

Welcoming the King

Preached at DCC by Phil Kayser on 2021-03-28

Introduction - background to this Psalm (Psalm. 24:0)

On January 12, 2007, a well-known violinist by the name of Joshua Bell, stepped out of the Metro subway in Washington, DC. He positioned himself against a wall next to a garbage can, put on a baseball cap, pulled his violin out of its case, and with a few coins in the case as seed money, he began to play. For the next 45 minutes he played Mozart and Schubert to more than 1000 people who walked by. This was an experiment put on by Gene Weingarten of the Washington Post as part of a documentary on buskers. Bell collected \$32.17 from 27 people who did not recognize him and he got \$20 from the one person who did recognize him. Most did not know that they were getting the exact same concert that people had bought \$100 tickets for three days earlier at the Boston Symphony Hall. They didn't recognize that he was playing a rare Stradivarius worth over \$3 million. The whole event was filmed as part of a project that eventually won a Pulitzer prize. But it is interesting how so many people could pass by a famous violinist playing a \$3 million violin and hardly give him a second thought. No doubt they were too preoccupied with other things.

Two thousand years earlier there was a far greater Person who walked among the crowds in Israel. A minority did recognize Him and appreciate Him, but He was either ignored or rejected by most. They failed to recognize that Jesus was the Creator of all, the Lord of the universe, and the Incarnate King of kings. And those who *did* recognize him as the Messiah and who *did* acclaim Him, probably didn't have a clear picture of the fact that He was Yehowah God, the Lord of glory.

A thousand years before Jesus, David wrote this Psalm, as the title shows. He was a shepherd, musician, warrior, and king himself. But he was also an inspired prophet, and as a prophet he was able to look through the lens of prophecy and clearly see the kingship of the coming Messiah. He had an inside scoop. And what a marvelous picture he paints of this King in Psalm 24.

This Psalm is actually part of a trilogy of Messianic Psalms. Psalm 22 shows the suffering priest who was also a Lamb reconciling the world to Himself. Psalm 23 shows the shepherd who cares for those who have been reconciled. And Psalm 24 shows the divine king who also rules over this newly formed people. Some commentators have characterized these three Psalms as the cross, the crook, and the crown. They fit together and complement each other perfectly. To know Christ as Shepherd (Psalm 23) we must first know Him as Suffering Savior (Psalm 22) and that inevitably leads us to bow before His sovereign Lordship (Psalm 24). So Psalms 22, 23, and 24 really belong together as Messianic Psalms.

Let me give you a little more background information that might help us to understand this Psalm. I shared a little bit of this in an introduction to worship a few weeks ago. Jewish tradition says that this Psalm was first sung when David brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem. The ark of the covenant was the throne of God, and the glory cloud rested

above the ark. In the tabernacle it was as if God Himself was sitting on that throne with His Shekinah Glory. You can imagine the reverence and awe that God's presence would produce when this glory cloud came into the city to declare God's Lordship over Israel and over the earth. It would have been an awesome spectacle - unless of course God hid His glory until He came to His resting place. There is legitimate debate on that. I tend to think that He hid His glory during that procession just as Jesus did while on earth.

One other background fact that is helpful in understanding this Psalm is that it was one of the seven Psalms that was sung in a cycle around the time of the Passover. On Palm Sunday they sang Psalm 24. On Monday it was Psalm 48. On Tuesday it was Psalm 82. On Wednesday it was Psalm 94. On Thursday it was Psalm 81 - that's the Psalm that says, "Oh that My people would listen to me." On Friday it was Psalm 93. On Saturday it was Psalm 92. And then on Resurrection Day it was Psalm 24 again.

So at the very time that the leaders were trying to quiet the crowds and the children who were singing about His kingdom as Jesus was riding into Jerusalem, the leaders in the temple were unwittingly welcoming Him and acknowledging Him to be the King by singing this Psalm. And He walked toward that temple through the hundreds of thousands of lambs that were being herded there on that same day. So He was coming to the temple as the Lamb of God, but also as the King. And as King, He walked into the temple and he cleansed the temple of the ungodly who had turned it into a den of thieves. The way God's providence orchestrated this and many other details of the Passion week is absolutely marvelous. So, enough on that background. Let's dig into the Psalm.

Christ's right to enter His kingship (vv. 1-2)

The first two verses speak of Christ's right to enter His kingship. Here and throughout the Psalm Jesus is acknowledged to be Yehowah - or LORD in all capital letters. When Jesus showed that He could command the wind and the waves, the disciples fell down on their faces to worship Him. They recognized that He was divine and worthy of worship. Indeed, Peter was so humbled that he said, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8). They recognized His divine right of Kingship.

Verses 1-2 of this Psalm say,

Psa. 24:1 The earth is Yehowah's, and all its fullness, The world and those who dwell therein. 2 For He has founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the waters.

