

Come Let Us Worship Our King

Psalm 47

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Derek Pulliam

At this time, I invite you to open your Bibles to Psalm 47. And out of this text, I'll be preaching a message that I've entitled, "Come Let Us Worship Our King." Psalm 47.

Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! For the Lord, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth. He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet. He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. Selah.

God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted! [ESV]

This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray.

Gracious God and Father, King of glory, fill this place, Lord God. We just want to be with you. Speak to our hearts in such a marvelous and mighty way, Father. Give us a sense of your presence that is overcoming to us, Lord. Lord, we've come in here with thoughts. We come in here with plans and ideas. And we pray, Father, that you would make them subordinate to your cause and your will. Lord, be with the speaker today. Be with the listeners today. Help us, Lord God, to receive your word and the way that you give it. This I ask in Jesus's name. Amen.

Come, let us worship our king. Today's meditation in the Psalms does not come to us in hushed tones. It does not use its inside voice, so to speak. If we would take a cursory glance at the descriptions that pepper this psalm, we'll find clapping hands, shouting, loud singing, and trumpet playing that I would almost imagine is loud, too.

I had a comical moment in studying this because there was one particular Bible teacher that made the observation that none of the other commentaries made. The obvious one. He said, "This is not a quiet psalm." It's like, wow, indeed. What we have in Psalm 47 is a boisterous, exuberant celebration that extends to us an invite. Or maybe it would be better to say that it seeks to elicit from us a response. No. Probably more accurately stated would be to say that it issues authoritative commands that require our compliance.

So as we come to Psalm 47 with those thoughts at the forefront of our minds, we realize that this psalm does not observe social distancing. This is a psalm that gets into our collective faces. Moreover, it does not observe social graces. It doesn't permit us to rest comfortably in our mental frameworks, in our philosophical beliefs, or even in our political ideologies that are not honoring to God. This psalm comes close to us, and it challenges us, and it calls for us to be transformed by the Spirit of God.

This psalm at first glance may appear to be oddly placed. What do I mean by that? Well, Psalm 47 is an enthronement psalm. And as such, it has this overflowing imagery that depicts God as the theocratic sovereign. It shows Him, like the other enthronement psalms, as being the king who reigns supreme over not just the nation, not just a few people, but over the entire cosmos. It presents the Lord as the God and king of the created order. It screams out to us that the Lord is king. But the interesting thing is this psalm

is placed in Book Two of the psalter, where 20 of the 31 psalms are psalms of lament. It's an odd placement because all of the other enthronement psalms are found in Book Four of the psalter. And so here you have it, this psalm placed in the background or against the background of lament and mourning. Could it be that it's not so strange after all that this psalm is placed here? Could it be that a people musing over torment of feeling trampled, oppressed, attacked, and injured need just this type of psalm? Could it be that as the psalms of lament come to us as cathartic, as soul cleansing, reminding us that God is aware of our pains, and that He walks with us in the midst of them? Could it be that we must be reminded of the God who walks with us? We must be reminded that He is king.

And so this psalm comes to us. And it comes to us loud. And it comes to us with its volume turned up, bidding us authoritatively to come. In verses 1 through 5, we find this admonition to come worship the conquering king. In verses 6 through 9, we find an additional admonition to come worship the reigning king.

So as we look at this psalm as I've described it as being a psalm that is turned up in volume, a psalm that does not recognize social distancing or social graces, it's the type of psalm—if you can picture this as you're riding down the street, it's the type of song that you just know has to be turned up loud. And so you turn it up, and you sing along with it, as I did yesterday, and as my wife turned the music down. But it's the song that calls you in, calls you into the celebration, calls you in with all the watching eyes surrounding you because, again, it's not concerned about our decorum or our social graces.

But the psalm isn't just loud. It's a psalm with symmetry. When you look down at verses 1-5 and then 6-9, you find the psalm neatly separates. Verse 1, you have a call to worship. Verses 2-5, you have the rationale for worship or an affirmation of faith. Verse 6, you have another call to worship. And the subsequent verses 7-9, you again have a rationale for worship. The psalm calls us to consider the themes that saturate it, that show us that the Lord is the exalted one whose authority is unparalleled and whose kingdom is without end. It celebrates God's sovereignty anew, like a coronation or a crowning.

