd being crowned with glory. And the shepherd, again, just with this vision of leading his people, leading the host of his people into glory.

And so there is this leading theme in Psalm 24 as well. It's very much a psalm of procession. And as we think of going into a new year, as we think of it in that sense of going on a journey into the unknown, there's so much that lies before us that is unknown to us at this time, but that the Lord will reveal as the days go on.

[4 : 18] And we seek the Lord's will as we go forward into this new year. But the question is, are we going forward with the King? Are we going forward looking to the King of glory and entrusting ourselves to him in all these things?

Is he going to be our joy in this year? There is great joy to be found in him. As verse 5 here makes clear for us, he will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

God is able to provide abundantly. And that's what this psalm reminds us of, the abundance of God, the abundance grace he gives.

So we go on in our journey of life. And it can be said of some in life that people have lost their way. It's a phrase that we hear used.

People who have lost their way. Perhaps things were going well in life, but life has taken a turn, a twist along the way in a different direction.

[5 : 29] And that life can sometimes leave us in that situation. We so often think of it for others who have lost their way, but the reality is that we are all, we have all lost our way in this world.

But it's the shepherd who brings us back. And that's the great hope of these psalms. That as we look to them, we see we as a people have lost our way.

But that the shepherd came to gather his people. And we see in Psalm 22 that the cost of our care. We see in Psalm 23 the beauty of this care.

And Psalm 24 speaks of how to know this care. There is an authority of God in this psalm. That he is the one who all people will come under this authority and this rule one day.

There is a standard expected in this psalm. We see what is required of those who will come into God's presence. And we see too the rule of God here as well.

[6 : 40] The rule of our king. The one who will rule forever. And so we have this king in this psalm. But is he our king?

And as we enter into this year, may we find that this is the king that we are looking to. This is the king we are entrusting ourselves, our congregation, our community, all things to.

That the king of glory would lead us and go before us into this new year. So we're going to see three things from this psalm.

And it's like this procession going forward. And we're struggling to find our way. Maybe our life has taken a different path, an unexpected turn.

But we are being brought on track by looking to the Lord. And the three things that we're going to see are, first of all, the Lord's authority. Because the journey here begins with a recognition of God's authority.

[7 : 45] The very first words of this psalm. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. The world and all those who dwell therein.

Everything belongs to God. Ourselves included. All our days belong to God.

The psalms that we have sung, very often they think of time. And in verse 15 of Psalm 71, it says in the middle of that verse, Even all the day, for I thereof, the numbers do not know.

There is this uncertainty on our side. We don't know the numbers of our days. But God does. And that's what this psalm reminds us.

The earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof. Everything that we see around us. And when you think of it, when we look at the marvel of the created world, For he is the one who has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers, Verse 2 says, There is this wonder of creation all around us.

[8 : 57] The beauty of his creation. And we see it again and again, day by day. We walk around and we see the skies. We see the earth. We see the seas.

We see all of these things. And they speak to us of the wonder of creation. Just a number of days ago, I was over in Uig at a cemetery over there.

And we have had a great spell of weather recently where it's just been so calm and so mild, so peaceful. And that even standing in a cemetery and looking around there in Cliff and Uig, you're surrounded by just the beauty of creation.

The cliffs, the sea, the shore, the sky, everything just so peaceful and so calm. And yet in the midst of that, there is something that reminds us of what is wrong in this world.

As you stand in a cemetery before an open grave. And these are the things that speak to us again and again in the course of our days. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness is the Lord's.

[10 : 05] And all those who dwell therein, we belong to the Lord. So we see the beauty of creation in many ways. But we see the horror of sin before us too.

And a cemetery and an open grave is where you maybe see it most vividly. There is peace. And yet there is worry. There is fear.

What does the end mean? Well, it's to find ourselves under the Lord's authority. Because we are reminded here that God has made all things and he has made us.