As Creator of all things, Jesus is the owner of all things, and the Lord of all things. He is very God of very God. He is Yehowah, the covenant Lord of all. Hallelujah! And if the earth and everything that is in it belongs to Jesus, then we belong to Jesus. We owe Him our allegiance. We should be part of that crowd that cried out,

"Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' 10 Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Jesus has every right to be king of *your* life. *You* owe Him your unconditional surrender and allegiance. And it should be your *joy* to declare Him to be your king. After all, Revelation 5:12 says,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

So the first two verses of this Psalm address Jesus’ right to enter His kingship. The Pharisees and the Sadducees didn’t recognize that right, but we can do so this morning.

Christ’s qualifications for entering His kingship (vv. 3-4)

But secondly, Jesus has all the qualifications needed for entering into His kingship. People knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of David, but so far, no descendant met the qualifications of the Messianic king. Look at verses 3-4.

3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the LORD, And righteousness from the God of his salvation. 6 This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, Who seek Your face.

And then comes the “Selah.” which calls us to stop and meditate upon these grand words for a while. But you know what? The more we meditate on those words, the more we realize that those words do not perfectly describe us at all. For example, do you have a 100% pure heart? I don’t. Can you honestly say that you have never made an idol of any of your desires? Are you one who has kept his or her word 100% of the time throughout your entire life? Have you always thought and spoken the truth - always and only? I haven’t. There is only one man in human history of whom these verses is true - Jesus Christ our Messiah, Savior, and King. He had to be perfect to be a substitute Sacrifice who would suffer in our stead. He had to be perfect to give us His righteousness and justify us. He had to be perfect to be our Mediator. He had to be perfect to be our King. And the Gospels show that He was qualified.

Now, should we also aspire to this standard? Yes, we should. 1 John says that if we claim to abide in Jesus, then we ought to walk just like Jesus walked. That means that we need to be characterized more and more by the descriptions in these verses we just read. But as much as we have grown and have developed toward that goal, the reality is that only Jesus kept God’s law 100% perfectly. This is a Psalm about Jesus (and those who are united to Jesus). We can keep these words *in Jesus - and only in Jesus*.

The Pharisees who rejected Jesus on Palm Sunday were rejecting the only one who fit the qualifications for kingship. In fact, that rejection forced them in a week to submit to a far inferior king. They said, “We have no king but Caesar.” Rejection of Jesus has constantly led to a Caesar-like statism; something else will take His place. If Jesus is not acknowledged as the King over the state, then the state will eventually become like Caesar. Only Jesus has ultimate kingship, which means that if you follow Jesus you will at some point come into conflict with Caesar and other statist leaders.

Anyway, back to the words in this Psalm: James Montgomery Boice and others have noted that this Psalm was being sung antiphonally by the priests as God forced them to acknowledge Jesus to be the rightful heir to the throne. And as the choir sang,

3 Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?

A solo voice answered:

4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, Nor sworn deceitfully.

It wouldn't surprise me if Jesus was approaching the temple as this was being sung. And think of the significance of these words. It's not just talking about perfect actions; it's also talking about an inward disposition that is perfectly aligned to God's will. That pretty much leaves you and me out of God's heaven and off of His holy hill - unless, of course, you and I are united to Jesus by faith. And that's the Good News of the Gospel in a nutshell.

The application of Christ's salvation to us begins with the Spirit calling us (and as Paul points out, the Spirit calls us out of the kingdom of darkness and into His kingdom of light). And any time God calls, things happen. When He called the worlds into existence, they come into existence. When he spoke, "Let their be light," the call immediately produced light. And even now, when He calls for light in our soul and a new nature within us, it happens. The first thing that happens in response to that call is regeneration or being born from above. We are born again and given a new nature with a new orientation toward God. In John 3:3 Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But that new birth instantly gives us new eyes to see our sin and to see our need of a Savior, and it results in repentance and faith. And having been given the gift of repentance and faith, we embrace Jesus in conversion we are given a new record (that's called justification) and we begin to live a new life (that's called sanctification). The question is, "Have you trusted Jesus to be your Lord and Savior?" Is He your king?

Christ's kingship must be acknowledged (v. 7)

And that brings us to the third point. I want you to notice in verse 7 that Christ's kingship must be acknowledged. Verse 7 is not presented as an option; it stands as a mandate.

Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.

Let me give you some background on the original scene. This was all symbolic of other. There was some play acting that was going on. Just imagine that you were David when this was first being sung. As the procession of Levites who were carrying the ark on their shoulders approached the closed gates of Jerusalem, the Levites cried out - "Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up you everlasting doors!" It was a demand that Yehowah not be kept out of the city, but that His Lordship be acknowledged by admitting His throne into the heart of that city. That's the only way the gates will be everlasting - if the everlasting King is within. Everyone in that city, including King David was being commanded to submit to Yehowah's Kingship.

