

Worship God and God Alone - The King of Glory! Psalm 24

This is a Psalm of David who was a worshipper. He could declare the praises of his God unashamedly, publically, along with singing and dancing with great gusto, as well as being a gifted musician who could minister to others in worship of God through his playing of the harp and the lyre. He wrote many Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, rather poetically. Not bad for a shepherd boy who became perhaps the most celebrated Warrior-King in Israel's history. And as such he was a man after God's own heart.

This hymn that he has written, Psalm 24 celebrates the LORD's Kingship as it relates to his people where God is King by virtue of the fact that He is the Creator, the Sustainer and Possessor of the whole world and everything in it. Therefore God is worthy of worship, and not only that, but reverent loyalty from one and all as "the King of Glory". And it forever remains God the King's desire to rule over everyone who would open his self or her self to him by living clean, pure lives in his presence.

King David was such a worshipper who, although imperfect was genuinely and sincerely repentant when convicted of his sin, continued throughout his life to seek God and be blessed.

Over the last three thousand years this Psalm has been important in teaching people, both Jew and Gentile alike, **the absolute priority in their lives of worshipping God and God alone.**

Even today Jews, in recognising this Psalm's importance, recite it first thing on the first day of the week, which is Sunday. Did you enjoy the blessing of being able to be involved in declaring aloud it's praise, worshipping God, the King of Glory, when you joined in the reading as a group this morning as lead by our bikie priests?

As a hymn or song it is thought that it was used when the great procession of priests and the people carried the Ark of the Covenant into the Sanctuary of the Jerusalem Temple when completed by Solomon. David had been the first to do so before the temple had been built. We find this story in 2 Samuel 6:12-15 where the procession went from the greatly Blessed by God household of Obed-Edom up the road to the city gates and then entered in to the city to its temporary abode.

In this traditional procession The Ark is of great significance and importance. Bezalel originally built it for Moses in the wilderness of Sinai (Exodus 37:1-9). The Ark signified God's presence among the people. Later when the Philistine's captured it from King Saul

after killing him and defeating Israel, it seemed at the time that the Lord was no longer with them (1 Samuel 4:11; 5:1). Then again it was the ark of the covenant, the symbol of God's special relationship of love and loyalty, first to Israel, and then later, to David and to his line of kings. Because of this, in deep gratitude to God it seems that the ceremony was held year after year in such a manner that everyone could take part, from the King to the common person, who were renewing their loyalty to God.

In order to understand such loyalty along with the absolute priority of worshipping God, seeking the King of Glory and being blessed. Let's exam this Psalm made up of three parts:

Part 1 The Great King -- Creator of all things vv1-2

In the opening lines David introduces us to the Creator-King who rules over the earth. This is because the LORD owns "the earth" and "everything" on it as the one who established and made it inhabitable. Just in case you have not registered the truth I'll read it again... the earth is the LORD's and everything in it. God has got dibs on everything and everyone!

Now it may be that one particular Priest was delegated to proclaim these opening words to the great crowd who assembled once a year outside the walls of the city. What takes place here is an act of worship of the Creator of all things, of whom we read in Genesis 1, not just of the local God whom the Jebusites used to worship before David captured the city and made it "the city of David". There it was that David's city now sat, solid on its rock before all ages, right on top of the seas and chaotic waters. These waters reminded Israel of the chaos mentioned in Genesis 1:2, out of which God had originally created life and order. Who then dare ascend the hill of such a holy city, to worship the Great King and Creator God, who ruled the world and presence, dwelt there between the cherubim on the Ark of the Covenant? Let alone seek him and his receive His blessing! Let's have a look and see...

Part 2 Who may Ascend the Hill of the LORD? vv3-6

David bearing his heart (v.3) expresses the nature of fellowship with God as, ascending "the hill of the LORD", Mount Zion it was called, and standing in "his Holy place". What he is alluding to is that those who seek the LORD's favour need to prepare themselves, not just in a ceremonial way, but by sanctifying their lives.

We learn what this sanctifying means in v.4. The LORD expects purity and singleness of heart from all worshippers who seek his presence. It was Jesus who said, (Matthew 5:8) “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.” In David’s case purity of hands and heart is the condition of a worshipper living before God in accordance with God’s instructions, teachings and laws and doing this out of the sheer desire of his or her heart. This is what we call ‘Singleness of devotion’ expressed when a Godly person refuses to dishonour the LORD’s name by giving themselves over to idolatry, which is lifting up your soul to an idol, or by hypocrisy, swearing by what is false running against the truth.

It was a second priest who took up the cry of these verses asking the crowd the question in a loud voice: “Who is worthy to come in and worship in the holy place?”