He has made us. We are his. All those who dwell therein. But we are reminded here that God has not abandoned us.

God has not just left us to ourselves. But that he is still claiming us. That he still has that claim on his people.

[11 : 07] We belong to him. And that the words he reminds us that there is help. That it's not dependent on us. But it's looking to the Lord, the King of glory.

The earth is the Lord's. It all belongs to him. But the attitude of many is that, no, it's not his.

It's mine. It's my life. It's my way. It's my choice. All of these things. It's ours. And you see it so often when you look at the history of the world.

You think of New Year's honors list. And so many of them receive honors for what they've offered up to society and the world in so many different ways. It's given, in some cases, rightful honor.

That they've done well. They've done good in this world. But it's ultimately all of God. When we think of everything that this world has created, invented, and brought forth.

[12 : 12] Whether it's mechanical. Whether it's to do with health. Whatever it is. Whatever we've built. Whatever we've done. Electricity. Light. Light. All of these things. We can give praise and glory to others.

But it's all of the Lord. There is nothing that we can do apart from him. It is all under his authority and his sovereignty.

Abraham Kuyper, he said this. There is not one square inch of this entire creation about which Jesus Christ does not cry out, This is mine.

This belongs to me. Everything belongs to him. Ourselves included. But as we go into a new year, that can either be a comfort or a distress to us.

And what we want to find is, as we go into this new year, that we are looking to this Lord. Looking to this King. And have that assurance in him. Isaiah reminds us of what trusting in the Lord means.

[13:17] And Isaiah 43. But now thus says the Lord, he who created you. O Jacob, he who formed you. O Israel, fear not. For I have redeemed you.

I have called you by name. You are mine. That is that assurance of God to his people in these words. But then he gives assurance of being with them on the journey.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned. And the flame shall not consume you.

There is that assurance that as we are looking to this Lord, our King, the earth is the Lord's and belongs to him, that we have him with us.

Do you know that today? Is that where your trust is today as we go on on this journey? There was a man called James Simpson.

[14:15] James Young Simpson. He was a sir by name. As well, he was a doctor. And he was famous for many, much progression in medicine and medical procedures.

And he was once doctor of Queen Victoria. But he was once asked in his life, what was the greatest discovery he had ever made?

And his reply was this, that I am a sinner and that Jesus Christ is our great Savior. His greatest discovery in the midst of everything that he had done was that he was a sinner and that Jesus was our great Savior.

Is there anything greater that we could discover for ourselves? To recognize we are sinners, great sinners, but that Jesus is our great Savior.

We are all under the authority of the Lord. The earth is the Lord's and everything they're in. So how are we going forward?

[15:19] Are we looking to him as our King? That's the first thing that we see. We have the Lord's authority. Secondly, we see the Lord's standards. And in our journey here, it's like we're approaching a place.

In verse 3. Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? How are we going to get in?

We can be journeying in this life and thinking that things are going well. But when it comes to the end, when it comes to that realization of a destination before us, we can stop and wonder, how do we go forward?

We can be excited about going to a place or going to some kind of occasion. But then as we get closer to it, doubts start to come in.

Fear starts to come in. For example, maybe you've had this in the past. You're a good singer and you love singing. And someone asks you, will you go on stage and sing?

[16:29] And your initial response is, yes, I'd love to go on stage and sing. But the closer it's coming, the more nervous you're getting.

And then to go on to the stage or to appear beside the stage and to see an audience in front of you, suddenly that fear just increases and you're not wanting to go forward.

You can't see yourself going in. And that's where the phrase stage fright comes from. Where you think, I can do this. I want to do this. I'd love to do it. And yet the fear takes over.

And that can happen to us in so many ways in life. Even if we apply it to church and what lies ahead of us in this year in church, there can be so many things that we want to do.

There can be so many things we're desperate to do. Maybe there's people at home today just desperate to come to church, but there's that fear. How can I come? Or there's that fear of going to a prayer meeting.