But at the same time it is reminding us or calling us to worship the Lord in this enthronement psalm, like a coronation or a crowning, the scriptures are very clear to remind us that the Lord is not just ascending to the Lord in this psalm. We have psalms like Psalm 55:19 that offers us this reminder as it speaks of the Lord and refers to Him as, "He who was enthroned from of old." Or Psalm 93:2 as it speaks to us saying that, "Your throne is established from of old. You are from everlasting." And so the psalms reminds us that He reigns forever and has always been in that job of reigning forever.

And yet and still, this psalm comes to us to celebrate anew our king, calling us to a place of renewal, realignment, and reconditioning because the world itself is turned up loud. And unlike the symmetry that we find in this psalm, what we have from the world is a cacophony. We have noise. We have distractions. That while we ought to be about the king's business worshipping out loud, the world calls you to be distracted. And so Psalm 47 calls us to remember the king, to remember the king. In the face of nations that shake their fists in hostility toward God, we're called to remember the king. In the face of ideologies and authority forms and perspectives that seek to raise themselves up as competition to God, this psalm says, "Remember the king."

In our call to worship—and I'm pretty sure you're like, he still hasn't gotten to verse 1. I know. I probably won't finish. In this call to worship, it's actually picking up the thread of thought that we find in Psalm 46:10, the thread of thought that says, "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth." It's taking up that particular thread of thought, and it's calling us to clap our hands, to shout to God with loud songs of joy, the type of clapping, the type of shouting, the type of singing that have you looking in the back at Christopher saying, "Turn the mic down."

But again, it's not an elicitation. It's not looking to draw something out of you. It's not an invitation just trying to massage the issue for you. It's an authoritative command calling us to worship out loud.

I saw in some passages the idiom "clap your hands" is actually a figure of speech, which means to make a pledge or lend one's support to a contract. So as this call is going out to all the peoples, it's as if it is a call that calls all of creation to agree on this one point, that the Lord is king. And so you see this joyful agreement coming together by this diverse group of peoples who clap, shout with loud songs of joy.

And as you hear that, you think if I'm going to be carrying on like that, if I'm going to be losing my place of decorum here, I need some explanation as to why I would go through all of those gyrations and changes. And the passage says, "I'm glad you asked," because as you look at verse 2, you start to move into your rationale, your affirmation of faith, you reasoning behind the worship. It says, "For the Lord," Jehovah or Yahweh, "the Most High, is to be feared a great king, over all the earth." What we have is the subject, or rather the object of our worship. The covenant keeping name of God is used here, Jehovah. And from Jehovah, we have this beautiful, exalted descriptor of Him describing Him as the Most High.

And you continue to see these allusions to God being the Most High. You see it here in verse 2, and then you shift your eyes down a bit at verse 5, and it speaks of the Lord going up. Again, this exalted picture of Him. And then you shift on down to the end of the psalm, and it speaks of the Lord as being highly exalted to over and over and over again remind us of this reality that the Lord is the highest, the one who is preeminent, the one who is the very zenith and apex of majesty. The one that Psalm 83:18 speaks of where it says, "You alone, the Most High over all the earth." Or in 97:9 as it says, "Exalted far above all gods." The descriptor is telling us that He has no rival. He has no equal. This is the Most High God. It's a reminder that He is higher than the mountains that we face. He's stronger than the power of the grave. He's constant through the trial and the change. He's the one thing that doesn't change. Our King, the Most High.

And then we see that He is to be feared. And immediately we start writing in the margins that means reverence. One writer, as he thought about this descriptor or rather this godly characteristic or virtue, he referred to the fear of God as the "soul of godliness." John Owen referred to the fear of the Lord in the following way. He says, "Is the whole worship of God, moral and instituted, all the obedience which we owe unto him." As Charles Spurgeon began to think about the fear of the Lord, he described the fear of the Lord as "delight that leads us to fall on our faces before God but leaning toward God."

