

“Lift Up Your Heads: The King of Glory Comes to You!”

(Psalm 24 – Advent 2 – December 7, 2025)

Psalm 24 – ¹*The earth is the LORD’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.* 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.* ⁷*Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.* ⁸*Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.* ⁹*Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.* ¹⁰*Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.*

Dear Redeemed in the name of heaven’s King, who comes to save us:

Psalm 24 was written by the great King David. The Holy Spirit breathed into him the words to write, foretelling the coming of the great King of Glory, our Savior.

This messianic psalm was likely written at the time the Ark of the Covenant was returned to its place in the tabernacle at Jerusalem. For centuries, the glory of the Lord had been associated with the Ark. When the Israelites crossed the wilderness to the Promised Land, the Lord spoke to Moses from between the cherubim on the mercy seat of the Ark (Exodus 25:22). As they entered the Promised Land, the glory of the Lord accompanied them with the Ark, giving them victory over their enemies. Some time before David became king, the Philistines captured the Ark; and it was lamented that the glory of the Lord had departed from Israel (1 Samuel 4:21-22).

But now, soon after David was crowned King, God enabled him to return the Ark to its place in the tabernacle at Jerusalem. Psalm 24 is a joyful processional liturgy, calling God’s people to worship, celebrating the coming of their King of glory, the God of their salvation. We can imagine the scene as the ark was brought through the gates of the city with the joyful words in verse 9: *“Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.”*

How appropriately this Psalm is used in the season of Advent, as we celebrate the King of Glory coming to us in the Person of Jesus Christ. For as John 1:14 says: *“we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* Jesus came into the world the first time with His almighty power, to save

us from our enemies of sin, Satan, and death. He comes to us daily, bringing life and salvation to us through His Word and Sacraments. And He will come again to bring us through the gates into His everlasting heavenly Kingdom.

How appropriately also, the Psalm calls us to receive the King of glory in reverent worship. After all, He is not just a man – He is God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. The Psalm begins by highlighting this truth in verses 1-2: *“The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters.”* Out of nothing, by His powerful Word alone, He created all things in the world and the universe. It is this King of glory who made us, who gives us every heartbeat and every breath. We owe our life to Him.

In view of His nature, completely set apart from us, the Psalm asks in verse 3: *“Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place?”* As the Israelites ascended Mount Zion in Jerusalem to worship, and as we come before Him in worship today, we may well ask, “Who am I to enter the holy presence of the Lord of glory?” Indeed, when the Ark of the Covenant was being brought to Jerusalem, with David leading in festive procession, it was seen that the glory of the Lord was nothing to be trifled with. When the ark began to tip over on its cart, a priest named Uzzah reached out his hand to steady it; but with this forbidden touch, the glory of the Lord killed him (2 Samuel 6:6-7).

Indeed, *“Who may stand in His holy place?”* The answer is given in verse 4: *“He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.”* But God is holy and we are sinful. Our hands are not clean; for how many times have we used our hands to do unholy things, to hurt others, to take what is not ours, and to be lazy when our hands should have served faithfully? Our hearts are not pure, either; for how many times have we used our hearts and minds to entertain unholy images, to bear grudges, and to think the worst possible things about someone? How many times have we lifted up our souls to idols of possessions, pleasures, people, whatever or whomever we put before God? And as for our lips; how many times have we use them to speak deceitfully, to tell white lies and half-truths? Who are we to ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in His holy presence? If we were to reach out and touch Him, as sinners, would not His glory kill us?

But there is good news! We need not try to enter His holy presence on our own merit. For the Lord of glory has already come to us, *“full of grace and truth.”* Heaven’s King has come down to us in humility to work out our salvation.

“Who is this King of Glory?” Of whom does David prophesy? He is the promised Messiah-King, the greater Son of David: Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the King of glory, dwelling between the cherubim. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, dwelling with His Father and the Holy Spirit in unapproachable light from eternity (1 Timothy 6:16). Yet, He is the Word of God who became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). The King of glory was born to us humbly as a Baby in Bethlehem. The Son of God in our flesh could be touched, and even held, without fear of death, as the Son of Man.

Why did He come to us in such humble form? It was so that by His perfect life, from His conception by the Holy Spirit to His last breath on the cross, He could work out our salvation. As our Substitute under the holy Law of God, Jesus always kept His hands clean, doing what was right. His heart was always pure in love, even for His enemies. His soul was always lifted up to His Father, to serve His will alone. He always used His lips to speak the truth in love, proclaiming His salvation for sinners.

The sinless Son of Man alone is worthy to ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in His holy place. As Jesus ascended Mount Zion and entered the gates of Jerusalem that last time, He fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9: *“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.”* Yet it was not to assume an earthly throne of glory; it was to lay down His life for us. On the cross, He who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). God the Father laid on His Son the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6). As the one bearing all our sins, the touch of divine wrath killed Jesus instead of us.

Yet, *“Who is this King of glory?”* As David declares in verse 8, He is: *“The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.”* For He is no longer dead but living; the Victim has become our Victor! By His almighty power, He defeated our enemies of sin, Satan and death! By His perfect obedience, Jesus conquered Satan’s temptations, and by His cross He crushed the serpent’s head, freeing us from his power. Having taken away our sin, Jesus rose to declare us forgiven in the sight of God. In His glorious resurrection, He declares the last enemy, death, to be defeated.

Now David says of every believer in verses 5-6: *“He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face.”* By His gift of faith, we seek His face as the God of our salvation. The Lord of Glory brings us His blessing of forgiveness instead of the curse of sin. He brings us His gift of righteousness

instead of rejection. Through faith in Christ, we stand blameless in the sight of God and at peace in His holy presence.

Now as our exalted King of glory, Jesus reigns to ensure all these blessings to us. At the right hand of His Father, He rules with almighty power over all things for our good. In verse 10, David calls Him *“The Lord of hosts”* or *“the Lord of Sabaoth.”* The word has to do with armies, hosts of power. As *“the LORD strong and mighty,”* He has countless angels around His throne praising Him: *“Who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word”* (Revelation 5:11; Psalm 103:20).

Yet He is the King of Glory, who come to us *“full of grace and truth.”* Jesus comes to serve us in humble form of Word and Sacrament. He comes to forgive our sins in His Gospel. He comes in Baptism, to pour out the Holy Spirit on us, to present us clean and holy. He comes in His Holy Supper to give us His Body and Blood for our forgiveness. He comes to answer our prayers and help us in every need. As He promised His people in the Old Testament, so He promises us: *“In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you”* (Exodus 20:24).

Therefore with David and believers through the ages, we welcome Him who comes to us with His blessing of salvation. We join our hearts and voices in the festive song, repeated in verse 7 and 9: *“Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in.”*

Jerusalem, like many ancient cities, was surrounded by a high wall with gates. When a king came to the city, the gatekeeper would open the gate wide. This showed that the people welcomed and honored him. They would even go out and greet him with patriotic songs. This welcome procession would be filled with joy, especially when their king returned having won a great victory for them in battle. By this image, David tells believers to open wide their hearts to receive the King of Glory.

In this Advent spirit, today we welcome the King of Glory with wide open hearts. We receive Him with joy as He brings us the victory He won in the great battle, bringing us His blessing of salvation and eternal life. And we lift up our heads as we await His final Advent when He will come to welcome us through the wide open gates of His heavenly Kingdom. There we will live forever with this King of Glory. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify His glorious name, evermore praising Him who came to save us:

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.