[17:35] There's that fear of going to the Lord's table. We want to do it, but there's a fear within us. And so as we think of what we want to do for the Lord in this coming year, how we want to honor him in this year, and all that we would love to give to him in this year, there's always that fear that comes into our mind as well.

And especially when we see what's before us, when we see the Lord and his standards and what he might expect of us, because we're shown that in these verses.

So the question is asked in verse 3, who shall ascend and who shall stand in his holy place? We're shown then the standards in verse 4. He who has a clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

The question that lies within us is so often, how can I go forward with the Lord? Because the questions that we see in Scripture are so often associated with that.

The Philippian jailer, as he brought them out of the jail, he said, Sir, what must I do to be saved? That question. Or the rich young man who came to Jesus, as a good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[19:05] These are the questions that resonate in our hearts. How can I find myself right with God? And if this is the standards expected, clean hands and a pure heart, do I have that?

Clean hands. There's that outward aspect of our lives, a pure heart. What is within. And so we look at ourselves and we say, I don't.

My hands are filthy with all that I've done in life. My heart is filthy. The sin within me. And we think, I cannot go.

I cannot ascend this hill. I cannot stand in this holy place. And so we're put off going forward.

It's like it's an impossible requirement for us. But it doesn't end there looking to ourselves. And thankfully it doesn't.

[20:06] So as we are going into a new year, we are reminded our hands are unclean. Our heart is impure. But yet in verse 5 it says, He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Such is the generation of those who seek him. who seek the face of the God of Jacob. So we can never reach these standards.

We can never attain them. But he gives us that invitation to seek him and to look to him. He will receive blessing from the Lord and our righteousness, which is filthy rags.

It says, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. He is the one who enables us to stand and to ascend this hill and to appear before the Lord.

Not through ourselves, but through what Christ has done for us. And so all the fears that we have for this year ahead, all of the desires we have for the Lord, we are to look to him and to trust in him.

[21:28] And again, Scripture is full of those who came to the Lord in this way, depending on him. And some of them are so surprising. The woman who had the issue of blood in the Gospel of Mark, Mark chapter 5, verse 28, she saw Jesus.

And what did she say? If I touch even his garments, I will be made well. Simple faith. If I could just touch his garments.

She didn't see herself as worthy. She didn't see herself as able to come forward in this proud and boastful way. But just humbly, if I can just touch his garments.

Or the leper in Mark 1, verse 40, who came to Jesus, imploring him and kneeling, said to him, if you will, you can make me clean.

There's just that dependence on him. Our hands are unclean. Our hearts are impure. We can come to Jesus and say, if you will, you can make me clean.

[22 : 39] And what did Jesus do to the leper? It says, moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean.

That is the authority that he has. That is the power that he has. So whose hands are pure, whose heart is pure, whose hands are clean.

Not ours, but the one who has gone to the hill for us. The one who we are to go with into this year was Charles Spurgeon, who said, Our Lord Jesus Christ could ascend the hill of the Lord because his hands were clean and his heart was pure.

And if we by faith are conformed to his image, we shall enter too. By faith. So we can go on looking to him.

That is the way to go forward. So the third thing we then see is the Lord's reign. As the psalm concludes in verse 7 to the end, the king of glory is here leading his people.

[23 : 56] They couldn't ascend, but he can. And so it says, Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in.

Who is the 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 the king of glory? The Lord of hosts. He is the king of glory. The door will be open to the Lord, but also to his people, because he is the one who will keep us as we look to him.

Jude makes that clear in his letter in the New Testament. In Jude verse 24, Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority before all time and now and forever.

Amen. The one who is able to keep you from stumbling and present you blameless, clean hands, and a pure heart through him, in the presence of his glory with great joy.

[25 : 21] That is the joy that we see in this psalm as the procession comes to a close. The king of glory entering in with all his people. And he is the king who is mighty in battle.