Just note that the qualifications here are not a question of... “Have you kept the law?” or “have you performed the required sacrifices?” The qualifications have to do with that persons will. The individual must have in the first instance, clean hands. Here we are not talking about washing your hands after you’ve been out in the garden before church, as some occasionally do a bit of weeding before the service. I am talking about clean hands marking outwardly the cleanness of the heart within. And the second qualification regarding your will, have you carefully avoided any obvious evil ways. Did you all manage to avoid stopping at the Jolly Farmer’s Pub on the way here, to sink a few shots while playing the pokies, cussing the machines when you won nothing before driving here over the limit with no cash left in your pocket for the offering? If you’ve arrived at worship with a pure or clean heart and avoided evil then this is sufficient for God to accept and to bless you. Mind you for most parents you’re put to the test in the same way just trying to get both yourself and your family ready to come to church, which is no easy feat in itself when you’re attempting to arrive at church with a pure heart.... Anyway, the speaker categorically declares that all such people will be welcome to join in the procession and to come right into the holy place.

Now these two qualifications are not a description of a believing person. All they point to is that the intending worshipper should *want* to come in, as an imperfect sinner as they undoubtedly were. Which is good news for those who might have had a stop at the Jolly Farmer’s before the service or got the children ready.

A thousand years earlier that is all this God of Jacob had asked of Jacob, not a perfect life, just a sincerity of heart and purpose. That is what is sufficient for God to grant a person his blessing. Now a blessing was something that people believed was almost physical in nature when something in the way of power passed from one to another, as in when Jesus touched the woman with the issue of blood Luke 8:41-48, or should I say she reached out from the crowd and touched the hem of his garment. At that very moment Jesus knew that the power of God's blessing had gone out from him.

This power *tsedaqah/tsed-aw-kaw*, translated *vindication* in the NIV would be better served by the word *righteousness*. With this in mind we could translate the meaning of vv5-6 to mean this: "The God who, in His love has put right the one blessed, has now empowered him to put others right by means of his love... These are deep and moving Words that we should understand.

Part 3 The Divine Warrior – The King of Glory vv7-10

The procession now moves forward after the priests address. They reach the gates in the city wall and we hear the first choir begin to sing aloud unaccompanied, their declaration to the gates, telling them to open up you old doors, to let the King of Glory come in. Yet the Great King, the King of glory is only represented by that 1.300m by 80cm box known as the Ark of the Covenant. But that smallish box- the Ark was all sufficient for God's purposes, and here's why. The whole gracious plan of the King of Glory was represented in what that box stood for, just as, in later years, that same gracious purpose was made known in full to the whole world in the person of only one man- Jesus Christ.

Then the second choir reply with a short question asking v.8a "Who is the King of Glory?"

To which the first choir replies with a mighty shout: "He is the Almighty, the Divine Warrior who is for ever at war with the powers of evil." This we know is the emphasis because laying inscribed on two stone tablets resting in that box, the Ark, were the Ten Commandments. From the moment God inscribed the Commandments the first time on two stone tablets, the Israelites did evil and rebelled through idolatry making the golden calf, indulging in drunkenness and sexual immorality, while Moses was up on Mount Sinai with God receiving them. God wanted to wipe them out and start again. Moses interceded for them.

But then smashed the tablets and proceeded with his tribe, the Levites, to kill the immoral sinners they caught in the act. Now, as there were no known false immoral idol worshippers at the Jerusalem gate, choir number one proceeds [v.9] to loudly command the gates to open and to let the King of Glory in.

Choir two then responds [v.10a] by putting the same question again, “Who is the King of Glory?”

King David had learnt from the experience of his own life as a worshipper, that faith in God does not come easily.

Neither does it come automatically. He certainly knows that he needs assurance and help. And from where does that help come? From “The LORD Almighty – the King of Glory” [10b].

These were the final words that we all declared aloud together in reciting the Psalm. The LORD Almighty is the LORD of hosts, the head of the army of both Israel and the heavenly host of angels. That God is the King of Glory and this is the type of Warrior King the Jewish people expected to come as their Messiah to lead and deliver them once and all from bondage and oppression. Instead it was Jesus, who a thousand years later was born, grew up living, working and walking among the people, who joined the festive throng when it went to Jerusalem. In David’s time, the King of Glory did not enter in from the sky above, but from below in the shoes of that jostling crowd as they excitedly pushed their way past the city gates onward and into the courts of the Temple behind the ark of the covenant, God’s presence and power among his people.

This Psalm finishes by pointing forward to the time when the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem, using the picture language of the book of Revelation [21:22-27; 22:14], will be thrown open in eternity with everyone who is clean or pure of heart being invited to enter in.

To conclude: As those who understand and have experienced the grace of God in our lives and the life of the church when it meets- It is we who have the challenge of moving beyond the doors of this church and in our own way and life’s witness, reinterpreting the ancient Words of this Psalm as a message for the world... Ride like a Christian, drive like a Christian, love and live like a Christian: **Worship God and God Alone-The King of Glory- Jesus Christ!** And if you haven’t yet made that commitment then I ask, before you walk through those doors, that you consider the absolute priority of laying down your life and worshipping God through making Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, your LORD and Saviour.