When we think about the fear of the Lord, it's not a cowering that causes us to run from God. It's the sense of being overwhelmed by God, startlingly overpowered by God, having what Michael Reeves described as a "certain physical intensity or happy thrill or exquisite delight that leans toward the Lord." That's the fear of God. It's more than just us saying that we have respect for God. We adore God. But it's the idea of trembling before the Most High God.

And as interesting as that might sound, the initial thought that comes to mind, as you talk about God in that sense, you're talking about a trembling because He's holy. You're talking about a trembling because He's great. He's bigger than me. Yeah. But I'm talking about trembling because He's good. I'm talking about a trembling, Psalm 130, because He forgives sins. I'm talking about a trembling because, as Jeremiah 33:9 says He's a good God. And it describes Him as one that we fear and tremble before because of the goodness of God.

Why do we worship out loud? You can hashtag that. Why do we worship out loud? We worship out loud because God is to be feared. But He's a great king. He's a great king. His dominion extends not only all over the land or all over the globe, but all over creation itself.

He's a great king, which means He has no comparison. I keep coming back to this. Why is that? Because I am reminded over and over again that it's not just the church that's evangelistic. The world is evangelistic. And the world is doing all that it can to bring you into its arguments and press you into its mold. Whether you're conservative, you should be too liberal for your conservatives. If you're liberal, you're too conservative for your liberals. And if you are an independent, you should be downright alien to them because your citizenship is in heaven. Citizenship is in heaven before the great king, the one to be feared.

Not only do we have this rationale because of who He is, but we have this rationale because of what He does or has done. Verse 3 talks about how He has subdued peoples under us and nations under our feet. Verse 4 talks about He chose our inheritance for us, "the pride of Jacob," which is a reference to the land, the promised land, Jacob whom He loves. These references here in verses 3 and 4 are allusions to what the Lord did as He brought His people out of slavery and brought them into the promised land and wiped out every obstacle that was set before them. They recognized the Lord is doing that.

When we look at verse 5, and it talks about the Lord going up with a shout, it again celebrates in much the same way that we saw that celebration earlier in Exodus 15. Exodus 15 is in itself a psalm. And I would wager to say that it is an enthronement psalm because it speaks about God being not only king, but conquering king. And it invites us into this place of recognizing Him anew as the king of all creation.

As I prepared for this, I feel like I've actually preached this for the past two weeks. I haven't literally preached it the last two weeks. The last two weeks, we've been in the book of Revelation looking at chapters 4 and 5. And right there as you look at Revelation chapters 4 and 5, you see this picture of God in chapter 4 as being the Lord of all creation. And then you see in chapter 5 the picture of the lamb being the Lord of redemption. And so it seems like as you come to this psalm, it's not just speaking about God in glowing terms to kind of get us to reflect on Him attributes-wise. And it's certainly not to be limited to just moments of success in battle that the people of God enjoyed as a result of God's empowerment. But it pushes us forward prophetically. It pushes us forward to see what Christ has done as He's conquered. It causes us to see that as Christ came in His incarnation to take upon Himself humiliation in our room and in our stead, embracing all of the shame, embracing all of the sin that we owe, and taking to Himself the very wrath of His Father unmixed with mercy.

What do we find after He gets up out of the grave? What do we find as He's communing with His disciples? We find that the one who is the lamb arises as the lion. We find Him saying things like, "All power has now been given unto me." Like, wait a minute. Excuse me. You're like God the Son. You have an everlasting kingdom. No. He's saying that as the representative man, as your mediator, He has accomplished what it called for for Him to stand as our mediator king. And what happens after He makes that proclamation? He ascends in much the same way as we see this ascension spoken of in verse 5. Christ goes up. Christ goes up above all power, all authority, all dominion. Christ goes up and has a name that's above every name in this time or in any time at all. And Christ shows us that in the midst of our mourning, in the midst of our lamenting, that we can be confident, that we can stick with our talking points because He has conquered. He has overcome the world. He's overcome sin, death, and the grave, and now He's calling us to walk in obedience to Him, even in the midst of discomfort.