This is really what we do when we are converted. We repent of our lawlessness, believe that we are justified by Christ's law-keeping, invite Him to be Lord of our lives, and submit to His kingship. Only, there is a twist. As we will see in the next words, Christ enters the city whether we ask him to or not. He enters the city even when we question who He is. It's not just an invitation that Jesus *hopes* people will accept. It is a demand that Jesus *ensures* they will accept. God enables what He commands.

Christ's divinity acknowledged in His kingship (vv. 8-10)

Look at verses 8-10. (And this is the next major point.)

8 Who is this King of glory?

That's the first question. It's really a challenge. Who is this that demands my surrender? I don't know Him. Why should I let him in? Some commentators imagine these pretend skeptics to be the guards who had authority to open and close the gates to the city. And they were play acting as part of a grand drama. They ask "Who is this King of glory?" And the answer given by the Levites accompanying the ark of the covenant is,

Yehowah strong and mighty, Yehowah mighty in battle.

And the Levites who represented the King on His throne (which is the ark of the covenant) repeat the command - it is a command:

"Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in."

The guards once more ask, "Who is this King of glory?" To which the Levites respond in chorus, "Yehowah of hosts, He is the King of glory." And the gates were opened and the huge procession accompanying this King of glory marched in declaring Jehovah to be king of that city. His hosts are His armies. He has taken over the city. It's a beautiful picture of Palm Sunday. And Palm Sunday is a beautiful picture of Christ's Lordship over all. It may be resisted, but it will eventually find its place.

As I mentioned earlier, James Montgomery Boice points to Jewish evidence that this Psalm was sung on the Sunday that Jesus rode into Jerusalem. On the day that the priests were singing this Psalm inside the temple, the Pharisees are rebuking Jesus on the outside of the city. They were in effect saying, "Who is this king of glory?" But He did ride in to declare His Lordship whether they wanted him there or not.

I think this applies even to the individual. There is a theory out there that says you can accept Jesus as Savior and not accept Him as Lord - to optionally accept Him as Lord later. But the reality is that you don't have Him as Savior *at all* if you don't have Him as Lord. You can't split Jesus up into two persons. He is not a schizophrenic. In Isaiah 49:26, God says, "I, the LORD, am your Savior." It's a Lord who is a Savior. That's why the Bible says that we must believe in the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Not Savior and Lord but Lord and Savior. Saul of Tarsus is an excellent example of this principle. He was hot on the trail of Christians trying to kill them. Jesus knocked him off his horse, blinded him physically, but gave new

light to his soul so that the first words out of his mouth were to acknowledge Christ as being his Lord. You don't have Jesus as Savior if you don't have Jesus as Lord.

Jesus comes to fight (vv. 8b-c, 10b)

The last characteristic of Jesus that I want to highlight is that Jesus comes to fight against all His and our enemies. Verse 8 calls Him “strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.” The second part of verse 10 calls him “the LORD of hosts” or “Yehowah of armies.” So there is battle and there are armies. The Hebrew word for “hosts” is the normal word for fighting armies. Jesus is not simply a king who accepts the status quo. Jesus comes into the city to fight against anything that resists His rule. And that was beautifully symbolized by His second cleansing of the temple on Palm Sunday. He cast those out who had made His Father's house a den of thieves. He is in the temple-cleansing business.

And we can rejoice that Jesus is right now fighting against the evils in our nation. He often uses His enemies to fight against each other, but sometimes He brings plagues and other judgments. He is creative in how He fights, but He fights. Exodus 14:14 says, “Yehowah will fight...” Deuteronomy 1:30 says, “Yehowah your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes.” Forty three times the Bible says that the Lord will fight.

This means that if your heart resists His Lordship, He will resist you; He will fight against you. It is of the very nature of His kingship to fight against anything and everything that resists His will, His kingdom, or the law of His kingdom. He teaches us to gladly pray, “Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Not my will, but Yours be done.

And this is true in society. When society resists His Lordship, Christ guarantees that he will fight against that society. He forewarns us. Revelation 19 symbolically describes the warfare of King Jesus in these words:

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”

As King of kings He fights; He wars; He conquers.

When we celebrate Palm Sunday we tend to think of Christ riding into Jerusalem on a donkey. But that was just the beginning of His reign when He offered peace. The donkey was the symbol of coronation and peace. But when Israel rejected His peace He gave them war. When Rome rejected His peace, He gave Rome war. If you reject His peace He will give you war. But the interesting thing about Christ's judgments is that they are redemptive judgments. As a result of His wars, multitudes came to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

His reign continues through our entire era and will continue until all enemies are put under His feet (that's 1 Corinthians 15 and Colossians 1) and until all of His promised blessings

flow into all the earth (Psalm 72 and so many other passages). This means that Palm Sunday calls us not only to lay our garments under His feet (as the multitudes symbolically did on Palm Sunday), but to seek to the best of our ability to see all areas of our lives and of this world submitting to King Jesus. May it be so. Amen.