He is the one who earned out to battle and returns victorious, reminding us of that victory in the cross. How are we made pure?

How are we made clean? It's because he gave himself for us. And so we have that reminder, we look to Jesus who has gone up that hill.

We look to him who has gone before us in all of these things. He has won the victory. And we look to him who will come and lead us into glory by his glory.

because he is the king of glory. Glory represents the presence of God, a divine presence.

[26 : 27] And as we look in the New Testament, we see that this presence is seen in Jesus Christ. In John 8, verse 12, when Jesus spoke there, he says, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. That is the light of the glory of God, leading his people in the way.

And so we have that promise of this light, the king of glory going with us. So we are to look to him. As we go into this year ahead, are we setting that king before us?

Are we looking to him? There's a poem that says this, Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be, in working or in waiting, another year with thee.

Another year of progress, another year of praise, another year of proving thy presence all the days. Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace.

[27 : 33] Another year of gladness, the glory of thy face. When we lose our way in life, as we do, as we have done and maybe we are doing, we are to come back and see the one who is the king of glory.

The one who has authority over all things. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness that of everything belongs to him. and the one who has standards of clean hearts, pure hearts and clean hands, standards that we cannot achieve ourselves but that we look to in his righteousness.

And as we look to the king who goes before us, may he light our way and may we seek to honour him and to know victory with him as the king of battle who has gone for us to win that war and the king who leads his people home, the Lord of hosts, the king of glory.

As we enter in the gate of the year, how we opened up the gate for the Lord of glory to go with us, to lead us.

May it be so. individually, as families and as a congregation, may we know the king of glory with us, supplying our needs today and in all the days ahead.

[29 : 10] Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we thank you for your faithfulness towards us, for your sovereignty over us, that you have not abandoned the world that is yours, that everything within it belongs to you, that you hold all that is yours and your people to you, that you have that everlasting hold upon them.

We thank you for your standards. We thank you that we see them as we look to ourselves as so imperfect. Our hands are not clean, our hearts are not pure, but yet we confess these sins before you and thank you for the righteousness of Christ that is able to make us whole.

And we thank you for our King, the Lord of glory, the King of glory. May he go before us in every day of this year. May we confess all things before him, but may we look to him, trusting in him, seeking to honour our King and live for him as he lived and died and rose for us.

So hear our prayers and go before us now, forgiving all our sin in Jesus' name. Amen. Our closing psalm is the psalm that we've been looking at.

We're going to sing Psalm 24, the Sing Psalms version. We'll sing from verse 7 down to the end of this psalm, page 28 of the psalm books.

[30 : 50] And after we've concluded the singing, I'll pronounce the benediction. I'll go to the main door then and then just a reminder there's tea and coffee served in the hall next door.

Everybody's very welcome to come through there for that time. And also today there is a collection for the congregation's benevolent fund. So we're going to sing from verse 7 down to the end of the psalm.

You ancient gates, lift up your heads, your doors be opened wide. So may the King of glory come forever to abide. But who is this exalted King?

What glorious King is he? It is the Lord of strength and might, the Lord of victory. We'll sing from verse 7 to the end of the psalm to God's praise. You ancient gates, lift up your heads, you doors be opened wide.

So may the King of glory come forever to abide.

[32 : 03] But who is this exalted King? What glorious King is he?

It is the Lord of strength and might, the Lord of victory.

It is the Lord of strength and might, the Lord of victory.

You ancient gates, lift up your heads, your doors be opened wide.

So may the King of glory come forever to abide.

[33 : 12] But who is this exalted King? Who can this sovereign be?
the Lord of victory? The Lord of victory. He is King of glory and mighty.
The Lord of glory and mighty. The Lord of glory and mighty. The Lord of glory and mighty.
The Lord of glory and mighty. The Lord of glory and mighty. The Lord of glory and mighty.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Amen. Amen. Amen.

[34 : 30] Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and
abide with you all now and forevermore. Amen.
Amen.