Verses 6 through 9 speak to us of coming to worship the reigning king. And as loudly as I've been speaking about how this psalm is not silent, or quiet, or presented to us in hushed terms, when we come to verse 6, it seems like the volume is turned up a little bit more. Verse 6 with these repetitive calls or repetitive imperative command to sing praises to God, to sing praises, increases the intensity of the worship. As we get into the rationale found in verses 7, 8, and 9, we see the scope of God's reign. What is the scope of His reign? He is comprehensively the ruler of all creation. We see the tense of His reign,

perpetually, ongoingly, and forever in present tense. He is always reigning, always ruling. And we see those who are in submission to His reign. "The princes of the people gather as the peoples of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted."

Depending on your translation, I think the Holman Christian Bible, instead of saying, "as the peoples of God," it says, "with the people of God." If the proper rendering is to take this as "with the people of God," it is sort of a nationalistic look at a peoples, the Gentiles, being conquered and brought into submission and subservience under Israel. But it doesn't fit the framework of us just seeing that as a picture of nationalism. It doesn't picture Israel as conquerors necessarily putting their feet on the neck of the Gentiles, but instead is similar to what we find in the book of Isaiah, as I tend to say that every message, it seems like. After spending ten years in the book of Isaiah, everything reminds me of the book of Isaiah.

And so we find in this psalm as it speaks about the people perhaps gathering with the people of Abraham is similar to Isaiah 60:10-16, where we see the Gentiles so aligning themselves with the people of God that they're looking to rebuild their walls. They're looking to bring the wealth of the nations to Israel. Why? Because they worship the living God. It's their way, or sort of is a picturesque way, of showing a very real conversion, a very real transformation where all the things of this world that would otherwise distract or serve as a breach or serve as something to hinder their relationship with God, they're saying, "Lord, we lay it all before you." It's okay. Or rather we're on good standing to see that it's—I'm picturing the Gentiles this way because it speaks about them ministering or serving the people of God, that is to say the Jews. In Isaiah 56, the word that it used to describe their way of serving them is a word that could be denoted minister or serve in the same way that it's used in the Levitical context. As they're serving, they're serving as priests. They're offering up worship to the Most High God, demonstrating a very real zeal to the Lord.

But if this rendering is proper to see it as it says in ESV as gathering "as the peoples of God," we see a different picture. We see the picture that is set before us in Ephesians 3:6.

Ephesians 3:6 as it says, "This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." It is showing them, as the ESV renders it, as being a people that are brought in under the covenant blessings of Abraham, the covenant blessings that are yes and amen in Christ, the covenant blessings that we all enjoy as we are in union with Christ.

And so as we bring this to a close and we're looking at this psalm, we realize that it's not calling us to worship out loud in the sense of merely singing louder. But it's calling us to worship out loud in sort of demonstrative ways, ways that in the very basic working out of my faith at work, on social media, and in all of my discussions, in all of my interactions, I am to remember the king. I am to remember that He is the head and rule and has all authority, that He has disarmed all rulers and authorities and put them to open shame and triumphing over them, and that all things ultimately must glorify Him. That is to say every aspect of our lives are to glorify Him. We're called to worship the king. We're called to bow at His feet. We're called to do this as our expression of love to Him.

I know that for this season, things are kind of tough. We seem to be coming out of the pandemic, and yet, there's another infection that was sitting right under the surface. And as that comes up and rears its ugly head, we're reminded that we must worship out loud. That in all of our disagreements, that in all of our butting our heads against one another, that ultimately, we're looking to recognize the supremacy of God in every aspect of our lives, and to worship Him well.

Gracious God and most wise heavenly Father, I ask, Lord God, that you would walk us through this

difficult season, that you would walk us through this difficult season reminding us of your overwhelming presence that causes us to stumble, and to startle, and to tremble. Help us, Lord God, to worship you and to recognize you in every aspect of our lives. Help us, Lord God, to take up the charge found in this psalm and to worship out loud, to worship the king out loud in every opportunity, in every environment, and under all circumstances. Seal this word to our hearts today. This I ask in Jesus's name. Amen. God bless you.